

RANDBURG RAILROAD, SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

This report is part of a research project that describes the relationships between mines and railroads in the Mojave Desert and southwestern Great Basin of southeastern California and southwestern Nevada. t

The collection can be accessed at
<http://www.greggwilkerson.com/railroads.html>

Italics indicate quotations.

HISTORY

The Randsburg Railroad serviced the mines of Atolia, Red Mountain and Rand Mountain by connecting to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad at Kramer Junction.

The first gold discovery in the El Paso Mountains was at Goler (between Red Rock Canyon and Randsburg) in 1893. This discovery drew many miners to the area and the surrounding hills were heavily prospected. In 1895 a party of prospectors found placer gold at the foot of the Rand Mountains and soon traced the source of the gold to an outcropping near the top of the mountain. This discovery would become the fabulous Yellow Aster mine, and a minor rush to the new Rand district was on. Some of the important mines of the district were the Big Norse, King Solomon, Monkey Wrench, Minnehaha, Bully Boy, Napoleon, Gold Coin, and of course the famous Yellow Aster. (Western Mining History, 2023a; Myrick, 1963, :793-808).

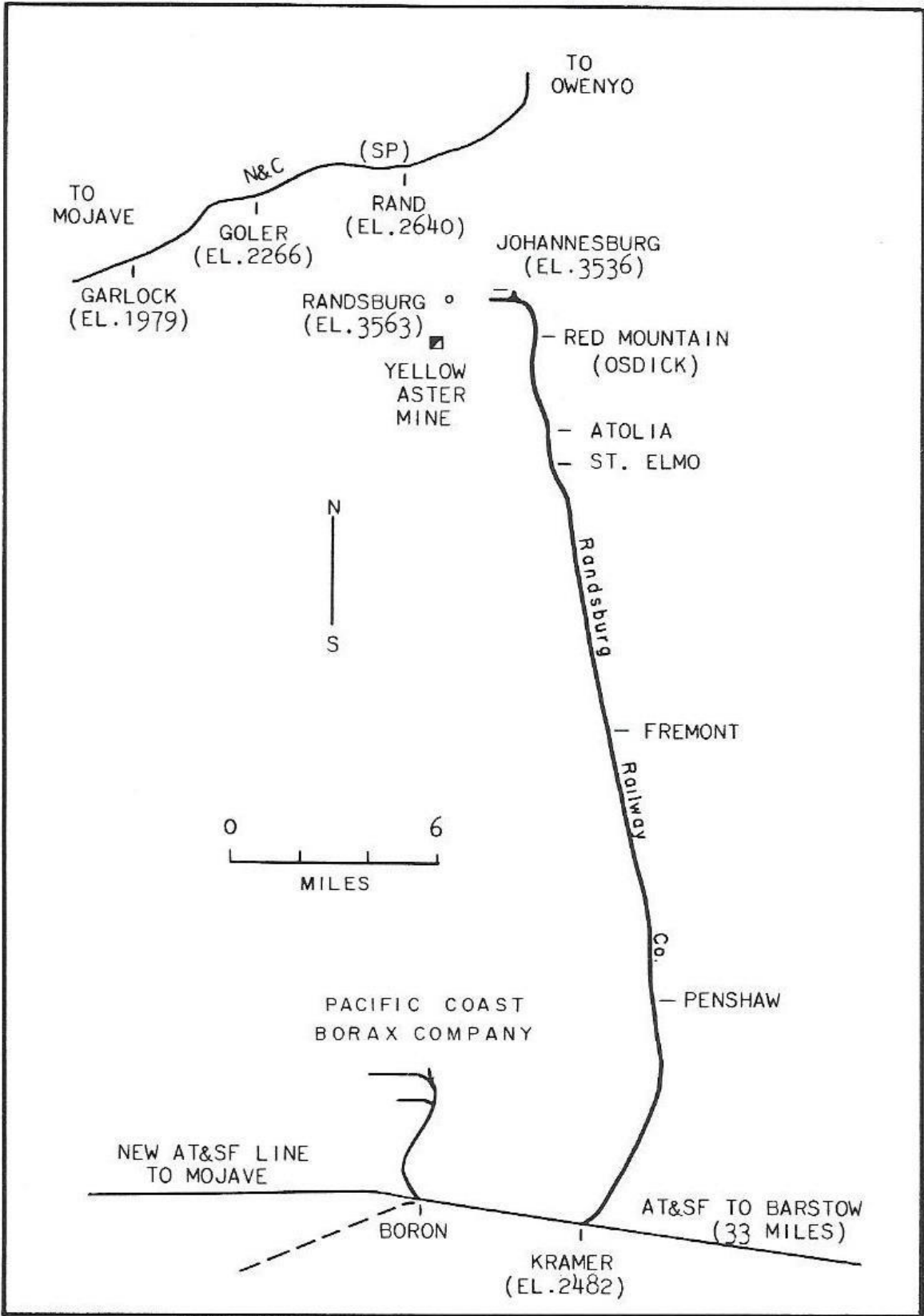


Figure 36. Route of the Randsburg Railroad. From Myrick, 1963, p. 797.

The Randsburg Railway was a 28.5-mile branch of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad (AT&SF). The line started at Kramer Junction, California, and terminated at Johannesburg, California, with a stop at Atolia. The line was completed on January 5, 1898, and began operation on January 17, 1898. The railway was acquired by the AT&SF in 1903. During its 35-year history, the Randsburg Railway served a number of local mining operations; it also provided passenger service (Wikipedia, 2023c; Myrick, 1963, :793-798). The Randsburg line did not connect northward to the Nevada and California Railroad.

Gold mining in the Randsburg Mining District continued from 1923 through the early 1930's. There was a hiatus in gold mining from WWII until the Yellow Aster reopened as an open pit operation from 1986 to 1994. Tungsten mining in the Atolia area continued through the Korean War (circa 1953) (Western Mining History, 1923a)

The Randsburg Railway served as a supply link to the Rand Mine, which produced more silver than any mine in California. The Rand mine closed in 1929, as it was no longer profitable (Wikipedia, 2023; Myrick, 1963, :793-798).

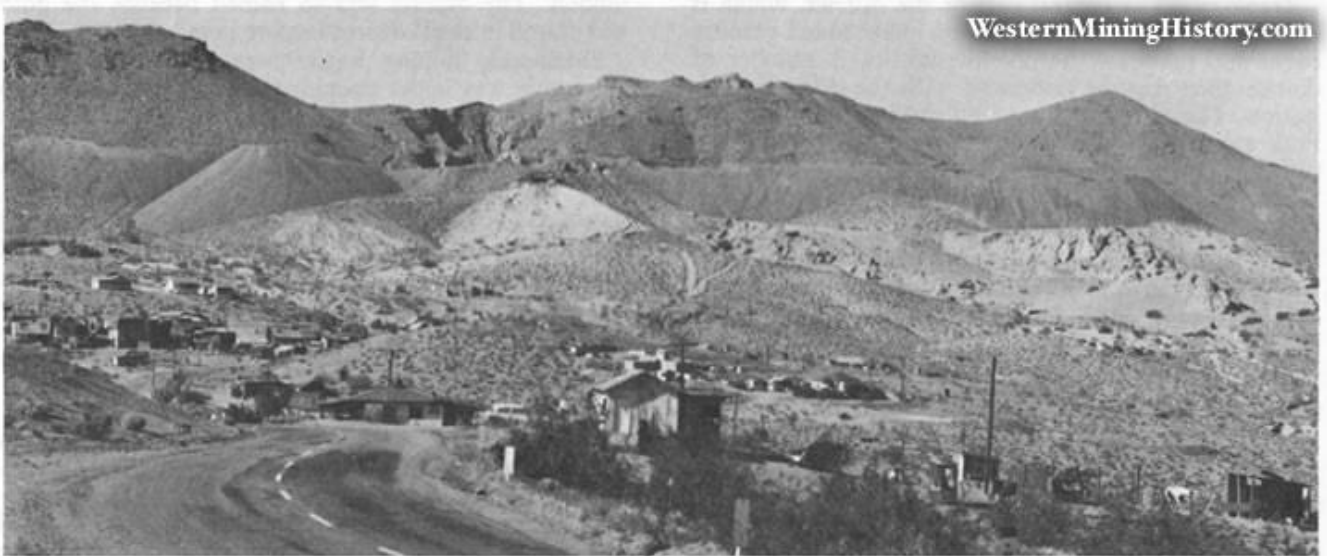


Photo 82. Yellow Aster Mine, Rand District. The Yellow Aster, in Kern County, yielded more than \$12 million in gold. The mine is in the background, the town of Randsburg in the foreground.

Caption: Yellow Aster Mine. From Troxel and Morton, 1962.

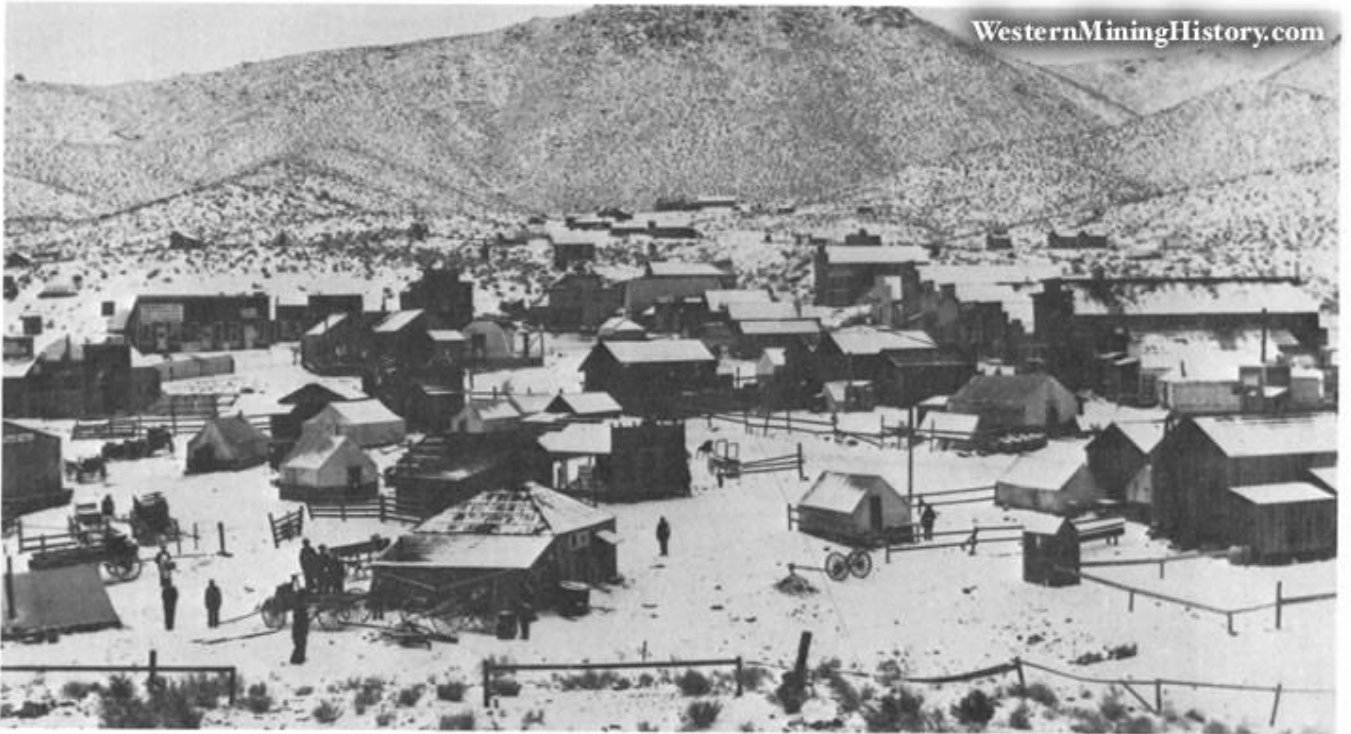


Photo 84. Town of Randsburg, Kern County. This winter view, taken in the early 1900s, looks east.

Caption: Town of Randsburg. From Troxel and Morton, 1962.



Caption: Yellow Aster locomotive. Frominkknife_2000 (7.5 million views +) - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/23155134@N06/6944550439/>, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=57574945> accessed Dec. 22, 2023.



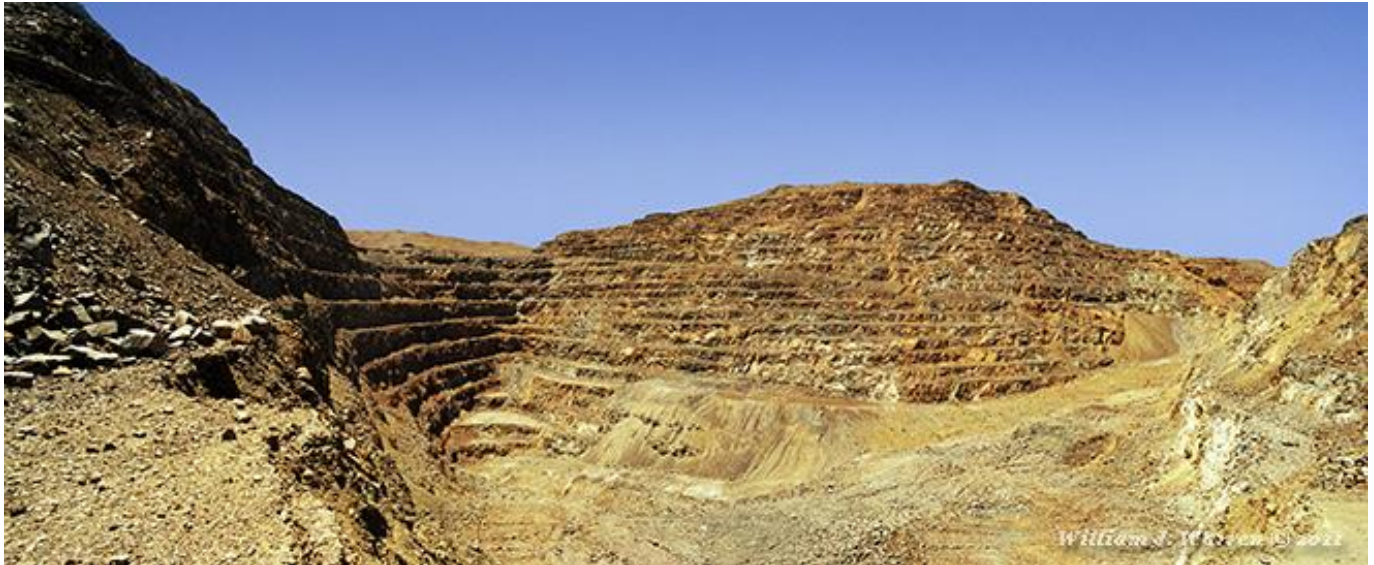
Caption: Yellow Aster mine railroad. Deric English Collection. From secretmines.com accessed Jan. 1, 2024.



Caption: Johannesburg station. From <https://mojavedesert.net/railroads/randsburg-railway/> accessed Jan. 1, 2024.



Caption: A couple of miners in an attempt to extort money from the Randsburg Railway Company staked out a claim and proceeded to dig a shaft, causing an armed standoff with the track laying crew. The contractor laying the track withdrew and when the miners went home for the night the crew was brought back in and the shaft filled and the track laid over it effectively ending the dispute. Photo by C. W. Tucker. From <https://mojavedesert.net/railroads/randsburg-railway/> accessed Jan. 1, 2024.



Caption: Yellow Aster Mine Open pit operation. From the Randsburg Desert Museum collection. <https://randdesertmuseum.com/site/?p=3441> accessed Jan 1, 2024.

The Randsburg Railway ceased operations on December 30, 1933, a victim of the Great Depression and a decline in the mining industry. The rails were removed the following year. Portions of the grade are still visible along U.S. Route 395 between Kramer and Johannesburg (Wikipedia, 2023c; Myrick, 1963, :793-798).

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

Kramer Siding to Atolia

The Randsburg Railway started at the **Kramer** siding of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) near the Kramer Cemetery 2.7 miles west of the present Kramer Junction (Highways 58 and 395). The line went northeast, crossed the location of present day Highway 395 and then paralleled it all the way to **Red Mountain**.

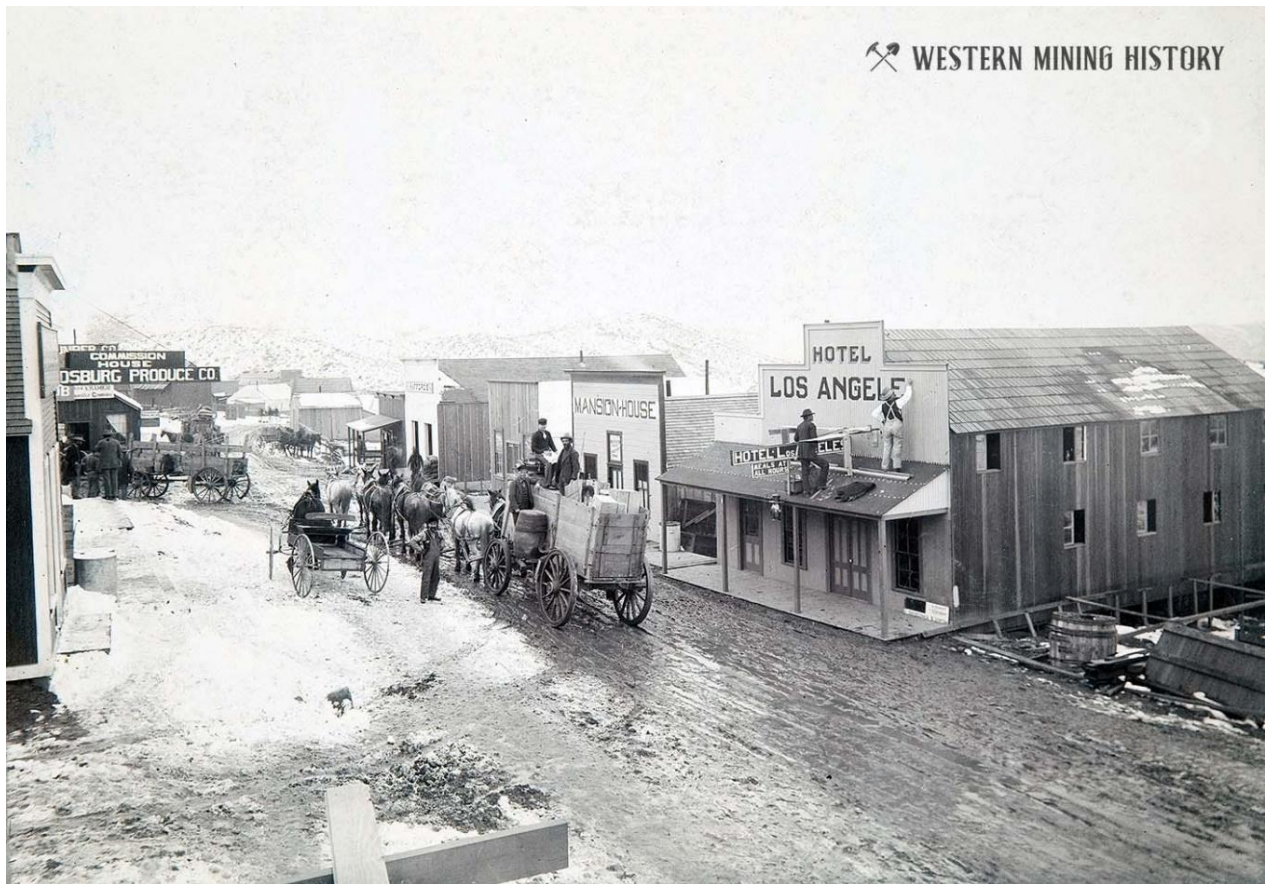
From its crossing with Highway 395 the Randsburg Railroad went north past the Edwards Air Force Base radio facilities to **BM 2718**.

From **BM 2718**, the Randsburg Railroad went north to **Fremont**. From Fremont the line went north-northwest to **Atolia**.

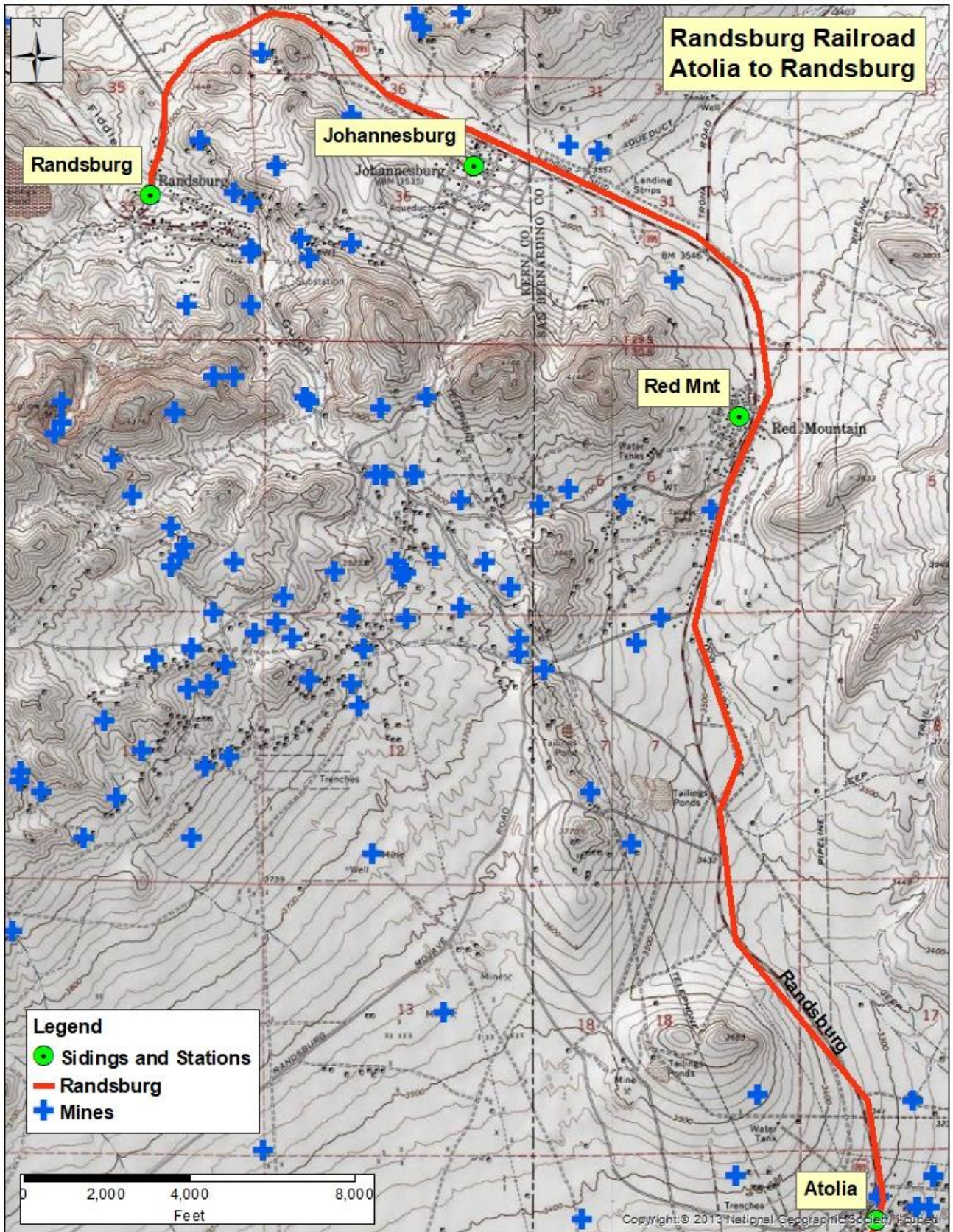
The Atolia district had mostly tungsten mines: Gypsy Group, Gustav Group, Federal Company's Group, Rose Fraction, Toboggan, Scheelite Group, American Gold and Tungsten, Amity Shaft, Mahood Shaft, Flatiron Shaft, Star No. 2, Monitor Shaft; Goldstone Shaft, Platte Shaft, Piute No. 1 Shaft, Acaley Shaft, Big Ben Shaft, Rainstorm, Paradox, Redondo Pete Shaft, Union and Atolia (MRDS, 2011; Myrick, 1963, :793-798). Atolia came to life as a tungsten mining town in 1906. Its peak years were around World War I, when it was the largest tungsten producer in the world (Western Mining History, 2023b; Hulin, 1925, Lemmon and Dorr, 1940, Wright and others, 1953:143; Myrick, 1963:793-798).

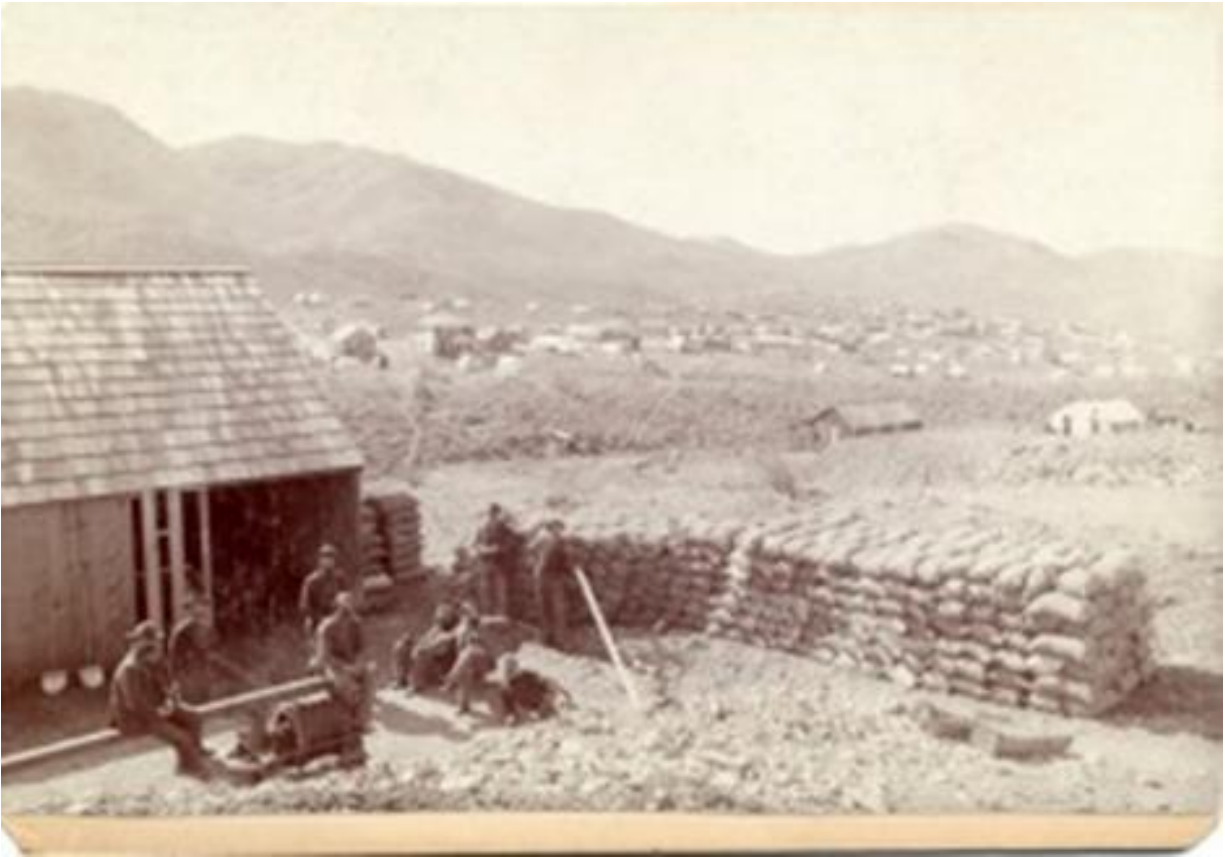
Atolia to Randsburg

From Atolia, the Randsburg railroad went 2 miles north to the Red mountain in the Randsburg District. The town of Red Mountain is between Red Mountain to the east and Government Peak (of the Rand Mountains) to the west. The railroad continued northwest to Johannesburg and Randsburg. The big mine for the Randsburg District was the Yellow Aster which was discovered in 1895. Ore from the Yellow Aster was worked at the Barstow Reduction Works after January, 1898, when the Randsburg Railway became operational. Other large mines in the district were the Big Gold and Butte Mines (Western Mining History, 2023c; Myrick, 1963, :793-798).



Caption: Intersection of Broadway and Butte avenues, Randsburg, 1887. From Western Mining History, 2023.





Caption: Wedge Mine Overlooking Randsburgg with sacked ore redy to be sent to mill. Photo from Deric English collection; <https://randdesertmuseum.com/site/?p=2763> accessed Jan. 14, 2024.



Caption: Randsburg station. From randdesertmuseum.com accessed Jan. 14, 2023

REFERENCES

All references in this report are available at
<http://www.greggwilkerson.com/iv-references.html>