

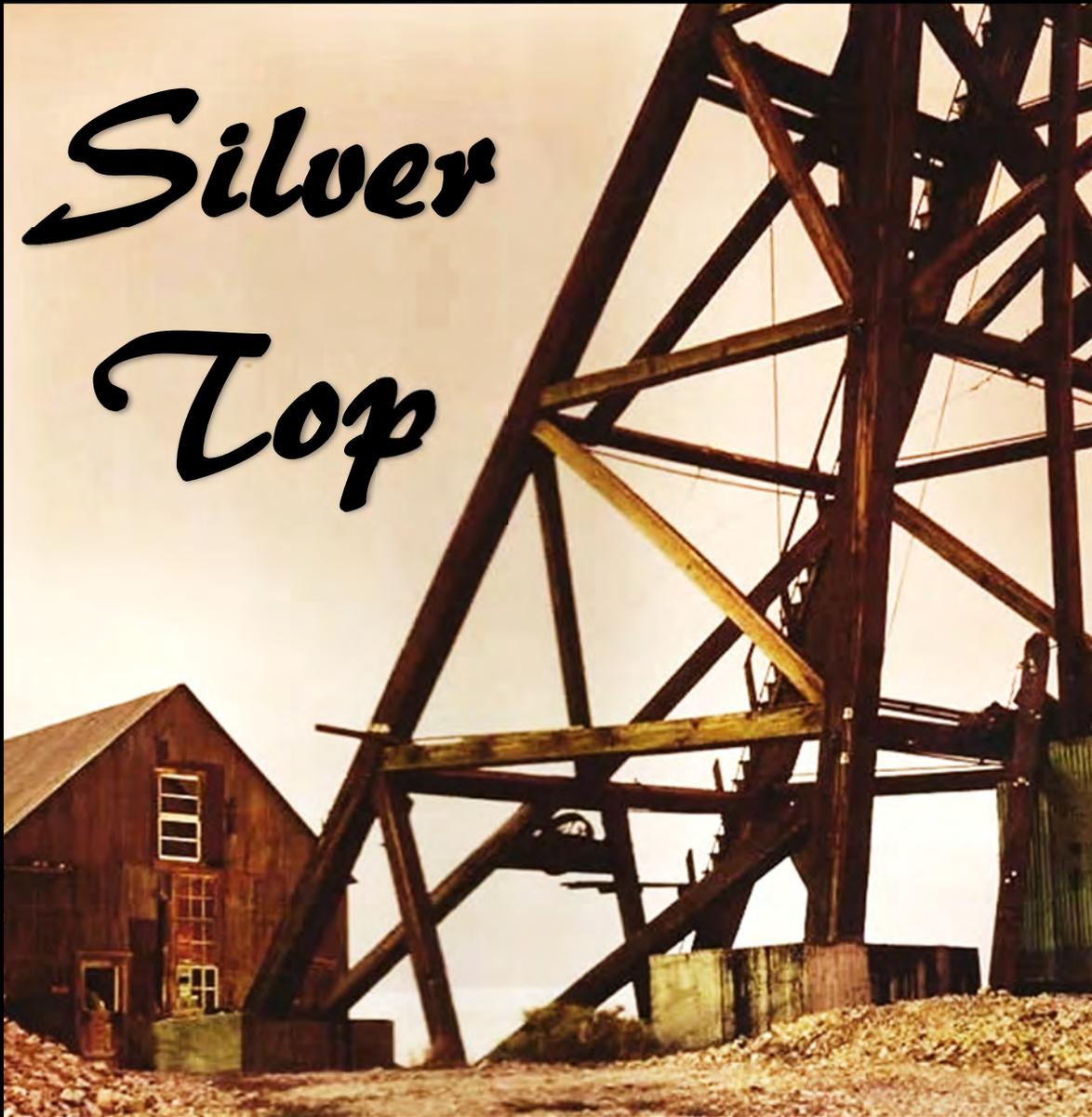
Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation presents

# Tailings

Volume 16-2

Fall 2018

## *Silver Top*



## *Headframe Restoration*

# SAVING TONOPAH'S HISTORIC SILVER TOP HEADFRAME



*For many years, this iconic headframe has stood as a silent watch guard over the Town of Tonopah. Many people know it by its distinguished lean, but do not realize it is in danger of collapsing. Please help the Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation rescue this historic mining headframe, one of the original mining claims located by Jim & Belle Butler in 1900.*

# HEADFRAME RESTORATION FUNDRAISING

The Silver Top mine is one of the original mining claims located by Jim & Belle Butler in 1900. Improvements were made by the Tonopah Mining Company starting in 1906 when the small headframe was torn down and a 65-foot headframe was erected in its place. A hundred plus years later, it is in desperate need of attention.

Originally, long timbers placed on the ground was all that supported the four heavy wood columns. Over time, these timbers disintegrated, and the Silver Top's columns started sinking unevenly into the ground. Efforts were made to stabilize the Silver Top, but proved ineffective, and guy-wires are currently holding the headframe in place. In 2016, an engineering survey was completed. The report stated that, "the Silver Top Head Frame appears to be in danger of total collapse."

For this project, after creating a level workspace near the shaft, the headframe will be dismantled and set aside using a large crane. Then, a concrete foundation will be constructed. Once this has been accomplished, the headframe will be put back in place with all four of its columns resting on

the foundation and mounted to weld plates, and, ideally restoring the collar in a historically consistent fashion, that will allow visitors to look safely down the shaft's 1,100-foot depth.

This spring, the Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation received notification of a grant award from the State of Nevada, Commission for Cultural Centers and Historic Preservation in the amount of \$100,000. THMPF will provide the matching funds along with over \$20,000 of in-kind service. The matching funds have come from three years of fundraising activities for this project, however these funds are not enough to complete the project. An additional \$100,000+ is still needed!

The Silver Top is a unique part of the Tonopah Mining Park experience and the only historic mine in Nevada that has all its major components still in existence: hoist house, headframe, shaft, orehouse (often referred to as the grizzly), and railbed of the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad. Losing the headframe would be a devastating loss to Nevada's mining history, and so we are looking to the public to assist us in raising the needed funds to save the Silver Top.



*The Silver Top mine, circa 1912. Notice the miner pushing the small ore car on the left side of the photo. This upper level was connected to the headframe and extended to each of the surrounding mine dumps.*

# THE CHARCOAL INDUSTRY

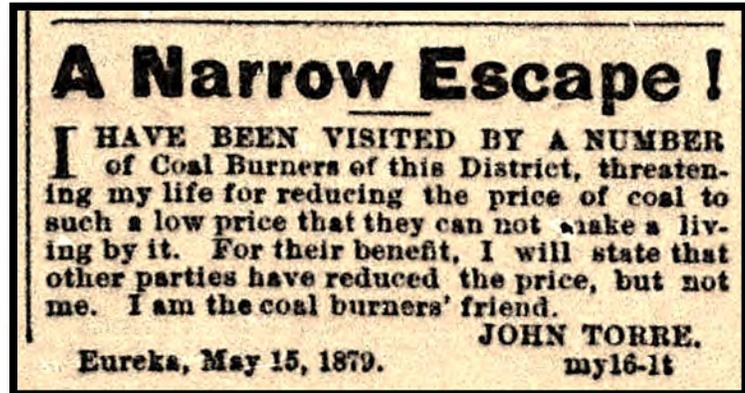
## *in Nevada and Eastern California, Part 2*

by Stanley W. Paher

(Continued from Tailings, Spring 2018, Volume 16-1)

### Trouble at Eureka, Nevada in 1879

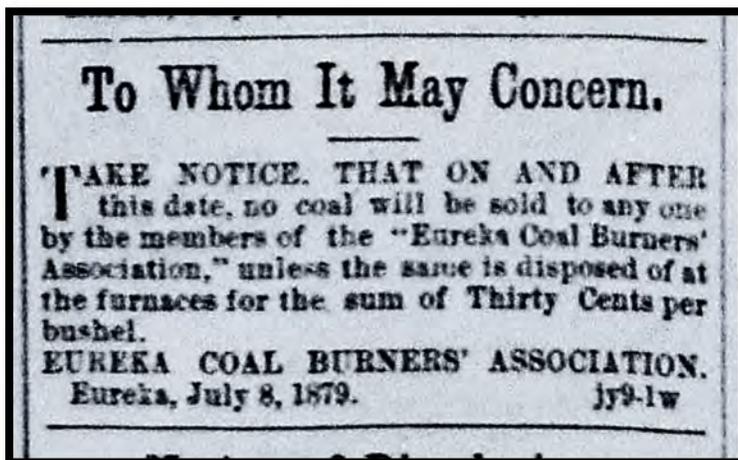
Supplying fuel to Eureka smelters was big business between 1870 and 1880, but by the summer of 1879 trouble developed among the Carbonari, the teamsters, and the smelter owners. The situation came to a head when the Carbonari formed the Eureka Coal Burners' Association at a local Italian saloon where the burners prepared a list of demands, especially an increase in the price paid for charcoal from 25 cents to 30 cents per bushel. On July 7, charcoal burners assembled at the Eureka Opera House, the only place in the camp large enough to accommodate all of them.



*Eureka Daily Sentinel, May 16, 1879*

Beginning July 8, a "take notice" advertisement was published in the local Eureka Sentinel for ten days asserting the new demand, an emphatic statement. Further, the Carbonari demanded that they be paid in cash and asked for full disclosure from the teamster's receipts showing how many bushels have been sold. The Association which had grown to 1,196 members threatened to cut off supplies of charcoal unless their demands were met.

On the morning of August 9, six coal burners entered the home of teamster, George Lamoreux, dragged him from his bed, and threatened to beat him if he continued to haul charcoal. Later that day he drove to a



*Eureka Daily Sentinel, July 13, 1879*

charcoal ranch to pick up a load. But when confronted by the Carbonari, he returned to Eureka with empty wagons. About that same time, Robert Brown was prevented from loading charcoal and he, like Lamoreux, took the matter up with the local sheriff.

On August 11, a local Eureka news report stated that, "two thousand persons, banded together, and with arms in their possession, defied civil authorities and refused to have any of their number arrested. They now hold forcible possession of many coal pits in this county. By force they prevented owners of charcoal from hauling it to their furnaces, and they threaten to destroy other property and burn the mining camp. Marshall Rich, who had brought along several wagons, told the owners [the teamsters] of the charcoal to go ahead and begin loading, but the Italians prevented them from doing so. Arrests have been resisted by the rioters, who are well armed, and organized under the command of desperate leaders."

The local press reported allegations of misconduct on both sides. When Eureka's smelter operators united to slash the price, they would pay for a bushel of charcoal to 27 cents instead of the current 30 cents, on the grounds that the declining quality of ore would no longer allow them to pay the higher price, trouble began. The burners' Association rejected the reduction by refusing to permit further charcoal deliveries to the smelters and, on August 18, forcibly took possession of the town of Eureka. In response, Nevada Governor Kinkead quickly called into active service the state militia and ordered them to the stricken camp.

**MOB LAW AT EUREKA.**  
**THE COAL BURNERS DEFY THE LAW.**  
**THEY THREATEN TO BURN THE TOWN.**  
**ALL ABOUT TWO AND A HALF CENTS PER BUSHEL FOR CHARCOAL.**

Recently the mine managers at Eureka decided that thirty cents per bushel for charcoal was too much, and they refused to pay more than 27½ cents in the future. To this reduction the Charcoal Burners' Association, numbering several thousand men, objected. They declared that the original price must be maintained, and refused to permit any of the coal burners who do not belong to the Union to supply the mines with coal. Several days ago affairs were assuming a very serious aspect and it was generally believed that trouble would ensue, which culminated yesterday. The coal men, the majority of whom are un-naturalized Italians, took possession of the town of Eureka, and threaten to do great damage if their terms are not acceded to. About 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon His Excellency Governor Kinkead received the following telegram:

EUREKA, NEV., August 11, 1879

To HIS EXCELLENCY GOVERNOR KINKEAD: We respectfully represent to your Excellency that a large class of the residents of Eureka County, Nevada, known as Coal Burners' Association, numbering some two thousand persons, are now banded together, and with arms in their possession, are defying the civil authorities and refusing to allow any of their number to be arrested. They now hold forcible possession of many coal pits in this county. By force have prevented and are now preventing the owners of charcoal from hauling it to the furnaces, and they threaten to destroy other property and burn this town. Warrants have been issued for arrests of parties and arrests have been resisted by the rioters, who are well armed and organized under command of desperate leaders. We therefore respectfully ask your Excellency to order the Militia of the Second Brigade into active service to quell such insurrection, and we ask for immediate action herein.

Signed: B. J. TURNER,  
Chairman Board of County Commissioners.  
MATHEW KYLE,  
Sheriff of Eureka County,

To which His Excellency promptly replied as follows:

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,  
CARSON CITY, NEVADA,  
August 11, 1879.

BRIGADIER GENERAL GEO. M. SABIN, COMMANDER SECOND BRIGADE N. S. M., EUREKA, NEVADA.—Sir: The Sheriff and Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners of Eureka County have telegraphed me that the county authorities are unable to suppress a riot in Eureka County and to enforce the laws. If their statement is warranted by the facts of the case you will call into active service all force of your Brigade necessary to aid the law officers in the proper execution of the laws and for the protection of citizens and their property. Report to me promptly your action and the condition of affairs.

JOHN H. KINKEAD,  
Governor and Commander in Chief.

From latter advices it is learned that General Sabin the Commander of the Second Brigade, is at San Francisco, and will not be at Eureka until to-morrow. In his absence Major Buttlar, his Adjutant General, has taken Command of the troops there, and will at once place them in active service.

*Carson City Morning Appeal, August 12, 1879*



*This charcoal kiln (oven) is located in the Diamond Mountains, north of Eureka, Nevada.*

The Fish Creek War was on and the ensuing strife was principally over the price of charcoal. When the well-armed militia arrived, a lull in the fighting ensued until August 18 when a 9-man posse headed by Deputy Sheriff Simpson, attacked a charcoal camp on Fish Creek, 30 miles south of Eureka, and in a one-sided battle killed five of the coal burners, wounded six others and took several prisoners. None of the lawmen suffered damage except to reputations, the posse being criticized for the tactics employed.

The shock of this event and the tone of substantial legal proceedings overwhelmed the Carbonari. Though some resistance continued for a few weeks here and there, most resumed making charcoal. In the end, charcoal prices dropped to 22 cents a bushel. The local press estimated the cost of the war to the county was between \$10,000 to \$30,000.

## **The Charcoal Industry, 1870-1878**

The practice of dealing in charcoal by the bushel unit prevailed throughout the mining West. A bushel of charcoal had a bulk of 1.59 cubic feet, and weighed from 16 to 20 pounds, depending on the species of wood used and quality of the finished product. One cord of green wood four feet high, four feet wide and eight feet long—yielded by pit-burning about 25 bushels of charcoal.

The price of coal was contingent upon several factors, especially the hauling distance between kiln and smelter, and that most basic of all criteria, supply and demand. Smelter owners at Oreana, Nevada, in 1867 had to shell out 65 cents a bushel for charcoal, though after the next year when the Central Pacific began



*These charcoal kilns are located in the Tybo area, below Kiln Canyon.*

running nearby, profiteering charcoal contractors had to slash their demand to 25 cents a bushel. Even then charcoal represented the smelter's largest single item of expense.

Lead-silver smelters at Eureka for example, ordinarily required about 30 bushels of charcoal to reduce a ton of ore. The Eureka Consolidated works consumed charcoal at the average daily rate of 4,600 bushels. Richmond Consolidated, also of Eureka, was using 4600 bushels daily, and during the 22- month period from March 1873 to January 1875, expended for charcoal the staggering sum of \$880,000. At their peak of production, the dozen furnaces at Eureka were purchasing \$600,000 worth of charcoal monthly.

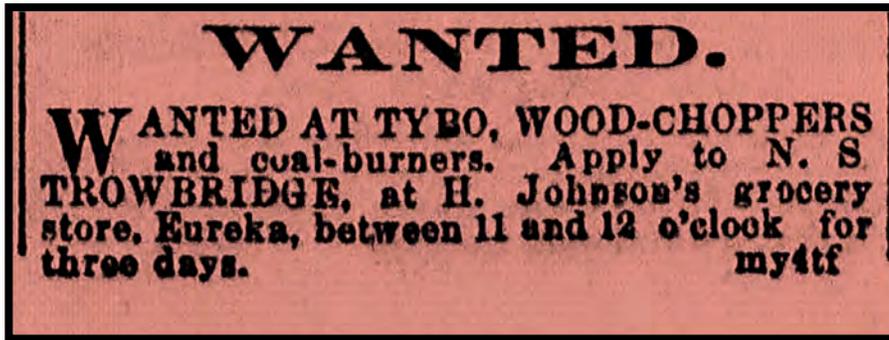
Evidence of the rapidity with which Nevada's foothills were denuded was recorded by Rossiter Raymond in 1872: "The wood 10 miles around Eureka has been used up in a little over a year – thus the question of fuel becomes, at once, a very important one."

A Nevada legislature report issued in 1875 stated: "The timber in the vicinity of Eureka is fast disappearing. The coal burners have stripped the hills and mountains within a radius of 25 miles . . . Charcoal must be obtained from some other source very soon or the furnaces must be stopped . . . Should the charcoal rates advance within the next month or two, a crisis is imminent."

The situation in some places became so drastic woodcutters were seizing almost any vegetation available. The growing fuel shortage materials was responsible in large measure, for a transition that began creeping into the charcoal industry about 1880 to common coal.

they calculate on their fuel costing them about half of the usual rates. A force of twenty men was employed about three months in building the kilns.”

If the kilns were superior to the pit-method of burning, it was a fortuitous circumstance, for the situation in many parts of the mining West became drastic. A squeeze play had developed, with the mills and smelters and the middle. As surface ores were depleted and the mines deepened, production became costlier; and as exhaustion of timber resources forced upon the charcoal contactors an ever-lengthening haul, the price demanded for charcoal crept slowly upward.

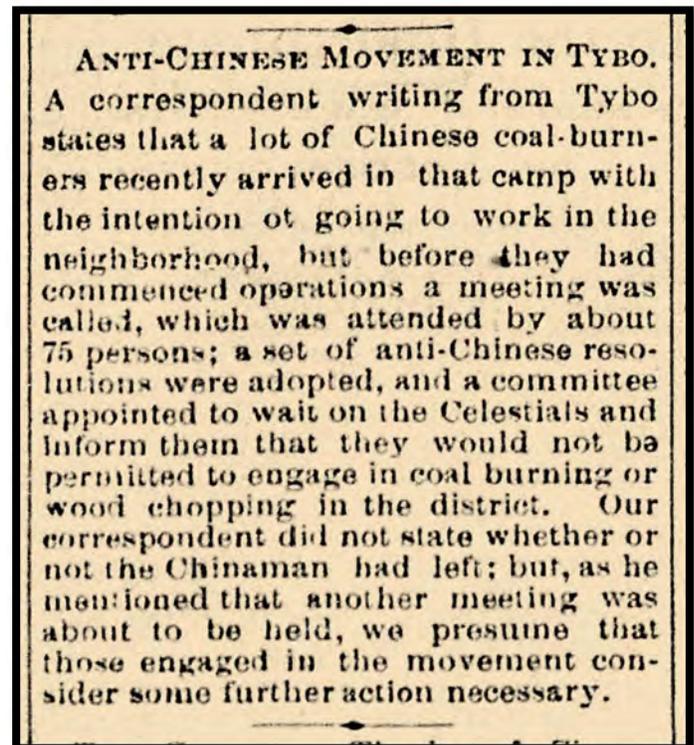


*Eureka Daily Sentinel, May 5, 1876*

## Tybo, Nevada

On September 2, 1877 the *Eureka Sentinel* reported that “Henry Allen, the well-known contractor of Eureka, has just finished a work of considerable magnitude at Hot Creek. Last summer he was employed by Tybo Consolidated Co. to build 15 kilns in which the company proposed to burn the charcoal necessary to supply their furnaces at Tybo. He finished the work about a week ago, and some idea of its magnitude may be gathered from the fact that 600,000 bricks were used in building the kilns.

“They are oval in shape, having a diameter of 25 feet. Each one has a capacity of 1400 bushels, turning out that quantity of coal to each charge, the operation consuming five days. A great economy of time results from these kilns, instead of burning in the old-fashioned way and as the company owns a vast quantity of wood in the immediate vicinity,



*Eureka Daily Sentinel, April 30, 1876*

Another charcoal war, marked by less bloodshed than the one experienced at Eureka, followed the importation of Chinese coolie [indentured laborers] woodcutters to a charcoal camp near Tybo. Because they would work more cheaply, Chinese laborers in most Great Basin mining camps were most unwelcome. And so, when charcoal burners under contract to supply several million bushels of fuel to Tybo's Two-G Mining Co. imported a gang of "coolies" as laborers, white workmen united in protest.

As recreated by Nell Murbarger, "Assembling on the side of streets and in saloons, small knots of muttering whites congregated in a roaring mob and stormed the sleeping charcoal camp. To the tune of cracking bull whips, pistol shots and drunken curses, they sent the Orientals fleeing for their lives. Morning found the charcoal contractors scouting the nearby hills for their scattered woodcutters. Driven back to the kilns, virtually at gunpoint, the still-jittery Celestials were ordered to resume work, and throughout that day discharged their duties under the combined threat and protection of loaded Winchesters.

"Nightfall brought another conclave of miners bristling with guns and indignation. In deference to the armed guards still vigilantly patrolling the charcoal camp and its environs the original plan to 'clean out the Chinks' lost some of its fire, and the contractors were given 24 hours in which to get rid of the Chinamen."

When the end of this grace period found them still cutting wood under protection of the rifle-armed guards,

#### **ANTI-CHINESE MOVEMENT AT TYBO.**

##### **Mongolian Coal Burners Driven From the District.**

A few days ago we published a letter from a correspondent in Tybo, giving a brief account of the proceedings of a public meeting held there to take action in regard to a body of Chinamen, who had come into the district for the purpose of chopping wood, burning coal, etc. Messrs. Everett & Donnell arrived here last evening from Tybo with the Chinamen referred to, and we have been furnished with the following additional particulars concerning the affair. It appears that the Tybo Consolidated Company let a number of contracts to burn coal, with the understanding that that labor should be performed by white men. The contracting parties, however, came to Eureka and engaged a lot of Chinamen, whom they took to Tybo to be employed as wood choppers and coal burners upon the contracts. Upon their arrival the Workingmen's Protective Union of Tybo held a meeting, at which it was resolved that they would permit no Chinese labor in the camp. A committee of two was appointed to wait on the Mongolians and notify them to leave the town immediately, which order was promptly obeyed. They rolled up their blankets and were attended by an escort of seventy men until they had arrived a mile from the camp, when they were given money sufficient to pay their expenses to Eureka. When they arrived at Hot Creek, 12 miles from Tybo, a body of men got after them with shotguns and Henry rifles and drove them back to a ranch about half way between the two places. The Workingmen's Union, hearing of this, raised a subscription of \$165 to have them hauled back to Eureka. Conveyances were procured and the Celestials, as we before stated, arrived in town last evening. These are the circumstances of the case, as related to us. The working men of Tybo are evidently determined that they will tolerate no Chinese labor competition in that district, and while we can never justify lawless acts of any description we can not but admit that the members of the Tybo Union in providing the poor devils means to return to the place from which they came displayed more magnanimity than is usually shown in such cases. The whole affair is another argument in favor of the necessity of national action upon the Chinese question and a verification of the facts set forth in the leading editorial article in to-day's SENTINEL.

*Eureka Daily Sentinel, May 6, 1876*

another ultimatum was issued. Either the Chinese leave camp before another nightfall or both they and their employers would be ridden out of town. White laborers by this time were so thoroughly aroused that wholesale bloodshed would have been inevitable had not the Chinese offered to leave peaceably in exchange for stage fare for the 90-mile ride to Eureka, and Tybo's Asiatic League shelled out passage money.

Meanwhile the charcoal industry was eating itself out of the land. Smelters at Eureka were consuming 1.2 million bushels of charcoal annually, and the tree crop from over 5000 acres of juniper-pinyon wood land and the hills were denuded of wood in a 35-mile radius. Like a pestilence, leaving behind it, tens of thousands of acres stripped of timber, the charcoal industry also left in its wake a black record of bloodshed, racial strife and corruption. Area Shoshone also were rendered hostile and threatened by starvation through ruthless destruction of the nut-pine groves which for untold centuries had provided their mainstay of life.

## Wildrose Canyon

In the spring of 1877 ten conical kilns were built at the head of Wildrose Canyon in the Panamint Range to fuel the two smelters of the Modoc Consolidated Mining Co. on the east flank of the Argus Range, about 25 miles west. Twenty-five feet high and 30 feet in diameter, these kilns held about 42 cords of wood each. Under supervision of saloon keeper James Honan, they produced charcoal during spring and summer of 1877. Depletion of the luxuriant growth of nut pine, cedar and

juniper soon put an end to Wildrose Canyon charcoal business (*Mining and Scientific Press*, September 22, 1877).

## Conclusion

After the early 1880s, whether the smelter operators liked it or not, the end was near for the charcoal industry. The ready answer was coke, and with retooling, experimentation and increased skill in both coking and smelting, the transition from charcoal to coke was gradually but grudgingly made.

As each smelter made the conversion, erstwhile woodchoppers and charcoal burners drifted to other jobs, especially to the coal fields. In the words of Murbarger, "With the last charge of wood laid in the great stone kilns, and the last fire grown cold, the desert wind and brush moved in to erase the black scars of the charcoal camps, and Nature re-clothed the land laid waste."

A visit to charcoal kilns today shows that around them are scattered fragments of imperishable jet-black charcoal fragments and waste. The visitor will marvel how without mortar or supporting steel reinforcing, the picturesque kilns have been standing solidly for a century and a half with no maintenance or repairs. They have served as storm shelters by animals and even temporary quarters for blizzard-threatened desert wayfarers.

But the real worth of the long-abandoned ovens is their historical function to remind present-day mining history buffs of a long-vanished industry of charcoal making, a product without which the West's silver-lead mines could not have been exploited.



The Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation is a Nevada 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Nevada's mining history, heritage, and the life surrounding it at the Tonopah Historic Mining Park. Contributions may be tax deductible pursuant to the provisions of section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. § 170(c). All contributions made to the Tonopah Historic Mining Park Foundation become its sole property and will be used as determined by the Board of Trustees.

For more information please visit our website at:

[www.tonpahhistoricminingpark.com](http://www.tonpahhistoricminingpark.com)

A big thank you to our partners, the Town of Tonopah staff members:

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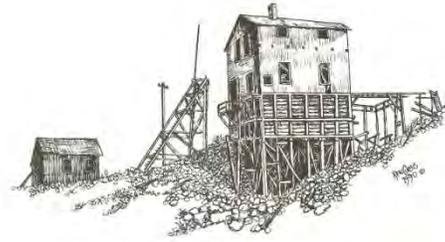
**Tonopah Historic Mining Park  
 Foundation**

PO Box 965 / 110 Burro Avenue  
 Tonopah, NV 89049  
 (775) 482-9274

[eva.tonpahminingpark@gmail.com](mailto:eva.tonpahminingpark@gmail.com)

**Tonopah Historic Mining  
Park Foundation**

PO Box 965  
Tonopah, NV 89049



SILVER TOP — TONOPAH, NEVADA

**This is the last 2018 issue of Tailings. Please be sure to renew your membership for more great issues!**

