

SPECIAL OLD WEST DAYS EDITION

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Shoshone Museum Association
P.O. Box 38
Shoshone, CA 92384
(760) 852-4524

Fall 2013



Volunteer Linda Greene Smith stops to admire the headframe from the Gerstley Mine in the new mining exhibit at the Shoshone Museum

The Gerstley Mine and Borate Deposit Near Shoshone, CA Stephen P. Mulqueen

The Gerstley Mine is an abandoned underground mine located several miles northeast of Shoshone on the southwestern edge of the Resting Spring Range in southern Amargosa Valley. The borate deposit and mine were named after James M. Gerstley, Sr., who was the chief executive of Borax Consolidated, Ltd, in London at the time of its discovery.

The deposit was discovered in 1922 by John ("Jack") Sheridan and is located within the Resting Spring Mining District. The Pacific Coast Borax Company (PCB) posted mineral claims to the deposit shortly after its discovery. During this period, PCB also operated numerous borate mines in the Ryan Mining District of Death Valley.

After claims were filed with the U. S. Government, it was determined that a large portion of the ore body at the Gerstley was on a school section. (The federal government set aside school sections as a means of generating revenue for the state teachers' retirement fund.)

Clarence M. Rasor (the chief surveyor for PCB) and John Sheridan negotiated a lease of the state parcel, and in 1922 a two-year state mineral prospecting permit was issued. (Rasor Road, located along Interstate 15 near Baker, is named after Rasor.)

(continued on page 2)

OLD WEST DAYS HISTORY TALKS

Mammoth Room - Shoshone Museum
Moderator: George Ross

Friday 1 November

5:00- 7:00 pm - RECEPTION

6:00 - **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

HISTORY OF ASH MEADOWS

-Cyndi Souza

Saturday 2 November

1:00 pm Welcome & Presentations

Matt Kingsley, Inyo Co. Supervisor

TOPICS

MAURY SORRELLS

THE ROOK FAMILY - MINE SAFETY

SPEAKERS

Charles Sorrells

Ethel Messer - George Ross

4:00 pm RECEPTION & DEDICATION
of new Feldkamp Memorial Park

BEAUTIFUL GICLEE PRINTS BY NOTED LOCAL ARTIST on sale at Shoshone Museum

Just in time for the holiday giving season, Mark Hamlin has generously allowed the Shoshone Museum to reproduce some of his spectacular paintings of colorful local landmarks and offer them for sale as a benefit for the museum. Board member Jim Gilliam has spearheaded the project. Thanks Mark and Jim, we appreciate your generosity and hard work.



Tecopa Peak and Wetlands
Giclee Print of Painting by Mark Hamlin



Dorothy (Dort) Frederick has once again produced an exquisite quilt that will be raffled as a benefit for the museum. Tickets are \$1 (or 6 for \$5). So hurry down and get some soon and often. You can't win if you don't purchase tickets!

NEW OUTDOOR EXHIBIT Gerstley Borate Mine Headframe

The centerpiece of our outdoor mining exhibit is one of the original headframes from the Gerstley Mine northeast of Shoshone. The Rio Tinto Company donated the frame to the museum. Other items include the ore and timber carts, rails, and talc pile donated by Pfizer, Inc. (Vaughn "Red" Rassmussen, superintendent). Our skilled crew of Bill Shaw, Gary McMullen, and Robby Haines cemented the frame in place and moved the other items into position. Thanks guys, it looks great and is a real eye-catching attraction!



Headframe crew (left to right)
Bill Shaw, Gary McMullen, and Robby Haines

(continued from page 1) The Gerstley Mine

After it was determined that the deposit held significant reserves of borate ore, a mineral lease was issued to Rasor in May of 1922 and subsequently reassigned to PCB in 1936. This was the first solid mineral lease issued by the state of California.

Lakebeds containing borates at the Gerstley Borate Mine (Gerstley Lakebeds) were deposited in a fault-bounded basin during late Miocene times and subsequently were overlain by a deposit of siliceous pyroclastic rocks informally named the "Shoshone Volcanics" (Haefner, 1976). Further geologic mapping and dating by B.W. Troxel and E. Heydari (1982) and R.E. Drake (1982) placed the age of the "Shoshone Volcanics" at 9.5 million years old. This would place the age of the Gerstley Lakebeds at approximately 10 million years old.

The borate ore body at the Gerstley consists of a significant industrial mineral resource containing a moderate-size occurrence of colemanite and ulexite with interbedded claystone, shale, and minor amounts of sandstone, volcanic tuff, and basalt. A cap rock consisting of older alluvium, basalt, and barren claystone/shale occurs at or just below the surface.

Production of ore from the Gerstley Mine began in 1922 and continued sporadically until 1999. Ore was originally hauled by 'Baby Gauge' rail, pulled by a Milwaukee traction engine, to a siding on the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad (TTRR) and then hauled north to the mill at Death Valley Junction (DVJ). After the 'Baby Gauge' rail at the Gerstley Mine was retired in 1926, ore was hauled by truck to the railroad siding.

After PCB's mines in the Ryan Mining District were shut down in 1927, ore from the Gerstley continued to be transported north to the mill at DVJ. By the early 1930s, a new mine and borax mill at the Kramer Deposit, located east of Mojave in Kern County, were in full operation, and production from the Gerstley was significantly reduced.

The TTRR was shut down in the late 1930s, and ore from the Gerstley was hauled by truck to the Dunn railroad siding, located along the Union Pacific Railroad between Baker and Barstow. From Dunn, ore was shipped to the port at Wilmington, CA, where it was transported to domestic and overseas markets.

In 1956 PCB merged with United States Potash Corp. to form U. S. Borax Company, later named U. S. Borax & Chemical Corp. (USB). Finally in 1967 the present owner, Rio Tinto Minerals, acquired USB.

The Gerstley has been idle since the late 1990s. Most of the surface facilities are now gone, and all of the underground openings have been permanently closed. The real-life stories of employment at the mine can still be told by some of the local inhabitants of the region who earned a living while working underground and on the surface at the Gerstley.

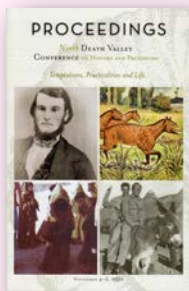
Geologist Stephen P. Mulqueen started working for the American Borate Company at the Billie Mine in Death Valley in 1978. While living in Furnace Creek, Steve developed an interest in the history of the Death Valley and Amargosa Valley regions. Steve has also written a more complete history of the Gerstley Mine, which is for sale at the Shoshone Museum. All proceeds benefit the museum. Thank you, Steve! And thanks also to Fred Johnson for his help with the geology!



Echoes from the Archives

HOLIDAY SHOPPING AT THE SHOSHONE MUSEUM

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NINTH DEATH VALLEY HISTORY CONFERENCE



This newly released volume is loaded with interesting stories about Death Valley and the Amargosa area. Many local authors are among the contributors, including George Ross, Ken Lengner, Linda Greene Smith, Judy Palmer, Susan Sorrells, and Genne Nelson. (\$15)

JEWELRY The museum has a nice selection of affordable local and Native American jewelry for sale. Local artists include our own Ethel Messer.

MINERALS Colorful minerals make wonderful gifts for the aspiring geologist or for someone who enjoys interesting collectables. The selections include copper ore, cut agates, iron pyrite "fool's gold," amethyst, mica, jasper, and Mojave Desert minerals. (\$0.99 to \$6.95)

BOOKS FROM ARCADIA PRESS This interesting series includes such titles as *The Twenty Mule Team of Death Valley* (by Ted Fay), *Area 51* (by Peter Merlin), and *The Railroads of Death Valley* (by Robert Palazzo). At just \$21.99 each, they make very nice gifts for the history buffs on your gift list.

HATS AND SHIRTS Help support the Shoshone Museum by wearing an attractive logo hat and shirt. Available in a variety of colors, a gift of museum attire provides a lasting reminder of a memorable vacation. (\$16.95 - \$17.95)

This is just a small sample of the many interesting books and colorful gift items available at the Shoshone Museum. Sales from the gift shop provide a large part of the annual operating budget and help keep the museum doors open.

WINTER HOURS

Open daily (except Tues) from 9 am to 3 pm. The mission of the Shoshone Museum Association is to tell the unique story of the Amargosa region and to preserve its cultural and natural history

PUBLIC ACCESS COMPUTERS Available at Community Center and Library in Tecopa

Thanks to Inyo County Library Director Nancy Masters, Tecopa Librarian Nancy Good, and Inyo County Tecopa Operations Manager for Health and Human Services Kathy Nixon, we now have 7 new public access computers in the community. WIFI is available 24 hours a day, every day. The computers themselves are available in the library 7am to 3pm Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday and at the community center during open hours (7 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday). Thanks also to Inyo County Information Services Director Brandon Shults and staff who keep our new computers working!



Fire Captain Danny Macbrohn using one of the new public access computers in the Tecopa Library

Nancy Good - newlightfotodesign.com



6th ANNUAL FIREFIGHTER'S BAZAAR

Show your support for our outstanding local fire department and join the fun on Saturday, October 26, at the Tecopa Hot Springs Resort. There will be food, live music, Indian tacos, fire dancing, craft booths, and a silent auction. Raffle tickets for a gorgeous quilt are available at the Tecopa Hot Springs Resort, the Shoshone Museum, and the Shoshone Village office, and from SIFPD auxillary members.

Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

Annual Membership Dues (Please circle one)	Name: _____	Date _____
Individual \$15.	Mailing address: _____	
Family \$25.	_____	
Business/Nonprofit \$50.	_____	
Cougar \$100.	Email _____@_____	
Mammoth \$500.	Returning Member ____ New Member ____	
Building Fund _____	Amount enclosed _____	

We are grateful for your contributions.
This is your museum and we hope to
make you proud to be a member.

Make checks payable to: Shoshone Museum Association.
Mail to: P.O. Box 38, Shoshone, CA 92384
or Pay by phone using your Visa or Master Card! 760-852-4524

Upcoming Events

- Oct 12 Money in the Bank - Shadow Mtn Players
Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
- Oct 26 Firefighter's Bazaar - Tecopa Hot Sprs Resort
- Nov 1-3 **Old West Days Celebration
including History Talks*,
DV High School Reunion,
Arts & Craft Show, and
Dedication of Feldkamp
Memorial Park**
- Nov 3 Dedication of Pupfish Habitat - Shoshone
- Nov 6-10 Death Valley '49ers encampment
- Nov 15-17 Death Valley Natural History Conference

Please call the Shoshone Museum for more information
760 852-4524

(* Shoshone Museum events,)

The Shoshone Museum Association
P.O. Box 38, Shoshone, CA 92384
(760) 852-4524 shoshonemuseum@vcawb.coop