

## MINES IN SIERRA CITY AREA

Despite deliberate tall tales, in the 1800's, regarding fabulous gold finds, fabricated for gain by prospecting outfit- ters, stories which ran from fabulous discoveries exposed on the surface of the ground to a lake surrounded by beaches whose sands consisted of gold nuggets ranging in size from marbles to walnuts, there were enough large nuggets actually found to keep the stories rife. Even today, after a rain- storm, many small nuggets are found along the streams. As recent as 1964, a local man walking with his dogs along a stream bank found a nugget, which he said was as large as his thumbnail.

After the stories of the Laguan del Oro opened up northern Sierra County, there were discoveries that made the Gold Lake stories seem like pocket change. In 1858, two pros- pectors, "Mexican Frank" and Joe Tierney, took a nugget from the bottom of a shaft at the Monumental Mine. In removing it, the nugget was broken; but, the largest piece weighed 10 1/2 pounds. After cleaning and exhibiting it for a brief period in San Francisco, the gold was minted and yielded the owners more than \$23,000 in gold pieces. During the same period, other nuggets were taken from the Monumental area which weighed from 20 to 50 pounds.

The more valuable mines; however, were not these most spec- tacular ones, but the mines which paid regularly. The placer mines along the river and the tributary streams were worked for many years and are still producing gold. The quartz mines have gone into a decline in recent years, but, in the past, were producers of staggering fortunes.

The largest quartz veins are thought to be in the Sierra Buttes, the Young America, the Mountain Mine, and the Phoe- nix Mines. Some of the older mines that are still being worked to some degree include the Hilda Mines, consisting of eleven unpatented claims; the Mayday-Undine Mine, dis- covered in 1901 and worked for eight seasons; the New York Gravel Mines, consisting of the Yuba, New York, and New Year Mines, where 300 patented acres are still being worked; and the 4 Hills Mine, consisting of 887 patented acres. These mines covered the outlets to the Spencer Lakes and the out- let of the Middle Fork of the Yuba. In the early days,

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\$250,000 to \$500,000 was taken from one pocket in a hole fifteen feet below the surface. Later pockets were dis- covered near the surface, containing from \$1500 to \$6000. There are many fissure with veins running from one foot to twenty feet in width, the average being four to five feet. A few years ago, this property was involved in a land exchange and has reverted to federal ownership. The Kentucky Mine consists of two claims, the Kentucky and the Grandma. It was originally located before 1896 and was re-located by E. A. Loeffler in 1910. The lode line is 3,000 feet. There is no work being done on this mine at present.



The Keystone Mine was averaging ore worth \$10 per ton in 1916. The Monarch mines consists of 27 claims, covering a length along the lode of 12,000 feet. It is located on the west rim of the Sierra Buttes. There is some good timber on the property.

The Phoenix Mines consists of 124 acres of patented claims and five unpatented claims. The lode is covered for a

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distance of 9,600 feet and is situated on the south slope of the Sierra Buttes. It was discovered in 1862 and lightly worked. Near the year 1880, \$112,000 was taken out; \$44,000 from the West Ext. # 2. In 1889, it was sold for \$27,000. Between that date and 1891, \$48,000 was taken out of the mine.

The Sacred Mount Mine was discovered in 1900 by Sam Langdon, who later sold it to Richard Phelan. In 1916, work was being done to get under ore assaying at \$8 per ton on the sur- face. The tailings, when operated on by a cyanide plant, assayed at over \$9 per ton. The Sierra Buttes Mines consists of fifteen claims, six of which are not patented. There is a total of 660 acres on the steep side of Sierra Buttes and is a mile and one-half in length. Work at this mine was first begun in 1850. The English company which owned it between 1870 and 1904 produced in the neighborhood of \$17,000,000. There are still many producing veins on the property.

The Sovereign Mine consists of 200 acres along the lode of 4,500 feet. There is much free gold in the veins. The tail- ings of this mine, when treated with cyanide, yield a \$5 average per ton.

The Swastika Mine, later re-named the Chipps, consists of 158.5 patented acres. Many pockets and rich bunches of ore were taken out in the early days and it was stated that there was enough ore exposed to keep the mine running in- definitely.

The Willoby Mine consists of 100 acres. Both lode and free gold finds were made at this mine. Ore averaging \$40 per ton was being removed in 1915.

The Young America mine, though idle for the most part, at present has recently been worked, looking for ore which could be produced economically. The Young America was one of the richest in the early days.

The Sierra Iron Mine consists of almost 300 acres of pat- ented property and was one of the few iron mines in the area. This property takes in most of Hawley Lake and ex- tends on both sides of the lake. In recent time, this lake property has been sold for recreational purposes, with the remainder of the property being retained, but not worked

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as a mine. Some copper and asbestos mines were worked in this area. The best known being Bassett's Pride. This is on the property now known as Bassett's Station.

Notes on the author:

Mrs. Jeanne McMahan was born in Florida on October 8, 1925. She married Forrest McMahan in 1943, in Tampa, Florida. She moved to Santa Cruz, California, when her husband was dis- charged from the Air Force, in 1945. The McMahans lived in Santa Cruz until 1958, when they moved to the Holly House in Sierra City. Mrs. McMahan was named acting Postmaster of Sierra City, upon the retirement of the previous Postmaster. She became Postmaster on July 23, 1968, and now holds that position. She is active in the Sierra County Historical So- ciety and has a lively interest in the colorful history of the Sierra City Region. Her address is Sierra City, Calif- ornia.

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