Old Dale

Mining District

After the famous California gold rush to the Serra Nevada began to play out in the 1860's, prospectors began to look for the other rich areas. Deserts have always attracted prospectors and miners because the lack of soil and vegetation exposes rocks and minerals to easy view. So when word finally got out about the Virginia Dale mine there was a minor boom and the Dale Mining District was born.

It is rumored that that near Virginia Dale mine was the first camp called Dale. Which survived from 188? – 1890 when the camp became to big (~10 people). Which lead to the first official establishment of Dale (now known as Old Dale) in 1890. The Post authorities established the Dale post office in this location in 1896. This Dale was one of the better locations because it was closer to the water source (~5 miles) at the Dale Dry Lake.

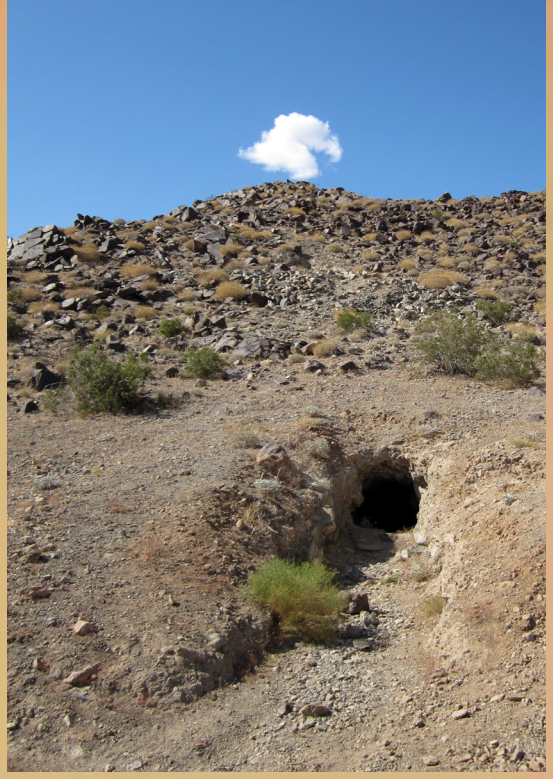
Dale Dry Lake was on record with the state of California as such by 1956. But before this happened the locales called it Burt's Dry Lake. It was named after John Burt who was a miner in the area. In this location he dug a well and built an arrastre to work ore from the hills to the south. No one can tell why it was later named Dale Dry Lake other then the fact that the town Dale used it as a water source.

The Dale mining camps were moved throughout the Dale Mining District to be closer to whatever was the most productive mine at the time. But the next official move of the town Dale was to New Dale.

The Post authorities moved the 'Dale' office in 1902 to New Dale. This move of Dale was do the out puts of the Supply Mine and OK Mine.

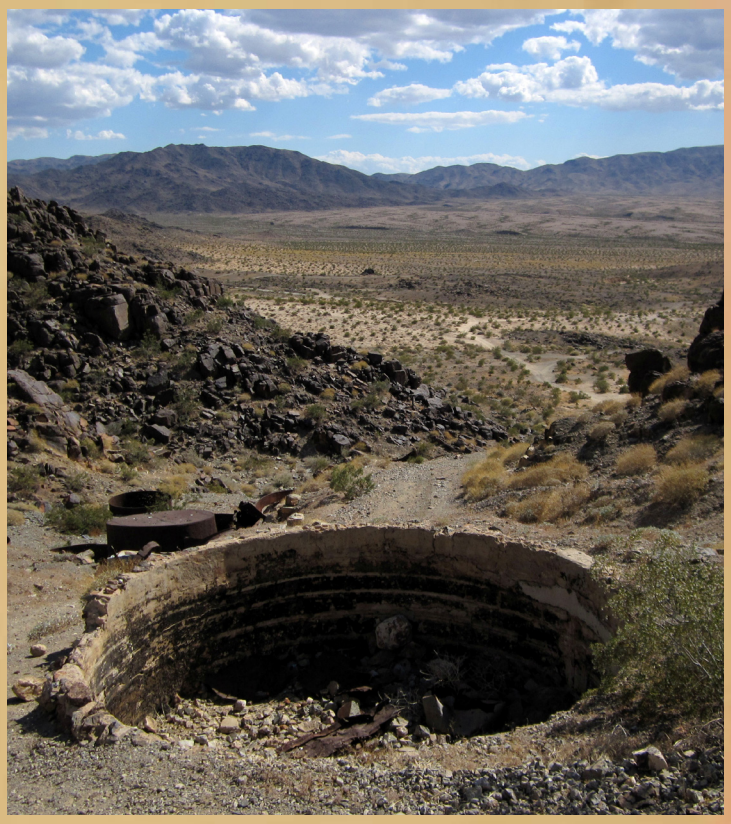
There is not much left at New Dale except rusty tin cans and faint foundations. New Dale was still used even after Dale 3 was established at the Supply Mine around 1903. Dale 3 established in 1903 according to J. Smeaton Chase's book, who had spent the night there in 1915.
There is not much there except concrete foundations and a crumbled rock wall to a building with walls 2 feet thick.

Virginia Dale Mine was the first to open and start producing gold. Workings, typical of that time, included a 250 foot incline shaft with two drifts, a stamp mill on a slab and an assortment of machines and tanks for extracting gold. Poor management, disagreements among owners and the law forced the mine to remain idle most of the time.



A correspondent for a mining journal wrote that, in his opinion, owners of the Dale Mine had developed the wrong method of processing the type of ore found there and, if they had studied the problem a little more, they could have avoided the black eye and failure that was now talk of the district.

The first demise of the Virginia Dale Mine coincided with the development of the Supply Mine, several miles southeast of the original Dale settlement. Town residents, mostly miners moved closer to the new mine and called the site New Dale.



Milling the ore initially gave unsatisfactory results and activities pretty much came to a halt by 1886. Later, during World War I, the Jim Sigifus developed the mine, installed a new mill and set out to sell for $500,000. Jim died suddenly and no deal was ever made.

In 1923, David and Anna Poste came to the area and took out a 10-year lease on the Virginia Dale mine, which had not been worked since 1909. They worked for 18 months upgrading the mine, laying four miles of pipeline, and getting the Chilean mill in working order. During this time they employed 16 men.

After only three days of crushing ore and producing gold bullion, the owners (the Sigafus family) started litigation against the Postes, which stopped all operations. Due to legal costs, the Postes left the area, and went to Death Valley and Tonopah for other mining activities and then to San Diego where their son finished high school. During this time, the Postes also continued to locate and work claims in the Dale district.

The Supply-Nightingale (Supply Mine) complex turned out to be the biggest gold producer in the district. I'm not sure when this group started up but it must have been post 1910 as there is no mention of it in any reports. Workings included two incline shafts and a dry-crushing-direct-cyanide mill. The underground workings (drifts, tunnels and winzes) totaled over 6,000 feet in length. Operations were discontinued in 1915 when water began seeping into the main shaft. The mines were later reopened.

Charles Schwab leased the Supply-Nightingale Mine and renamed it United Greenwater Copper Company. The main shaft was deepened to a depth of over 1200 feet. The mills were expanded and over half a million dollars in gold was recovered. But, as mentioned, problems with water seepage raised milling costs that could not be covered by the current price of gold and the mines were closed.

Schwab and his investors may have actually made some money. If so, they were the only ones in this district that did.

O.K. and Brooklyn mines were original located and mined by John Burt. Burt and F. J. Botsford and worked the mines until 1899. Around this time the town Dale relocated closer to this mine.

Then The Brooklyn Mining Company was formed and was quite active from 1901- 1916. A one-inch pipeline was laid from Dale Lake to the mine for milling operations which used about 2,000 gallons of water for every ton of ore treated. Before the pipeline was laid, water was hauled from Cottonwood Springs.

In 1914 Brooklyn Mine had gasoline power and a 3-stamp mill. On CA record it produced 150,000+, and a total production of 63,000 ounces of lode gold. Brooklyn and Los Angeles Group had a complex of shafts, drifts and tunnels that ranged along a defined quartz vein. Reduction works included three heavy stamps augmented by a rod mill. The ore yielded a little over one troy ounce of gold and one to three troy ounces of silver per ton.

OK Mine, comprised of two 800 foot incline shafts in contact with a quartz monzonite vein two to six feet in width, produced a little less than a troy ounce of gold per ton. The mine featured a ten stamp mill. The O.K. mine also has a legend. Of a Hungarian prospector named Miklos Kovacs. Who stumbled on a rich gold vein somewhere near the portal of it. Unfortunately, he was unable to relocate it! Prospectors still search for the lost vein today.

Golden Egg is on the road to Duplex mine. It was active from 1940-1970. A German immigrant named Carl Schappel worked the gold mine until his death in the 1970's. The adit was several hundred feet and small ore carts were used to carry the ore. Carl Schappel's cabin burned down New Year's Eve, 1962. The Marine Corps, located in 29 Palms, came to his aid by constructing and impressive replacement cabin in just one day. Arsonists burned his cabin in the 1990's some 20 years after his death, when mining had resumed at the Golden Egg.

Mission and Sunrise Mill and Well (depth 500 feet) were built in 1934 shortly after Sunset and Mission mines were opened. The main corrugated iron tank at Mission Mill has been dislodged from it old hilltop perch to exposé its circular concrete base. This is now used as helicopter landing pad.

Gold Miners in the U.S received a boost in 1933 when President Franklin D. Roosevelt raised the price of gold from $21 an ounce to $35 an ounce. Mines that had not been worked for years reopened. Gold mining abruptly stopped when the United States entered World War II and Roosevelt issued Executive Order E-208 closing all mines not essential to the war effort.

After the war, the fixed price of gold at $35 an ounce was not enough to meet the increased cost of labor and to modernize the mining equipment. Mining never really continued as it once was until the mid-1970s when the U.S. Government stopped fixing the price of gold. The price soared, peaking in 1980 at $850 an ounce, then settling between $250 and $400 an ounce. Mines throughout U.S. reopened.

In 1906 President Franklin D. Roosevelt but together the The Antiquities Act. Which resulted in these mining mountains to become a national monument in 1936, but not everyone was happy with the new status.

Although existing mining claims and private property within the monument were not affected by the designation, mining interests in particular tried to get the federal government to rescind the monument. In 1950 their efforts were partially successful: The Old Dale Mining District was removed from the monument, reducing the monument's size to 560,000 acres.

Thank you Miners for your effort in keeping this part of land FREE.