

THE GREENWATER STAMPEDE

by Ted Bobrink
12851 Kendall Way
Redlands, California 92373

Ask anyone if they have heard of Death Valley and they will certainly answer yes. How about "Greenwater"? From Death Valley basin the western cliffs of the Black Mountains rise like a wall; and just a few miles southeast of a perch called "Dantes View" there was once located a boom town called Greenwater.

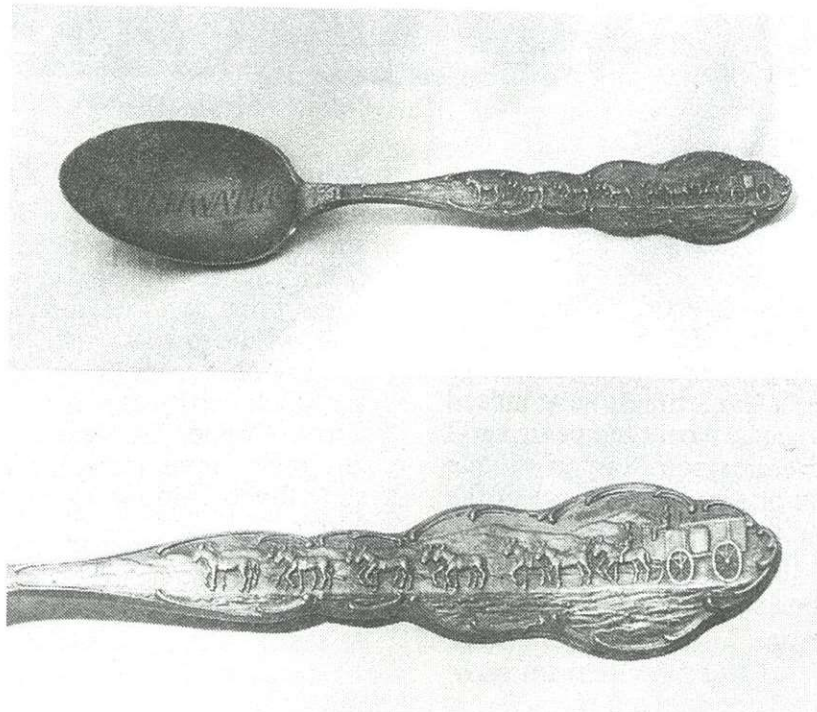
Although it was the promise of gold and silver that brought most men to Death Valley, Greenwater was built on copper. In December of 1904, a prospector named Arthur Kunze found some large boulders of copper ore and staked six claims. He then walked 180 miles across the Death Valley desert to record his claims at the land office in Keller.

After working his copper claims for about a year, Kunze sold out to the famous Charles M. Schwab (1862-1939), who was then president of Bethlehem Steel. Kunze received \$150,000, much of it in company stock. When the word got out that Schwab was in, the stampede was on.

Greenwater called itself "the greatest copper

camp on earth," and promised that within two years its copper production would exceed that of Butte, Montana, by factor of 100! For a short while, the world believed it. The Greenwater population soared from 70 to more than 1,000 within 30 days. In five months, more than 2,500 claims were filed, plastering practically every square foot of the desert in all directions.

Patsy Clark of Seattle financed the largest operation in Greenwater, the Furnace Creek Copper Company, for \$200,000. From 1906 to 1907 another \$4,000,000 was pumped into the Greenwater mines, but in the end not a single one showed a profit. George Graham Rice, one of the sharpest mining stock promoters of the day, called Greenwater the "monumental mining stock swindle of the century." However, the Greenwater Stampede was based, at least in part, on real ore deposits, some of which, no doubt, yielded rich assays. Reputable mining engineers approved some of the ground, and respected, savvy mining tycoons bought and developed





some of the claims. The extensive waste dumps which remain, demonstrate that significant mining and/or exploration took place.

I have visited the Greenwater site myself; today not even so much as a nail is left on the ground. All that remains are the large waste dumps and a few leveled areas where buildings once stood. However, a few artifacts have indeed survived from Greenwater. About ten years ago I bought a copper souvenir spoon from an antique dealer unaware of its origin. In the bowl of the spoon is engraved the name "GREENWATER," on the front handle is a team of twelve mules

pulling an ore wagon, and on the back of the handle is a gold pan with crossed pick and shovel, a loaded prospector's burro, a bullfrog and a cactus. The spoon was not doubt sold to some poor sap in Greenwater during the few years of the town's existence.

The only other Greenwater artifacts I've seen are stock certificates for Patsy Clark's Furnace Creek Copper Company. If anyone knows of any other items traceable to this infamous and short-lived mining town, please write to the editor.