

## THE ORIGINAL SIXTEEN TO ONE MINE

By Mark Mallicoat

Fathers Day weekend this past June, I was lucky enough to be the invited guest of Rick and Kitty Yarborough for the annual shareholders meeting and mine tour of the Sixteen to One Mine in Alleghany, California. During the ride up from the Bay area, I was like a ten-year-old kid getting ready for his first trip to Disneyland. The trip to the mine was quick as Rick and I discussed lamp collecting and I looked forward to the upcoming adventure. I was looking forward to Rick's input, as being a miner himself he would provide valuable insight in the mine.

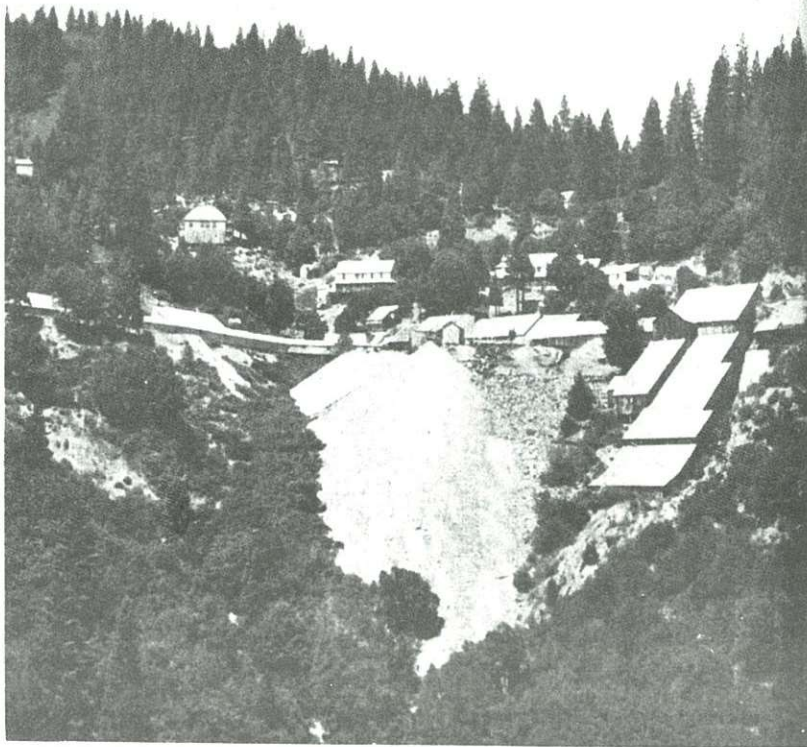
It had been almost thirty years since I had visited this mine and not a lot had changed. A few of the surface buildings had been removed but a sense of history still filled the air and I was ready. The mining company drove us from the mine office area down to the portal located at the eight hundred-foot level where entry was made through the old Twenty-One tunnel, an adit built in 1984. We put on our hard hats and lamps and headed in. Boots are recommended, as the mine is very wet thanks to El Nino and the Spring/Summer runoff. Much of the mine is solid rock with

very little timbering and rock bolts being used, still in other areas timbering looks very much like some of the Comstock mines with double decking square set timbering. Rick was pointing out the various draw points in the mine and the way the early miners took advantage of gravity in getting the ore to the surface. About Eighteen hundred feet and we were at one of the main hoisting stations where the miners brass in. This was really an interesting area to me, as this is a working mine with phones, lights, emergency equipment, supplies and a working hoist. Most of my exploring has been in old abandoned mines and there usually is not much left to give you a sense of what really went on when the mine was operating. From this area a winze runs at approximately forty-five degrees down to the Twenty-two hundred foot level via a four-man skip. It's another half mile or so from the Twenty-two hundred foot level to an area presently being worked in the mine. We continued back into the mountain another quarter mile to an area known as the Ballroom near the intersection of the Tightner shaft. This is one of the older areas of the mine having been

mined in the 1920's and 30's. A narrow trail of sorts runs down following the vein of pure white quartz which is up to fifty-feet thick into this huge cavern where you can see the eleven hundred foot level and the one thousand foot level combine. Really an awesome display of what the early miners had done with their mules and carbide lamps. This area yielded over eighty-nine thousand ounces of gold and employed a good many miners through the depression. Just to the south of this area over twenty-five hundred ounces was

mined in one day from the Thirteen hundred thirty stope for a million dollar day in December 1993. An additional five-thousand ounces were mined nearby in 1995.

The company had miners stationed in the various areas of the mine and they were easy to engage in conversation and happy to answer questions. They really gave me the day to day of what it is like to work underground. A half-hour later we were back out in daylight after having spent two and a half hours underground. It was really enjoyable to see



The Sixteen to One Mine  
Alleghany, California



first hand the operation of a producing mining company. The company has approximately thirty-five full-time miners presently employed and much of their success has been with the use of metal detectors, radar and computers. Mine management estimates that only twenty percent of the gold has been mined and exploration continues. Tours are available and I would invite you to visit their web site at [www.origsix.com](http://www.origsix.com) for lots more information and history.

Lode gold mining began in this area in 1853 in the Rainbow Mine (now owned by the Sixteen to One) and the Irelan Mine. Mining began on the Sixteen to One vein in 1896. Mining in this area is known for its extremely rich pockets of almost pure gold. Two thirds of the gold from the Sixteen to One has come in the form of highgrade, with the balance coming from the mill. Present mill ore is running approximately 2.3 ounces per ton.

The company had the mill up and running for our tour. Modern equipment, but the basic principal is much the same as the mills of one-hundred years ago. What a noisy operation, but I guess it's sort of hard to crush rock in a quiet sort of way. The process is much the same except they use a ball mill instead of the old cams

and stamps. Again gravity plays in the movement of the materials through the mill. The old timers got it right and even with all our modern technology, we have not improved their basic scheme too much.

The present day Sixteen to One Mine is actually several mines that have been combined through litigation and purchase over the years. The Tightner Mine, Twenty-One Mine and the Sixteen to One Mine combine the area, which we explored. The company also owns a number of other mines in the immediate area. Mining is alive in this Northern California area. The country is remote, rugged and beautiful. Fellow lamp collector and miner, Errol Christman runs another mining operation several miles away, as well as others.

If you're going to be in the Northern California area, I would recommend a visit to Alleghany. It is a beautiful tree covered sleepy town at approximately forty-five hundred feet above sea level. There is a great mining museum in the old supply store that is worth a visit and lots to see and do. The town does have a local watering hole and a café named Red Star after one of the mines, but not much else. Get your gas and munchies in Grass Valley. A few miles away are the historic mining

communities of Sierra City and Downieville. Downieville is the county seat of Sierra County and has food and lodging available. It's about a three-hour trip from the San Francisco Bay area.

The original Sixteen to One Mine can be contacted at 530-287-3223 or by writing P.O. Box 1621 in Alleghany, California 95910. The mine office is located right down-

town.

REFERENCES:

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- CONTRIBUTIONS to ECONOMIC GEOLOGY, U.S. Geological Survey, Bulletin 580, 1913.
- CALIFORNIA JOURNAL of MINES & GEOLOGY, Volume 52 #3, July, 1956.
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