

# MINE EXPLORING AROUND

## SEARCHLIGHT, NEVADA

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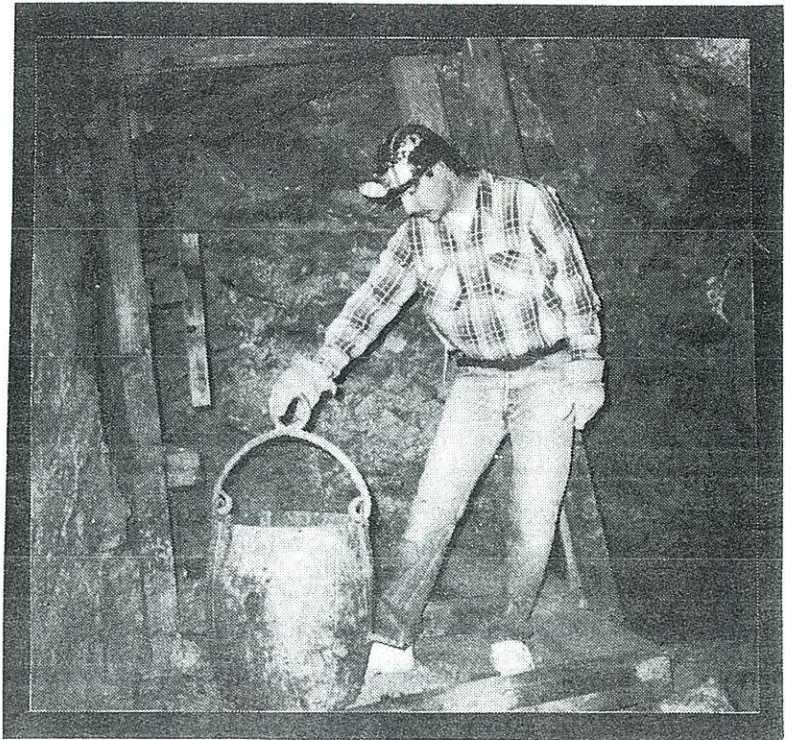
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Over the years I have made several trips to mining camps across the California desert. The town of Searchlight is just across the California border in the state of Nevada.

The Searchlight District was discovered in 1897. Good ore was found on the Searchlight claim--what is now the Duplex mine--in 1898. The principal mines are near the town, but the mining district of Searchlight is usually considered as extending east to the Colorado River, at the Arizona boundary, and north to the Eldorado District.

One of my underground mine exploring buddies, Larry Kuester, and I have made several productive trips to this historical area. Evidence of heavy mining in this region abounds, head frames are everywhere standing guard over their deep and history filled shafts. Most of the very early mines have been worked and reworked many times over the years, but often this is good for the artifact collector. Often times, the old trash left by the miners before was dumped in an unused drift, or used to backfill an old stope. The mine that Larry and I have been exploring has proven this to be true. The range of mining artifacts in this mine date from the late 1890s to 1965.

When you look at the entrance to this mine, and from the size of the waist dump, you would not think much of it. We entered thinking that we would not find much at all. Then, to our surprise, on the first station we found several powder boxes and carbide cans. These were

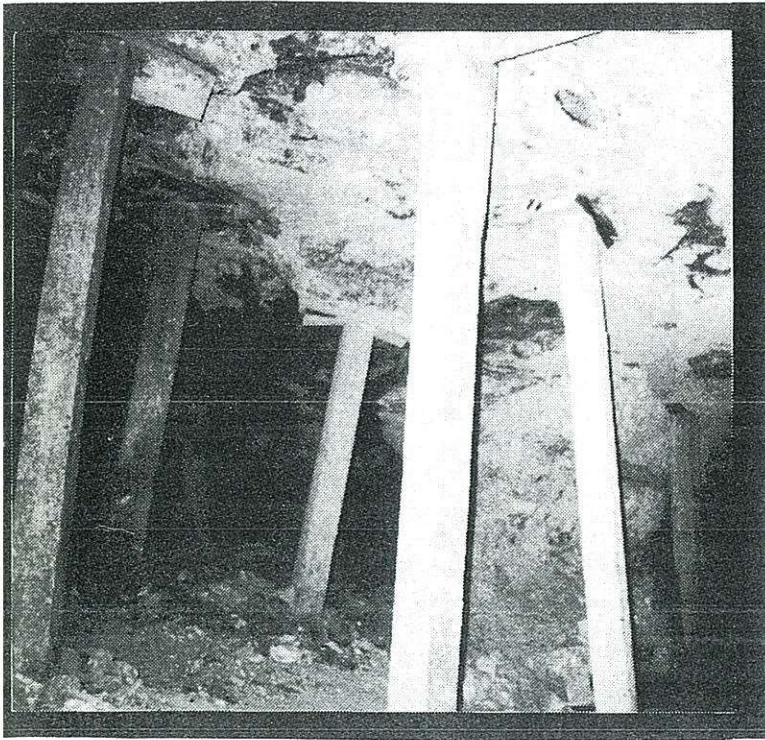


A photo of Larry Kuester with the small pig-tailed bucket that we found at the end of a tunnel.

mostly from a more recent vintage, but it was still fun to find them. As we explored more on this first level, I noticed why newer things were mixed with older artifacts. The 1930s miners mined out all of the support columns that had been left by the earlier miners. These were replaced with pathetic little two by fours to hold up the roof. As you descend down an incline shaft, about every thirty to fifty feet you come across another level. The old bell wire is still mounted on the timbers, but we did not find any mine bells or bell signs. The deeper we went, the newer the boxes and cap tins got. When we reached the bottom level, you could tell it was probably mined in the 1950s. The mining trash left in the 1950s is still interesting, along with the old graffiti the miners left on the walls, either with a candle flame or a carbide lamp. It seemed that on every level some old timer left his mark on the wall with either pictures or jokes. Some of the pictures, like one of a sailing ship, were drawn with the soot of a carbide lamp and were very well done.

MINEING ARTIFACT COLLECTOR





A photograph of a stopped out area showing the two by fours and four by fours that were used by later miners to hold up the roof as they mined out the older support columns. Shown towards the right, behind two four by fours, is one of the original support columns.

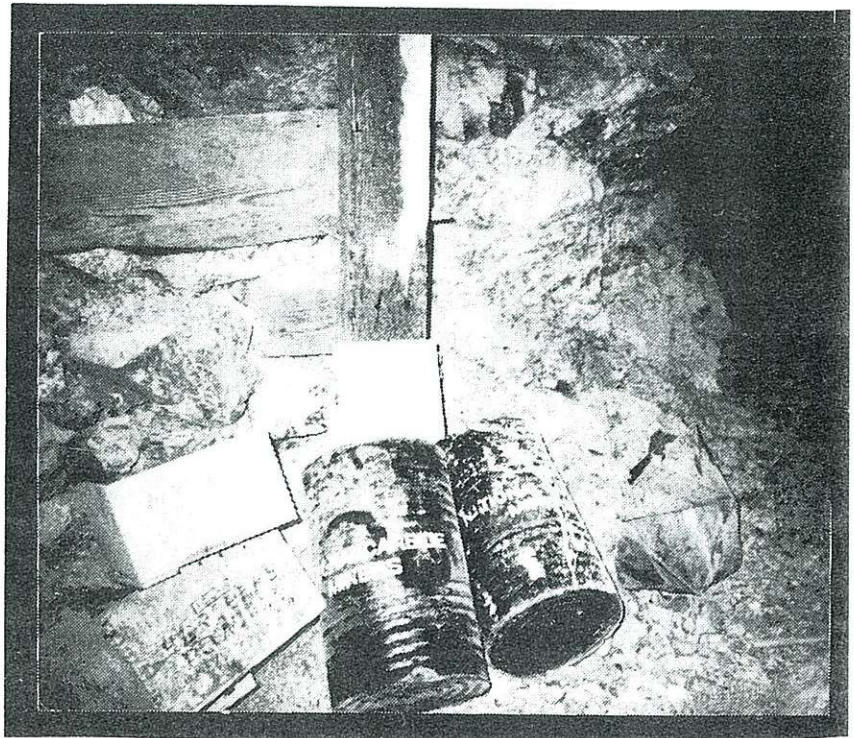
This mine was like a giant maze, sometimes you would have to climb up one level in order to go back down two levels. I would pile up things that I wanted to take up to the surface, and then spend half an hour looking for where I had left them. One time, I could hear Larry but we could not find each other.

Over all, after four trips, I think we have explored most of the major parts of this mine. But, I thought that on our last trip and we then found a new tunnel. At the end of this tunnel, a small windlass was set up and the neatest little pig-tailed ore bucket was hanging just as the miner had left it 75 years ago. You can imagine how much fun Larry and I had dragging this bucket well over a mile and a half up, down, over, and under cave-ins and timbers!

As time goes on, finding mining relics is a much harder task. Most all of the easy mines have been cleaned out, or blasted shut by the land owners. I have done some very dangerous vertical mines. It is hard to describe how it feels to be on a rope, hanging over an 800 foot deep

shaft, praying that you will drop down to a station or level before you reach the end of a three hundred foot rope. The two most dangerous things about vertical mine exploring are: 1) Having to change over from repel to your ascending gear while hanging on the rope, and 2), the danger of falling debris from above. Over the years I have decided that there is nothing in an old mine that is worth risking your life for. The purpose of this article is not to encourage anyone to go out, unprepared, and think that they are going to come back with a load of neat mining artifacts. It takes lots of research, equipment, experience, and luck to be successful. Many a time I have driven out to what should have been a promising area and came back with only box pieces or a cap tin lid.

I am planning a few trips this winter and if your interested in exploring, or think you might want to come along, please give me a call at 909-337-7102.



A photograph down one of the drifts in the mine where we piled up a group mining artifacts to be taken up to the surface. Shown in this pile of artifacts are two Hercules Powder boxes, two 100 pound National Carbide cans, and some other miscellaneous items. These cans are red with white lettering.