

## MOJAVE MINING DISTRICT

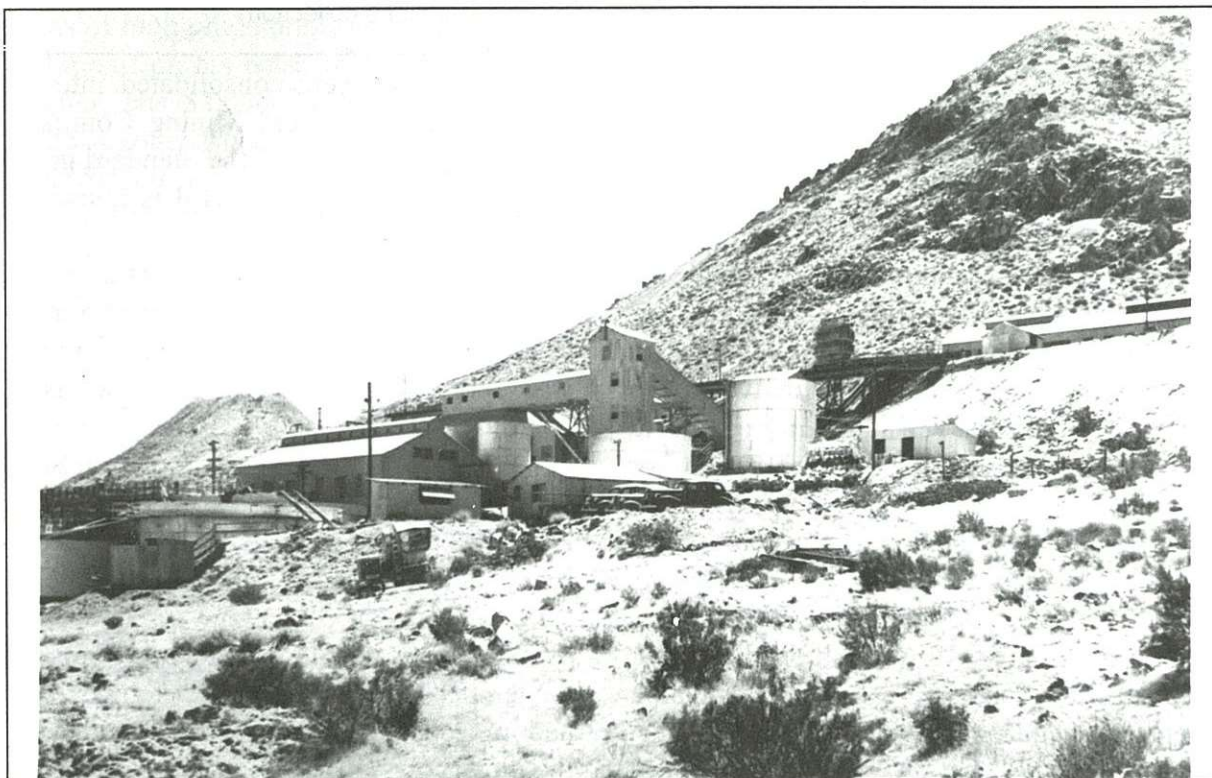
By Deric English

My interest in the Mojave Mining District stems from my grandfather having been a miner at the Golden Queen and Cactus Queen mines. During part of this time, my grandfather's family lived on the northwestern flats of Standard Hill in an area known as "Reefer City". "Reefer City" was a camp where miners' families lived in reefer cars obtained from the nearby railroad company. Similar anecdotes, sometimes humbling, of my grandfather's profession and my father's childhood have roused my curiosity in this often overlooked mining

district.

The town of Mojave lies in the arid plain of the Mojave Desert, near the eastern foothills of the Tehachapi mountains. This Kern County town, in southeastern California, is approximately one hundred and three miles northeast of Los Angeles.

As an early railroad town, Mojave began with its dusty streets, wooden shacks, and numerous saloons. The Southern Pacific Railroad reached Mojave on August 8, 1876, and laid out the townsite the same year. Eventually, the railroad workers and



Golden Queen Mine and Mill, Soledad Mountain, Mojave, California, ca. 1939. (author's collection)



Bird's-eye view of Exposed Treasure Mine and Mill,  
Bower's Hill, Mojave, California, ca. 1903. (author's collection)

townspeople exchanged their shacks and hotel rooms for small homes. Businessmen, Chinese included, offered laundry services, saloons, gambling houses, restaurants and "entertainment".

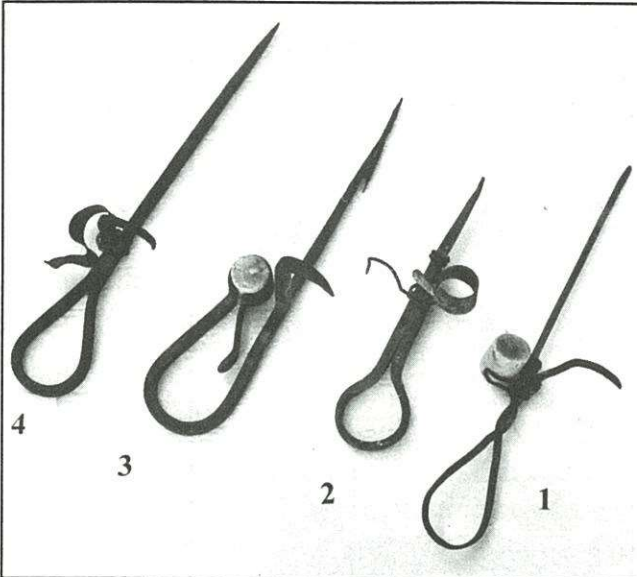
Freighting goods to and from the outlying camps was Mojave's lifeline. Between 1884 and 1889, Twenty Mule Team freighters from Death Valley delivered ore at the rail in Mojave. Later, from 1907 to 1913, Mojave was the supply station for crews working on the Los Angeles aqueduct. It was a bustling business center.

On March 8, 1894, George Bowers found gold on Bowers' Hill, three miles south of Mojave. Bowers shipped two car loads of ore from his Yellow Rover claim, netting him \$1,600. Consequently, a sudden rush led to the location and development of the Desert Queen and Exposed Treasure mines. In 1900, the Yellow Rover and Ex-

posed Treasure were consolidated into the Exposed Treasure Gold Mining Company. These mines were called the Standard group by 1921. Today, Bowers' Hill is known as Standard Hill.

Excitement on Bowers' Hill spilled over to Soledad Mountain, one or two miles south of Bowers' Hill. Soledad Mountain was soon dotted with miners' cabins, a boarding house, bunkhouses and a W.F.M. union hall. Some of the early mines on Soledad Mountain were the Karma (1896), the Echo (1900), and the Queen Esther, starting production in 1904.

Mojave's early mining days were overshadowed by an event that began on September 17, 1933. George Holmes, who had mined since he was sixteen years old in the glory holes of Grass Valley, Randsburg, Tonopah and Jerome, discovered rich float on the north face of Soledad Mountain.



Miner's candlesticks from the Mojave Mining District and found in the Queen Esther Mine (nos.1-3) and the Whitmore Mine (no.4). (#1) Candlestick similar to the Packer patented stick #88, page 52 of Wilson/Bobrink *Miner's Candlestick* book. (#2) Blacksmith miner's candlestick. (#3) IDEAL miner's candlestick from Ludlow-Saylor Wire Company (#4) Blacksmith miner's candlestick.

\$600,000 for his efforts.

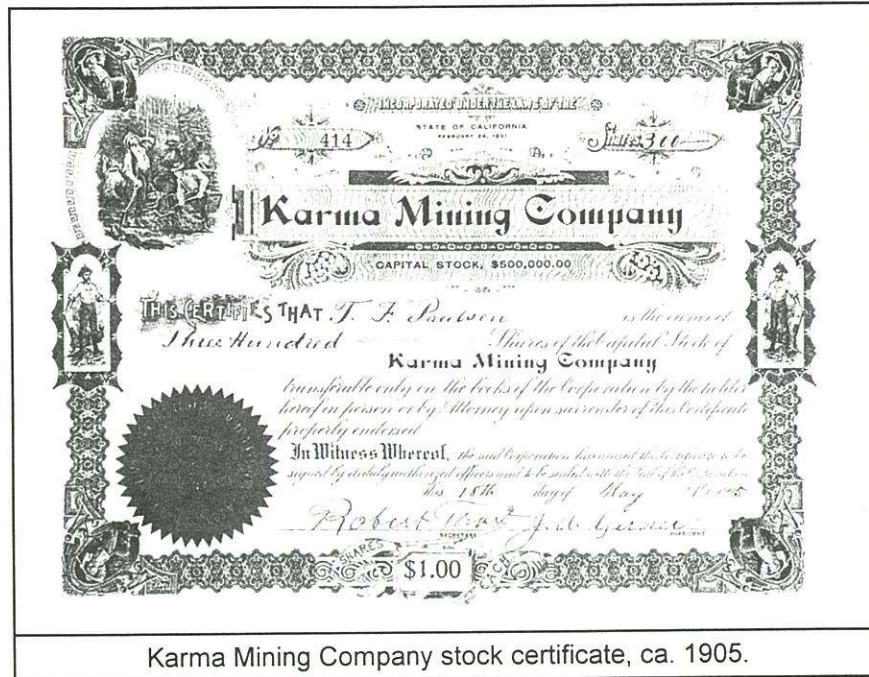
News of Holmes' Silver Queen bonanza set the mining world on fire. On December 4, 1934, the *Los Angeles Times* headlined this story: "**HUGE GOLD STRIKE REPORTED**". On January 11, 1935, George Holmes sold the Silver Queen (later named the Golden Queen) to Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa. This company, founded by Cecil Rhodes, paid Holmes \$3.17 million plus royalties. During the next seven years, Consolidated mined a million tons of ore worth thirteen to fifteen million dollars.

With his pick and shovel, Holmes sank a six-foot shaft and located the vein from which the float had come. He dug thirty sacks of high grade ore, carried them a mile and a half on his back, then shipped it to a smelter. His \$2,000 return enabled him to grade a rough road, acquire a compressor and strip out his first carload. Holmes sent out three hundred carloads of ore during the first eleven months of 1934, earning

Although other mines of the district pale in comparison to the Silver Queen, Mojave had it's share of producers. Among



Bug lamp from the Queen Esther mine. This one is not made from your usual Log Cabin syrup tin, but from a Dixie Queen Plug Cut tobacco tin.



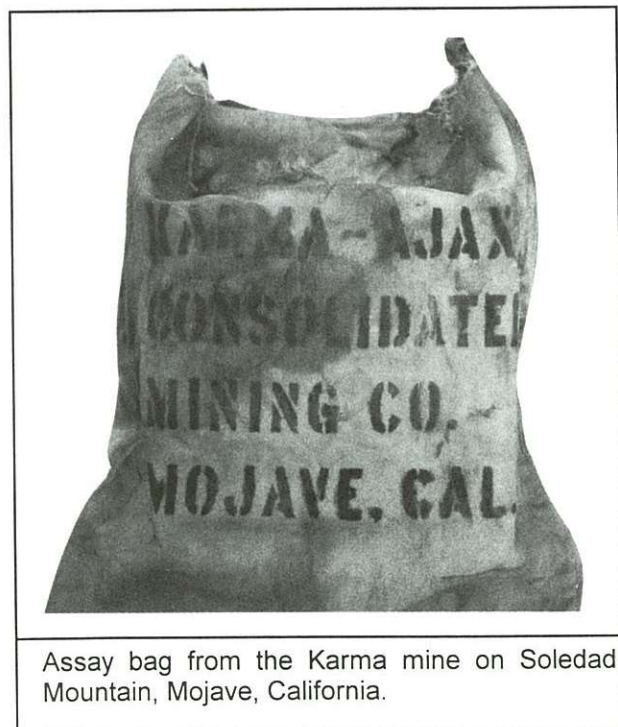
Karma Mining Company stock certificate, ca. 1905.

these were Harvey Mudd's Cactus Queen, Dr. Giannini's Middle Butte, Jess and California governor Goodwin Knight's Elephant-Eagle, Percy Wegmann's Yellow Dog and the Whitmore. All played significant roles in the history and economy of the Mojave Mining District.

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Assay bag from the Karma mine on Soledad Mountain, Mojave, California.