

Appendix A: Mining History of the Providence Mountains from [Desert Fever](#) by Russ Hartill, Larry Vredenburg and Gary Shumway, 1980.

Extracted from Desert Fever: An Overview of Mining History of the California Desert Conservation Area, 1980. Prepared For: DESERT PLANNING STAFF BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR 3610 Central Avenue, Suite 402 Riverside, California 92506, February, 1980.

PROVIDENCE MOUNTAINS

Like the New York Mountains to the north, the first discoveries made in the Providence Mountains were for silver. These discoveries, made in 1863, transformed the Macedonia Canyon area into the mining camp of Providence City. In 1880 another significant silver discovery was made at the Bonanza King. With the decline in silver prices, however, attention was turned toward gold, and the Hidden Hill, Gold Valley and Out West mining camps sprang up. During World War II, the immense iron deposits in Foshay Pass were mined, and silver, gold and copper mining has occurred at various places in the range during this century.

Rock Spring

Charles Hamilton and Francis B. Austin on March 12, 1863, discovered some rich silver ore about 10 miles west of Rock Spring. This first ledge was known as the Dona Carolina. Later these men, "in company with Messrs. Taylor and Nicholson... discovered Silver Hill, nine miles from Rock Springs." Thus began recorded mining in the Providence Mountains, but according to legend then current, this was little more than a revival of mining, as "From traditional accounts, these mountains were long supposed to be rich in mineral deposits, but never been explored by Californians until this year. In some places there are yet to be seen traces of old inclines running into the mountain, no doubt workings of the Spaniards many years ago." 81

The Rock Spring Mining District, established in April, 1863, was thirty square miles and embraced Macedonia Mountain in the north and Silver Hill Mountain on the south. The Government Road essentially split the district. Mister J. J. Downie of San Francisco was recorder, Mr. Hilton of Sacramento was president and the "bylaws and regulations are similar to Virginia laws." 82

In May, Mr. P. J. Gillford's party was prospecting Silver Hill, and with Hamilton and Austin, several extensive ledges were discovered. Preparations were being made to begin work on the Dona Carolina and on Silver Hill. On July 3, 1863, Thomas Wheeler, Joseph M. English, A. J. Seales and Charley Neal discovered the Macedonia and Blue Ophir ledges. 83

Work progressed rather slowly. In October of that year, the Great Western and the Pride of the Union mines were resuming work after a forced shutdown due to lack of workers. Work also was just beginning on the Dona Carolina, although the Mammoth boasted a "fine tunnel." Two months later, the Macedonia Silver Mining Company of Buffalo, New York, was sinking a shaft as was the Blue Ophir. On the Wheeler property, an optimistic 3,000-foot tunnel was contracted for. Also in 1863 the townsite of Providence, "a string of stone cabins and tents," was laid out and briefly prospered. 84

The directory of mining companies with offices in San Francisco, for March, 1864, listed five with interest in Rock Spring: "The Donna (sic.) Carolina, Jefferson, Miquadowa, Empire, Mammoth and San Francisco." The last three appear to have been run by the company. 85

In November the Rock Spring, Macedonian, and Silver Hill are mentioned as three separate districts. Reflecting areas of greatest activity. Evidently work had been progressing on the Blue Ophir Ledge, for it had a 125-foot tunnel, while the Silver Hill District lay essentially undeveloped. A year later, in December, 1865, Mr. Ensign Bennett, superintendent of the Macedonian Mining Company, purchased an "outfit for the mine" in Wilmington and headed out with others to "test its value." 86

The first rumors of "serious Indian problems" at Rock Spring began in November, 1865. It was not until the next year, however, that the district was abandoned after Moses Little, a miner, was killed by Indians on June 12, 1866, while alone in his cabin. Camp Rock Spring was established December 30, 1866, by the U.S. Army to protect mail carriers on the Government Road. Interestingly, they used two abandoned 25-foot long tunnels driven into the hill near the spring for storage. 87

When the Indians were subdued, activity resumed in the Rock Spring area, after lying idle for years. Now called the Macedonian District, work began sometime in 1871. Around June, 1872, Matt Palen erected an expensive smelting works. Also during the month a team hauled a load of supplies from San Bernardino to the area. In July came this report: "We have heard of many persons who have already left and are preparing to leave for the newly discovered mines in the Providence Mountain." Enough mining took place to ship 15 tons of ore to San Francisco in September, which grossed \$650 a ton. 88

A long time elapsed before the mines in the old Macedonian District were again active. The Macedonia Mine, renamed the Columbia, was apparently active just after the turn of the century, for in January, 1903, the property had been attached to satisfy a \$3,700 debt. 89

In December, 1910, C. F. Dayton, general manager of the Columbia Mining Company, was supervising installation of a five-stamp mill at the mine. Mark Neumayer and George Martin, more at home at their mine in Gold Valley, were employed mining on the Columbia early in 1911. By March, the mill was in operation, and the company soon began shipping concentrates. These concentrates reportedly were running \$365 per ton. In 1935 and 1936 this property was leased to the Columbia Mines Inc. They rehabilitated the five-stamp mill and added a flotation plant. 90

The Francis Copper Mine, not far from the Columbia, was active in 1917 and 1918 when 307 tons of ore were shipped to the Valley Wells Smelter. In 1931 there was a bunkhouse and a boarding house at the mine. 91

Providence

In the spring of 1880, George Goreman and P. Dwyer, prospectors from Ivanpah, discovered rock that assayed from \$640 to \$5,000 a ton in silver. Their discovery, about 15 miles south of the old Macedonia District, was the birth of the Bonanza King Mine. By April the Trojan District had been organized, and a rush to locate claims had resulted. Andy McFarlane and Charley Hassen "concluded to try their luck, and were rewarded by the discovery of a wonderful bonanza." Some of the other nearby mines included the Rattler, the Treasury, the Lucknow, the Mozart, and the Cashier. 92

On July 3, 1880, it was reported that ore was being prepared to ship to the Ivanpah Consolidated Mining and Milling Company at Ivanpah from the Bonanza King. However, further development was hampered by a lack of capital. Sometime around the spring of 1881, J. D. Boyer and H. L. Drew, San Bernardino businessmen, purchased the mine. In June, 1881, they also paid \$20,000 for the Pierce Mine. This was probably a good investment, seeing that \$28,000 in ore had already come out of it, yet the remainder of 1881 is notably lacking in information from the mines. In December, 1881, J. B. Osborne, H. L. Drew, J. D. Boyer, and N. Hasson sold all their interest in the old Amargosa Mining District for \$22,500. This sale gave H. L. Drew and Mr. Hasson, now in partnership with Mr. Osborne (of Calico fame), some extra money. Work was to begin at once on the Bonanza King, and negotiations for sale of their mines in the Providence Mountains were stopped. 93

On the Bonanza King, in January, 1882, a rich vein assaying \$100 to \$1,200 per ton was discovered and a plan was "on foot to erect a large mill there in a short time." Instead of going through with these plans themselves, they sold the mine to the Bonanza King Consolidated Mining Company, reportedly for \$200,000. 94

In July, 1882, a new hoisting works arrived for the Bonanza King Mine via Colton, and a ten-stamp mill built by Prescott, Scott and Company of San Francisco was freighted from Mojave by Remi Nadeau. All was in preparation for the mill. Between 100 and 150 men had actively been employed since May or June. The main shaft was being sunk by 3 shifts of men, and some 2,000 tons of ore worth \$230 a ton sat waiting on the dump. A post office had opened in June, and the town of Providence was born. 95

In the meantime, the Southern Pacific was rushing its way east from Mojave to stop the A and P before it reached California. The S. P. Railroad was open to Waterman (Barstow) on October 23, 1882, and to Goffs on March 19, 1883. This no doubt was pleasant news to the owners of the Bonanza King who, in January, 1883, shipped their first 11 bars of bullion worth \$19,000. During the first 12 days of February, they shipped an additional \$28,300 in bullion. The mill was turning out 2,000 ounces of 930-fine silver a day! 96

In July, 1884, Thomas Ewing, the superintendent, reported 'the Bonanza King is better opened up, better worked, and we have obtained better results from the ore than any other mine in this great mineral desert. Nearly one million dollars has been taken out from the mine in 18 months and ten days. 97

The mine continued to make good profits, but at a high cost. A February 3, 1885 letter to the Calico Print blasted foreman H. C. Callahan and shift boss John O'Donnell for being "heartless task masters.... forcing men to work more than their health and strength will permit." On March 11, 1885, the mines and mill were shut down, and virtually all the miners left. About a week later, the mines reopened with only 15 miners who earned \$3 instead of the previous \$4. The owners claimed the low price of silver forced the action. By the end of March, 35 to 40 men were back at the mine, which previously employed from 150 to 200. In order to attract additional workers, the company purchased advertising space in the Calico Print. 98

It was not until about June 20 that the mill started up again. The company was milling 24 tons of ore a day, and in one month, 24 bars of bullion had been produced. However, just two weeks later, on July 31, Desert Fever: An Overview of Mining History of the California Desert Conservation Area 95
1885, the mill burned to the ground, "the mines closed down and the owners, after collecting the insurance, went east, probably with a sigh of relief." 99

In 1890 Dr. Henry De Groot reported that the mine had produced \$60,000 a month, "the ore averaging one hundred dollars per ton." The mill operated more or less continuously from January, 1883, to March, 1885, and during June, 1885. This is a total of 28 months which would equal about \$1,700,000. 100

The spring after the mill burned, the Wallapai Tribune reported that a railroad was being surveyed to Providence and that a smelter would be erected at Needles as soon as the railroad was completed. In 1890 it was rumored the company intended to erect a twenty-stamp mill to replace the old mill, but this was not done. Little took place on the Bonanza King property in the 1880s after the mill burned, but at the nearby Kerr Mine, a five-stamp mill was erected late in 1885. This mill ran continuously at least until 1890 and paid good dividends. 101

In 1906 the Bonanza King Mine was reactivated by the Trojan Mining Company. They installed a ten-stamp mill powered by three gasoline engines. The mine was active only until September, 1907, but the property was examined and a thorough report was written. This aroused a great deal of interest, and in 1914 Hall Rawitser and Company of Massachusetts purchased the mine, beginning development work. With Mr. J. C. Gerney as superintendent, the mine was again a producer by 1915. 102

The company totally revamped the mill, and during 1919 was treating 40 tons of the old dumps a day. Some rich ore at this time was shipped and reportedly carried 100 to 500 ounces of silver a ton. Operations were suspended in 1920. During 1923 the property was leased to the Bonanza King Consolidated Mines Company, and 6 men were employed, working on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth levels. One carload of ore was shipped in May, 1924. 103

Providence Mountains (Gold-Iron)

The gold mines in the Providence Mountains that were first worked lay south of Foshay Pass, and were discovered as early as 1882. In May, 1886, the Queen Mine, Relief, Red Cloud and Mexican Mine were being developed. A mining district named the Arrow encompassed the mines, with Sam King recorder at Arrow Camp (later known as Hidden Hill.) By 1890 little actual work had been done. On one mine known as the Domingo (or Mexican), "Mexicans" had sunk a 40-foot shaft and milled ore in an arrastre. 104

After the fall of silver prices in 1893, here, like everywhere else, gold became a much sought after commodity. In February, 1894, a discovery of gold 9 miles south of Providence, at Hidden Hill, aroused extreme interest. At a time when the Vanderbilt Mine was waning, Pat Dwyer (one of the discoverers of the Bonanza King in 1880) with Jim Walker discovered ore that ran 54.5 ounces of gold a ton. P. H. Keane located the Hidden Hill Mine, and after a few shots of dynamite, took out over \$25,000 in gold ore that was worked in an arrastre. The Goldstone District, as the area was dubbed, experienced only a short-lived flurry of interest. About 1895 Monaghan and Murphy of Needles purchased 5 claims, including the Hidden Hill, and Golden Queen (or Queen) and formed the Hidden Hill Mine. They erected a small two-stamp mill. In the intervening years, until 1901, the shaft on this property was deepened from 35 to 165 feet, a modest development that yielded \$36,000 (including the \$25,000 discovery made by Keane). 105

In the spring of 1913 there was a serious revival of interest in this section of desert. The Mable Mine, also known in 1913 as the Gannon property, was discovered in the rush of 1894. Lying north of the Hidden Hill, 94 sacks of high grade gold ore were shipped from there in June, 1913. The Hidden Hill was gearing up for renewed mining in December, as "several tons of supplies and material" were sent to the mine. Two weeks later it was reported "A. E. Nescus, E. M. has men working building a camp on the Hidden Hill Group at the Golden Queen Mine. Myles Lund has charge of the work. John Domingo is busy with a stage and freight team." 106

By January the camp was constructed and Mrs. Nescus moved in to join her husband. In February, eight men were employed mining on the property. On April 9, 1914, the Hidden Hill Mining Company was incorporated for \$100,000. Also, it was reported that "Buildings are still going up.... and the camp is assuming the appearance of a village." In June, 1914, the miners struck an ore body heavy with free gold. This may be the pocket of ore that reportedly produced \$13,000 from 300 pounds of rock. In spite of these incredible discoveries, the mine appears to have closed down about this time. The buildings were attached by the contractor, then Sid Dennis, who was building roads, attached the contractors' team and wagons for debts incurred. Little additional work is recorded from this mine. 107

As was mentioned above, the Mable Mine was active in 1913. The property was again active from late 1918 to 1919. Production up to 1920 was about \$100,000. In 1924 two men were working the mine, and in 1940, four were. In 1940 there was a neat little camp at the mine, but the mine has been idle since. 108

The Vulcan iron deposit, on the west side of Foshay Pass, probably had been known for many years prior to its patent in August, 1908. About that time there was a 100-foot tunnel at the mine, but economic consideration forced the mine to remain inactive. It was not until the demands of World War II that the mine was opened. A camp was constructed to house 65 men near the mine, and another 35 men lived with their families in trailers in Kelso. Between December, 1942, and July, 1947, over 2,000,000 tons of ore were shipped by Kaiser Steel Company, the owner of the property, to the Fontana Steel Mill. When the Eagle Mountain deposits were finally opened up in 1948, the Vulcan property closed down. Since 1947 some iron has been mined for use in the manufacture of cement. 109

References

84. San Francisco Alta California , October 8, 16, 1863, December 16, 1865. Richard E. Lingenfelter, Steamboats on the Colorado River (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1978), p. 39.
85. C. Potter, The Mining Directory (San Francisco: Dewey and Co., 1864), p..
86. San Francisco Alta California , November 14, 1864; Wilmington Journal , December 16, December 23, 1865.
87. Los Angeles News , November 21, 1865; Dennis C. Casebier, Camp Rock Springs, California (Norco: Tales of the Mojave Road Publishing Company, 1973), p. 12.
88. San Bernardino Guardian , June 29, July 13, September 21, 1872.
89. Wright, 1953, tab, list p. 75; Redlands Citrograph , January 3, 1903.
90. W. B. Tucker, 1921, p. 340; Barstow Printer , December 16, 1910, March 234, January 6, 1911; Tucker and Sampson, 1943, p. 447.
91. Tucker, 1921, p. 341, Tucker and Sampson, 1931, pp. 271, 272.
92. San Bernardino Weekly Times , July 3, 1880; Colton Semi Tropic , April 24, May 1, 1880.

93. San Bernardino Weekly Times , July 3, 1880; San Bernardino Valley Index , June 3, December 31, 1881.
94. San Bernardino Valley Index , January 21, 1881; Crossman, January 3, 1891.
95. San Bernardino Weekly Times , June 1, 1882; Frickstad, 1955, p. 144.
96. Myrick, 1963, pp.765,766; San Bernardino Weekly Times , Jan. 20, February 17, 1883.
97. L. A. Ingersoll, Ingersoll's Century Annals of San Bernardino County California, 1769 to 1904 (Los Angeles: L. A. Ingersoll, 1904) pp. 62,63,281.
98. Calico Print, February 15, March 29, May 3, 1885.
99. Ibid., June 21, July 19, 1885; Myrick, 1963, pp. 765,766.
100. DeGroot, 1890, p. 532.
101. Kingman The Wallapai Tribune , April 10, 1886; DeGroot, 1890, p. 532; Calico Print, July 19, 1885.
102. Redlands Citrograph , March 31, December 8, 1906; Cloudman, 1919, p. 227.
103. Tucker, 1921, p. 360; W. B. Tucker, "Los Angeles Field Division, San Bernardino County," California Mining Bureau Report 20 , 1924, p. 198.
104. Kingman The Wallapai Tribune , May 8, 1886; Crossman, January 3, 1891.
105. Kingman Our Mineral Wealth, February 16, 1894; Barstow Printer, December 5, 1913; Crawford, 1894, p. 233; Engineering and Mining Journal , March 23, 1901.
106. Barstow Printer , July 11, August 8, December 19, 1913; W. B. Tucker, "Mabel and Contention Mine," California Mining Bureau unpublished field notes , Los Angeles Office, April 27, 1920.
107. Barstow Printer , January 16, February 27, April 17, June 12, 1914; Tucker, 1921, p. 348; Tucker and Sampson, 1931, p. 301.
108. W. B. Tucker and R. J. Sampson, "Current Mining Activity in Southern California," California Division of Mines Report 36 , 1940, p. 58; Tucker and Sampson, 1943, pp. 441-442.
109. Bureau of Land Management, Land Records, T 10 N., R. 13 E. S. B. Meridian; Cloudman, 1919, p. 820; Thomas E. Gay Jr., "Iron Industries," Lauren A. Wright ed., California Division of Mines Bulletin 176 , 1957, p. 254.