



6 PEAVINE - RENO'S WOULD BE COMSTOCK

Peavine, about which the people of Truckee are too familiar, is the same as of old; in fact, the name of a Peavine mine is never heard of here unless it has levied an assessment or "crookedness" is discovered in the management.

Nevada State Journal
May 23, 1877, p. 1.

THERE was always more promise than production from the Peavine mining district, despite its discovery several years prior to the Comstock. The graceful, many-hued peak looming over Truckee Meadows from the north played temptress for well over a century, revealing countless traces of mineralization from foot to crest and the source of more misplaced optimism than any casino on Virginia Street. Opposite Lemmon Valley, many of Peavine's narrow canyons held tiny deposits of placer gold, while half-way up rugged Horse Ravine sat Poeville, center of the district's only valid discovery. Man first truly interrupted the mountain's wilderness silence in 1872 when a gold and silver strike stampeded many of Reno's business tycoons to grubstake a series of speculative mining ventures that uniformly went to

bankruptcy and Sheriff's Sale. Despite some shining examples of chicanery, Reno investors regularly provided most of the seed money behind futile exploration of barren veins by ex-Comstockers who ballyhooed the district in exchange for longterm meal tickets. Just enough highgrade pockets of precious metal opened to the miners to argue the unwary into meeting still another assessment on their near-worthless stock. Most such Peavine speculations were knowingly regarded as Blue Sky gambles by Reno merchants who nevertheless enjoyed doffing their storekeeper's aprons for Sunday tours of Poeville's underground workings, where they could forget the mundane and dream of undeserved riches and San Francisco.

In retrospect, the most successful exploitation of the mountain's natural gifts

appears to be bottled water taken from the springs surrounded by pea vines, which gave the mountain its name, and sold in Reno at the turn of the century - a time when the city's municipal water supply enjoyed a statewide reputation for taste and clarity equal to rinsing out a miner's boot. Still, tantalizing hints of mineral wealth in the last decades of the 19th century kept hope aloft among those who wanted Peavine to contain "another Comstock." In actuality, the district was hard put to produce about \$150,000 - maybe a tenth of the costs. Another \$100,000 came from "poor boy" ventures prior to World War I and during Depression years. Even in the face of this disappointing record, sporadic investment continued, while the most recent study of Washoe County's mineral deposits by the state's mining bureau urged intensive exploration from Poeville east to Spanish Springs Valley, an area where geological conditions actually mirror those surrounding the Comstock.¹ Maybe those pioneer mining speculators weren't so far from the truth after all.

One of those favorite, but most inaccurate, bits of folklore concerning the mining frontier is the ease in which fabulous veins of gold or silver were discovered and developed. Helped along by novelists and Hollywood - who know a good theme when they see one - today's layman imagines that prospectors a century ago simply wandered into mineral riches heaped atop the earth's surface, to be immediately converted into coin of the realm. In most cases years passed between initial location and actual production of bullion. Reasons for such a pedestrian pace of development were many; low assay values, inadequate amounts of ore exposed, a remote location, inadequate milling techniques, or questionable title - to mention a few of the most obvious. In all but the richest strikes, claims often went begging for years until a venturesome firm risked its heavy investment to open a property and, hopefully, bring it to production status. Peavine fell into this category, with the first suggestion of mineral potential coming in 1856 when a few bits of placer gold were found in the eastern washes by miners prospecting north from Carson Valley.² Thereafter, fifteen years lapsed before a valid strike.

Silver was first reported in May, 1860 when Samuel Wright, a Peavine Springs

rancher, chipped heavy, black samples from a ledge that later assayed seventy-five dollars to the ton.³ However, Wright's find went unnoticed at a time when the Comstock ores ran into their thousands.

Isolated Peavine was the haunt of part-time prospectors, generally individuals living in the neighborhood but employed at other occupations. A good example of the breed was Felix O'Neil, Crystal Peak stationkeeper who searched Nevada's hills as an avocation, and was quite good at it. In 1862, he exposed copper near Peavine Springs before locating Austin's bonanza silver veins in central Nevada the following December while on a trip to Reese River.⁴ With absolutely no takers for copper at any price, O'Neil, in common with fellow Peaviners, held fast to those ledges, exploring them when he could find time or money to finance the work. The Peak's miners failed to collect their share of Comstock prosperity and made "bean money" washing placer gravel. While airily counting their prospective millions, they were content to wait till the railroad made it over Donner Pass before shipping copper samples to California for assay. Crude mud smelters built next to the croppings produced copper but were terribly inefficient. The answer was a mill, but who could afford it?

When the English Mill first fired up in 1865, Peavine seized its opportunity to produce or perish - and perish it did. O'Neil and others brought rock in by mule and wagon to find that the copper values failed to pay even smelting costs, much less transportation charges to San Francisco. The United Washoe owners had no more success; their Wedekind Hills claims contained silver and copper, but test lots of rock failed to pay for hauling just three miles to the mill. Although there was a flurry of excitement in 1864 and 1865 near Wedekind, by the late 1860's virtually all the prospecting fraternity left Peavine for the bonanzas of Reese River and White Pine.

The Lingle Placers

The narrow, low grade gold placer deposits along Peavine's northeast flank, from Horse Ravine to Raleigh Heights, had been known since the late 1850's. Never particularly rich, they could be worked only a month or two during spring runoff when the arroyos carried a little meltwater from the snows above. Precious metal concentrations



Fig. 32. English Mill Site

seemed best at the mouths of several canyons, where Peavine's low foothills opened into Lemmon Valley. Only the gravel-choked channels below arroyos proved enriched and then only for short distances. The gold was fine, but rough enough to show that it eroded from veinlets in the adjacent slopes, much as happened at Gold Canyon. Rockers and sluices freed the glittering metal, leaving piles of rocky debris lining the banks. Year in and year out, a few men arrived at the site each spring, taking a claim and staying with it till water failed. Only later, in the 1890's, did placer miners test the gravels with one of the newly-introduced dry washers to little success.

More or less alluvial gold can still be found along canyons south of the railroad right-of-way in secs. 16-17-18, T20N, R19E. Bonham and Papke's study put the Lingle deposits, renamed the Nevada Industrial Placer, in Section 16's southwest quarter, although a review of 19th century maps and

other sources suggests that Section 17's east half is more likely. Lingle Canyon, once the oldest placename on the mountain, has lapsed into obscurity and no longer is to be found on recent maps. This first productive area in the Peavine district corresponds to the gulch just west of Golden Fleece Canyon in Section 17.

First accounts of gold washing in the hills north of Truckee Meadows came in 1866 when two unidentified men were reported stripping the streambeds in spring. The following year "Kirman and Company" were at work on Peavine's east side. Not until October, 1868 was Solomon Lingle placed in the district. By this time, he was Kirman's partner in the seasonal placer work, and in common with other Peaviners, prospected upland outcrops at other times. The two partners claimed all water from Horse and other ravines, conveying it by a primitive ditch to Lingle Canyon, where it was turned on the slui-



ces.⁵ Kirman seems to have been the first miner to stake formal claims on the gravels, with Lingle buying in a year or so later. Kirman sold out in September, 1871 and thereafter Lingle was undisputed kingpin of Peavine's placers for twenty years.

Lingle evidently met few competitors for the golden harvest of his springtime rituals. Reno newspapers paid little attention to the work that brought in only \$5000 yearly. Just the occasional, brief comment made its way onto their pages:

Those miners who own the gold placer diggings on Peavine hill are taking advantage of the supply of water now furnished by the melting snows and are busy sluicing the auriferous soil. The grains of gold captured are usually coarse and have an "early days of California" look that gladdens the eye....⁷

Lingle took over Kirman's cabin on the claim and spent the whole of his time in the district, often elected recorder, holding records at his camp. His workings touched all those arroyos southeast of Horse Ravine and Lingle excavated whichever looked best

at the time, hiring other miners when water first flowed in his ditches. Most kept busy on the canal system, repairing breaks or trenching new pathways to keep adequate water in the busy sluices. An average day's yield for five men approached \$100.⁸

Lingle continued the annual washing until most gravel banks had been worked at least twice, then his name disappeared from local papers. However, the deposits themselves were not forgotten. In 1897 plans took shape in Reno to divert the Little Truckee to the Lingle Diggings by a "high line canal" some thirty miles long in order to rework the dirt by high volume methods. In 1908 a shortlived rush to the Peavine placers tested "old properties" mistakenly thought idle for the past half-century. By 1914, it was commented upon in passing that a few miners still worked "Lindell gulch, a narrow furrow cutting a foothill of Peavine transversly," for its gold content.

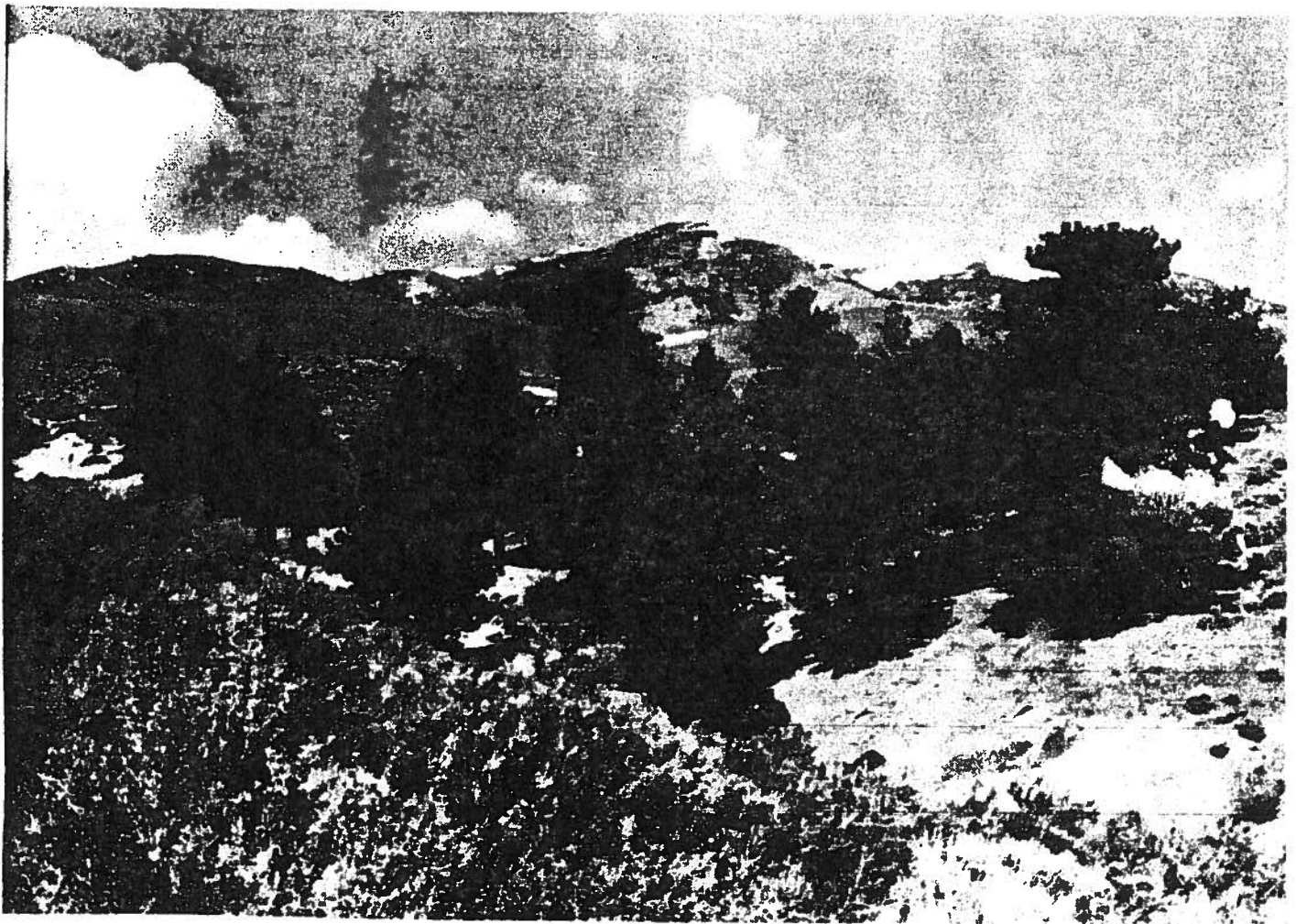


Fig. 33. Placer Area in Lingle Gulch

Other Placers

Two other areas, at the northern and southern ends of Peavine, also produced placer gold in very limited quantities. In 1867 maps showed alluvial deposits on the peak's northwest base in the E $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 5, T20N, R18E.⁹ These diggings had an occasional claimant in the 1870's and 1880's, plus a determined attempt to thoroughly process the gravels in 1895 by combining every watercourse on the mountain's west side and mechanically working all deposits.¹⁰ In 1873, at the height of Peavine's only boom, placers were reported near the Bull ranch, just a couple of miles northeast of Verdi. Since but a single notice appeared, and no recorded production then or later, the find was probably spurious or stillborn.¹¹

John Poe

No one deserves more credit for bringing Peavine from a sleepy, justifiably ignored mining backwater to local prominence than John Poe - prospector, world class promotor, and occasional fugitive from justice. Poe arrived on Peavine's silent slopes unheralded during the early spring of 1872, then proceeded to prospect with more method than most, locating the Poe and Paymaster claims less than two months after first stretching his blankets at camps along Horse Ravine and searching for minerals among the rocky, sage-covered hillsides. Within a year, the bustling settlement at the heart of the lucky miner's strike bore his name, Poeville - or Poedunk, as the irreverent would have it - and was home and headquarters to several hundred residents all working for or in hopes of emulating the town's founder.

For fifteen years, John Poe represented Peavine. Organizing stock companies to promote work, introducing new milling methods, striking a new bonanza if speculation declined in frenzy, or singing the praises of his mineralized stepchild, Poe managed a dangerous balance between flush times and disaster - looking back he seems a blend of the mining frontier's best and worst; fine prospector, poor manager, slippery business ethics and a boastful, transient, husband or father. At the end, he disappeared with no more notice than accompanied by his arrival in 1872.

Poe had virtually no success in mining

before reaching Truckee Meadows. In 1862 he abandoned his family in Michigan and came alone to California. Two years later he was reported in the Walker Lake country, evidently drawn to Nevada by the Aurora strikes.¹² By 1870 he was badly in debt when wife and family joined him in Calaveras County, California. After some months, continued family squabbles sent him prospecting again in March, 1872. Why he chose Peavine is anybody's guess, as is the source of his grubstake. Yet, on April 30, 1872 he struck the exposed tip of the Poe ledge in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 13, T20N, R19E and the Paymaster shortly afterwards.¹³ Solomon Lingle and his crews had walked over the black croppings for years but thought them worthless. After all, Peavine claimed to be a copper district, no one suspected silver. Poe believed the source of Lingle's placer gold would be higher up the mountain, spent just six weeks looking before chipping away at the source.¹⁴ Even so, the values at the surface hardly matched the Comstock, being no more than eleven dollars to the ton. Pick and shovel work then exposed small pockets of highgrade.

Once the presence of precious metals had been confirmed by duplicate assays in Virginia City and Grass Valley, Poe spent several weeks sinking test pits and raising money in Reno. Quietly, but convincingly, he persuaded leading figures in the riverside town to back his venture. Not until August 3, 1872 did a hint of Poe's finds reach the press, long after businessmen A. H. Barnes, B. B. Norton, Ed Lake, William Chamberlain and banker C. T. Bender bought into the Poe Mining Company, incorporated to manage the claims. Sales recorded in Washoe County's book of mining deeds brought Poe several thousand dollars and confirmed his control of the fledgling enterprise intended to transform Peavine into the state's newest bonanza. The prospective millionaire, now with a sizeable bank account and overnight respectability, was "...delving away in Peavine Mountain with an industry and perseverance that deserves success."¹⁵

Despite Reno's hope that Poeville might attract hordes of floating miners and prospectors, 1873 passed as an orderly transition on Peavine. After shovelling away debris covering sidewalls on the Poe and Paymaster ledges, which stood a couple of feet above the neighboring slopes, and opening a test pit whenever values increased, Poe ordered a mill, to be housed in a frame struc-



ture built from Charley Eastman's lumber. Poeville was platted in October amid hustle and bustle so thriving that two stage firms ran daily service from Reno for \$2.50, roundtrip. Newcomers could stay at the Poe House or two other hotels, and, wonder of wonders, Poe and his backers announced that they would employ only men of teetotal habits, as well as convey title to Poeville lots with a clause preventing the sale of alcohol thereon. It was to be a dry camp.¹⁶

Without warning, and at a time when 200 men roamed Poeville's streets and more camped out under canvas, the district's founder sold his interests to the mayor of St. Louis, Missouri for \$33,800. Some days after the October 25, 1873 transfer, Poe's wife, Polly, asked Washoe County's district judge for separate maintenance. Poe had brought his wife and eight children to Nevada in mid-1872 in the first flush of success on Peavine, but in November petitioned the courts for a divorce, charging cruelty and adultery - an action denied Poe in February.

The Poe's marriage, which began in 1841, had been a stormy one. Between 1862 and 1870, the fatherless family farmed Michigan land provided by the wife's relations, supposedly without support from the would-be miner in California. Once in Calaveras County, the couple continued their donnybrooks, with Polly and the children eventually leaving Poe. He filed a second divorce petition in August, 1873 which was pending when the sale was announced. Mrs. Poe immediately asked for support and money to employ legal counsel, which infuriated John and persuaded him to transfer control of all his property to a third party. The court stepped in, had Poe arrested and ordered him to deposit community property in trust pending a divorce. Poe pled illness and retired to the Lake House where he stayed on a two-day bender before secretly leaving the state. Not until April, 1876 was the matter settled and the Poes legally split.¹⁷

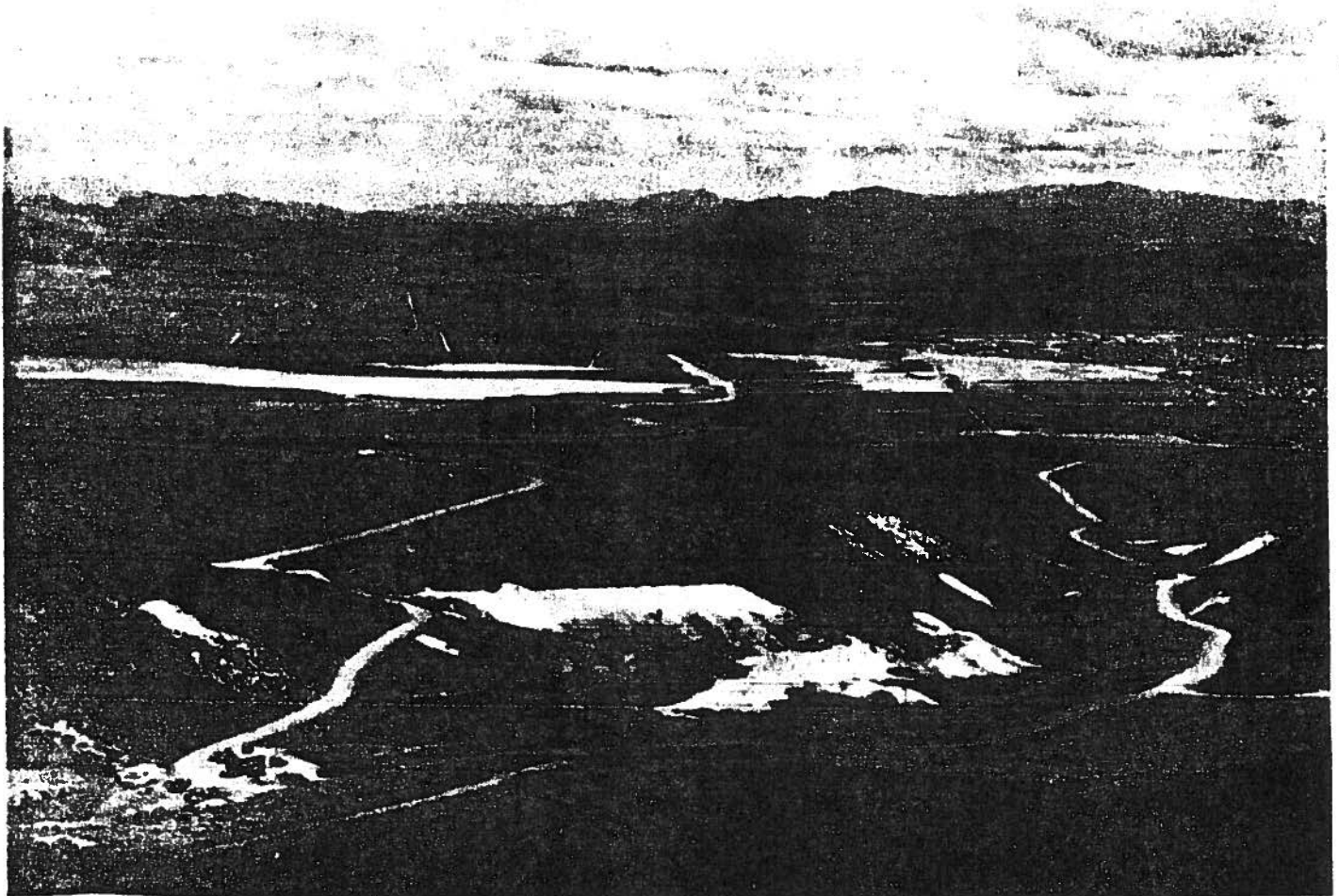


Fig. 34. *The Paymaster - Town of Poeville Located Below Trailer Camp in Ravine*

The Boom Years

Three mines, the Poe, Paymaster and Golden Fleece, yielded virtually all bullion attributed to the Peavine district. There were other claims, some with considerable underground workings, but none with significant output. Another point was also obvious; assessments and grubstakes outmatched bullion recovered by a factor of ten, if not more. However, hindsight little limited the enthusiasm sweeping Truckee Meadows when word spread of Poe's strikes. Everybody wanted in on a good thing and hung on for a giddy, roller-coaster five years full of ups and downs, mostly downs. Reno demanded her own mining craze, believed it necessary to municipal morale, and would not be denied the excitement found everywhere else in Nevada. No matter if the ore was beyond treatment by existing technology, management as venal as any on the Comstock, or outright deception normal as daybreak, Reno took pride in its dependent vest pocket boomtown and cheerfully paid for the privilege. If the

Comstock had not bottomed out in the late 1870's, bringing prosperity in general to a staggering halt, assessments from the Meadows' sucker list would have kept Poeville bright as a button for decades.

Mayor Brown of St. Louis, following purchase of John Poe's claims in October, 1873, talked other major stockholders in the Poe and Paymaster claims into amalgamating their holdings in a single firm, the Consolidated Poe Mining Company; the Con Poe as it was usually called by locals. By this union, one group of directors controlled the core of known deposits.¹⁸ The Poe and Paymaster were opened as a unit, with a single mill built to process ore hoisted from either mine. While taking possession, Brown found exploration work in progress on both claims, mainly surface cuts along mineralized zones, with little underground probing. Poe's Washoe Process mill had been only partially completed.

By December, 1873 the Con Poe mill

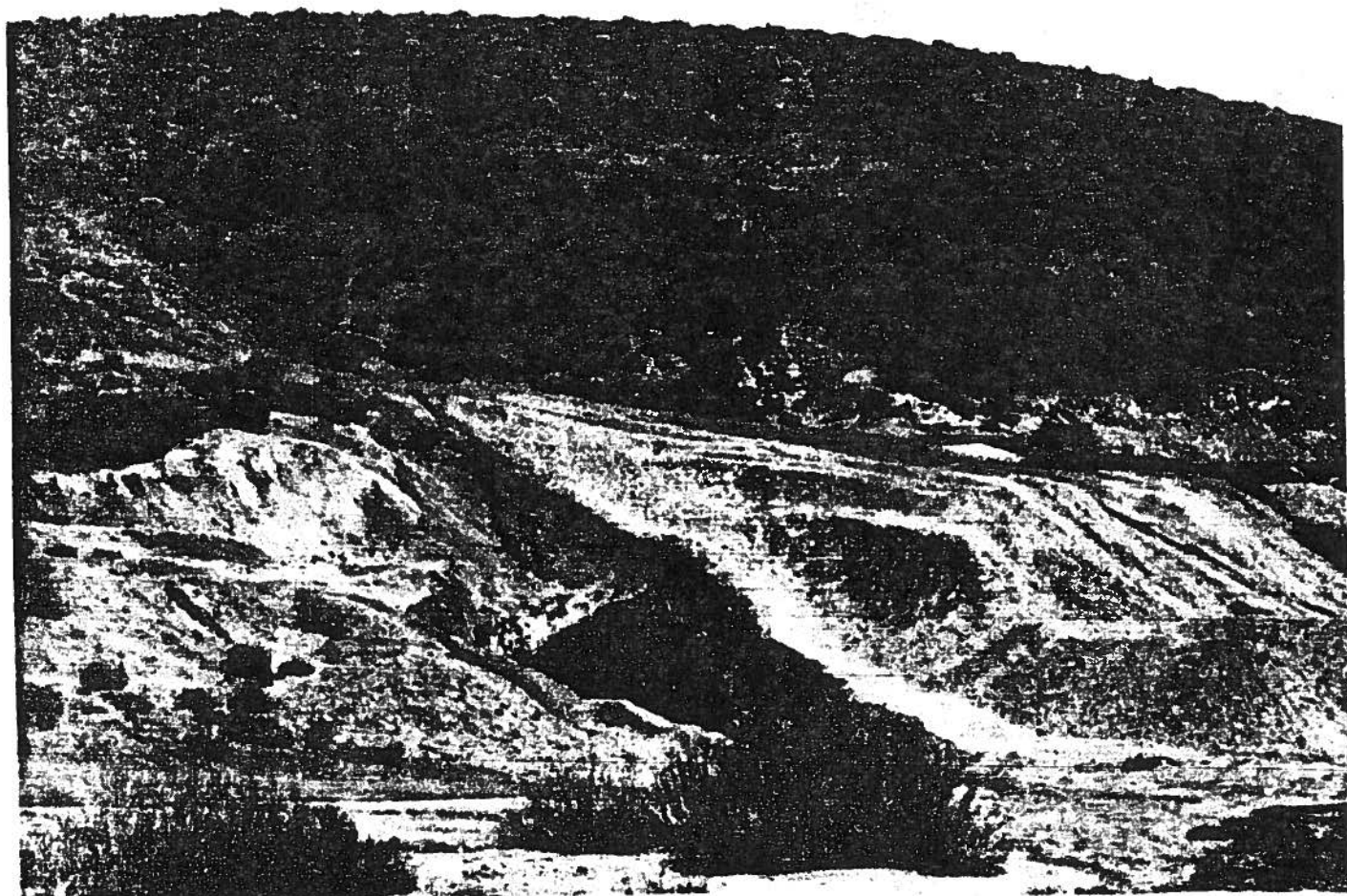


Fig. 35. The Golden Fleece

tested hand-sorted lots of rock as part of work to test the claims' potential. Tunnels intercepted the veins several hundred feet below the outcrop, then laterals along the vein network searched for enrichment. At the Paymaster, ore from drifts accumulated at the rate of twenty-five tons per day. Ore was a combination of black silver sulphides and red oxides similar to surface exposures at Austin. The millsite occupied slopes south of the outcrops, leading down to Horse Ravine and Poeville.¹⁹

Ineffective milling delayed full production. Shipments of ore treated at the English Mill - with its Stetefeldt furnace - showed that roasting was necessary to free the rock's silver content. Poe's Washoe Process mill failed to recover even half the values reported by assay, but when samples from the Paymaster were run through the custom mill in Truckee Meadows they produced \$60 to the ton. Months of tinkering in the mill by company directors followed, and it was late 1874 before they disgustedly gave up and decided to add a McGlew furnace to the bench beside their ten-stamper.

Construction of the new roaster was not without its peculiar difficulties. The inventor, McGlew, agreed to supervise erection for \$500, with the balance of his fees to come from bullion royalties. He claimed his design would treat thirty tons each working day and require just one operator, at a cost of just four dollars per ton. Ore was crushed dry and fed into the top of the furnace, passing through three heated flues before chlorine, arsenic and other impurities were released as gas. The roasted rock then returned to the mill where amalgamation recovered its silver.

In late January, 1875 the furnace fired up for the first run.²⁰ Five tons crushed the first day yielded \$300, which with other bullion poured after a week's experimentation, formed three large silver bars displayed at Reno's Jones & Company Bank while "...the news spread like wildfire and soon the whole town was ablaze with excitement, which continued throughout the entire evening. Anvils were fired, bonfires were lit, the services of the Reno Band brought into requisition, and all went "merry as a marriage bell."²¹

Despite producing Peavine's first ever mint shipment, McGlew failed, even after lengthy testing, in processing more than five tons per day, just a sixth of the



\$2,500

**"CARRY THE NEWS
TO MARY."**

HURRAH FOR PEAVINE!!

**BARS OF BULLION, NUMBERS
ONE, TWO AND THREE.**

Headline from Article Announcing Peavine's First Bullion Shipment, February 6, 1875

mill's stamping capacity. In frustration, directors approved another experiment and an O'Hara roaster went up in May, 1875. Ninety feet long and capable of fifteen tons daily, the O'Hara employed an endless chain belt to convey the sand-like crushed ore through two hearths where high temperatures drove off impurities as smoke through a tall stack. To the delight of stockholders, the new roaster freed up to eighty-seven percent of assay value.²² For a year thereafter, the Con Poe regularly shipped bullion bars from the mill.

Tracing the Con Poe's riches underground stayed far ahead of milling capacity throughout the boom years. Employment varied from thirty to fifty men, about half working underground and the remainder in hoist house or mill. In 1873, the Paymaster was first opened by a short tunnel which struck the ledge about forty-five feet under the grass



roots and led to a highgrade stope some 150' long. Attempts to follow the vein deeper in January, 1874 encountered water, which grew in volume as the incline approached sixty feet. Superintendent W. A. Bourne opted to reach his deeper ore zones by a 100' shaft, using steam pumps to dewater workings.²³ That November, new stopes below 100' yielded \$100 rock from a ledge of black sulphides three feet wide. Workmen dumped twenty tons daily outside the mill and eager investors sent Con Poe stock to two dollars per share, even though assessments were levied every quarter and the mill went from one crisis to another.²⁴

By early 1876, the Paymaster's crews sunk below the 165' mark to expose ore graded to \$300 per ton in special lots. The enriched zone appeared to be a cone-shaped body that widened with depth, and even somewhat less complex to mill than earlier samples.²⁵ By June, when the future - for once - looked bright, every miner quit work till back wages were paid in full:

The workmen at the Consolidated Poe mine quit work, declaring that no more ore should be taken out until they were paid off for five months wages, and that a change in management was desirable. There is enough ore out to run the mill another week, and unless something is done ...the mill will also be compelled to stop.²⁶

A new crew reached the mine from Virginia City, but the strikers persuaded them to return. A month later, at the firm's annual meeting, infuriated stockholders threw out incumbent directors and voted in a fresh slate. The strike brought on everlasting troubles. Suppliers of equipment attached the mine time after time in late 1876, forcing new rounds of assessments to meet debts. Steam pumps failed in October, filling the stopes with water while the pumps were rushed to San Francisco by special car for repair. Finally, caretakers replaced busy shifts and the Con Poe fell into the grasp of its creditors. Thereafter, the claims passed from hand to hand, inactive but for the occasional lease.

The district's other bonanza producer, the Golden Fleece, was a late-bloomer, located by William McDonald in mid-1873 and recorded on October 4th that year.²⁷ Less than two months later, on December 10, 1873 it was incorporated by Reno businessmen Tom Hy-mers, M. Lippman and D. Lachmann for \$300,000 in ten dollar shares. The claim was an obvious one, with slopes downhill from its

croppings littered with heavy float. Incredibly, the vein was explored by a tunnel driven almost 500' through dense, extremely hard trachyte, a costly, time-consuming job.²⁸ Not until November, 1874 did men reach the ledge with its gold and silver ore along a vein one to four feet wide. Hoisting began in January, 1875 from an incline pushed 150' below the surface, with the rock sent by wagon to the English Mill for separation. As with the Con Poe deposit, shipping rock became less complex as the workings sank deeper down the contact. In April, 1875 company officials decided to simplify hoisting by sinking a shaft to the stopes.

Milling posed a cost problem to the Golden Fleece throughout its productive life. Freighting rock to the English Mill was expensive, although recovery was optimal. However, directors resisted the powerful temptation to build their own mill and leased the defunct Con Poe plant. Recovery fell, but the mine worked on - hoping for a bonanza discovery underground. Finally, in July, 1877 the Golden Fleece shut down, a victim of stockholder unrest, debts and complex ore.

Poeville

Once John Poe found financial backing for the Paymaster claims in mid-summer, 1872 a camp of employees and the usual mining camp parasites rose from the flats of Horse Ravine just southeast of the ledges. As time passed and population increased, Poeville became a supply center and the hub of what passed for gracious living. It offered stage and freight service, hotels, stores, and several thriving saloons, despite efforts to limit the sale of alcohol.

No townsite existed before the Con Poe surveyed and platted the location in October, 1873, giving lots to those already on the ground, but selling others to newcomers. At the same time, over 200 inhabitants shared simple frame or canvas shelters below the Paymaster. Most storekeepers or hostlers were transplants from Reno; J. C. Hagerman, a grocer, built the Golden Eagle Hotel - Poeville's grandest - while Robert F. Hoy, discredited schoolmaster took a flyer as merchant and pulled political wires to become postmaster. Although the town supported a municipal band, they could never attract a newspaper. At



the end of 1874, a Virginia City reporter counted twenty-five structures, with a well-developed business center served by two stage lines, tollroads and repeated delivery of wagon-borne freight.²⁹ Some dozen families and about 300 working miners made up its enthusiastic residents. By 1876 townsfolk demanded a school and built the frame edifice from proceeds raised at benefits. Four years later, it was all gone:

Croquet is all the rage at Poeville this season. There are two croquet grounds in the place, but not enough people to run two games at once.

A caretaker or two shared the decaying town's few remaining shacks after 1880, disturbed occasionally by attempts to reopen the deposits.

Poeville's social mix resembled most small mining camps. Men greatly outnumbered women and families were few, usually those of merchants or mine superintendents. Stage traffic to Reno stayed high, and P. B. Norton built a tollroad attractive to teamsters since its easy grades made the job of hauling goods uphill less difficult for livestock. Holidays prompted celebrations similar to those in other Great Basin towns, but anyone who could afford it usually spent those seasons in Reno or California. At the same time, parties, dances or dinners kept residents regaled with entertainments, usually in the Golden Eagle's hall. The arrival of possible investors or company directors never failed to bring out the band and called for feasts, complete with toasts and windy speeches. Elections provided welcome diversions, since candidates treated everyone to libations and picnics. Minorities, primarily Orientals and Indians, shared the townsite in small numbers and met all the prejudices of the time. Four men arrested for raping a Paiute woman and assaulting her husband went unpunished in 1876, as did those who burned a Chinese washhouse for a lark.

Peavine's Great Scandal corresponded with its sudden decline. On July 15, 1876 George DeLong killed stationkeeper Samuel B. Miller, 46, at Junction House on the Honey Lake Road, where it intersected the Poeville cutoff. DeLong, 22, had leased Miller's barroom for about a year, after deserting from Fort Bidwell when army discipline interfered unduly with his personal freedom. DeLong was thought to be involved with Miller's wife, Olivia, and at her instigation followed Miller into the corral about

8 PM on the 15th, argued with him, then killed the older man by splitting his head with an ax. Mrs. Miller's reputation was none too good and she was arrested with DeLong and charged as an accessory to murder. The lady was no *femme fatale*, being fat, fortyish, redfaced and possessed of a thick German accent. A week after the murder, Olivia pried open the District Attorney's office door in the courthouse, in which she was kept overnight out of respect for her gender, and escaped on foot in early morning to the Yager ranch outside of town, where friends kept her hidden. On August 12th, after a tip, she was recaptured and once again housed in the District Attorney's quarters. Some ten days later, desperate that DeLong might confess her part in the killing, Olivia jumped from the window to the courthouse grounds twenty feet below at 4 AM in the morning. She topped the scale at over 200 pounds and was fatally injured in her getaway attempt. Dying, she refused to admit anything regarding her husband's death - maintaining a mute silence in the face of questions from the Sheriff. The next day, August 29th, 1876 her body was buried, with only the undertaker in attendance. Her obituary was an editorial blasting the way of the wicked and damning a woman who sacrificed life "...at the altar of sin." DeLong went to the state penitentiary for life.³⁰

Brooklyn

Of the several companies organized by out-of-state investors to search Peavine for mineral wealth, the most opulent of the bunch was the United Brooklyn Mining Company, a Brooklyn, New York corporation. Taking up Felix O'Neil's old idea of tunneling through the peak exploring such veins from the inside, their superintendent, Charles W. Bever, chose a location on the mountain's southwest side and some two and a half miles from the Truckee, between Bull Ranch and Peavine creeks, and built a town named for the firm. Operations began in March, 1875 as Bever told listeners he had a half-million dollars for exploration.³¹ Within a year, the camp - which had been claimed by John Poe earlier - contained a dozen homes, five families and a wagon road to Reno. The tunnel had only progressed an ignoble twenty-five feet.³²

This costly, futile enterprise would probably have shut down then and there had Poe not once again dazzled the directors with potential treasure. On May 26, 1876 he found



silver, uncomplicated by the presence of other minerals, atop a hill less than a half-mile from the Honey Lake Road.³³ Thousands of emigrants and miners had trod over the site now within spitting distance of Raleigh Heights and a Seven-Eleven store without recognizing riches. Silver-tongued Poe persuaded Bever to abandon Brooklyn with its barren tunnel for the new claim. Within a month, Poe and six miners had blasted their way to thirty-dollar rock at the Emma, or East Brooklyn mine.

After shutting down over the winter of 1876-1877, Bever purchased a steam hoist in Gold Hill and contracted with a party of miners to sink a double-compartment shaft to 260' and drift through the vein at that point. In May, 1877 the *Gazette's* editor took a guided tour of the improvements, then the most active near town. He found a fully timbered 150' shaft, worked by three shifts sinking about four feet per day. Three hundred tons of rock on the dump were said to average eighty dollars per ton, and believed free-milling, welcome news to any Peavine miner.

In June, the Emma started on her long road to perdition. As the shaft approached 200' water, which had been slight in the upper levels, suddenly filled the workings, forcing Bever to shut down until he could find pumps. Throughout 1877 and well into 1878, the Emma kept first one, then two steam pumps busy dewatering the shaft.

By February, 1879 and after \$100,000 in costs, the United Brooklyn admitted defeat. Eighteen months of high-volume pumping on a twenty-four hour schedule failed to make a dent on the water level, and tunneling into the vein from below was impracticable. A watchman replaced a twenty-man crew at what had been Peavine's banner property.³⁴

The town of Brooklyn, several miles east of the Emma, disappeared as well. After Reno's disastrous fire of March 2, 1879 the town was bought - lock, stock and barrel - by a Reno landlord who moved the houses to lots where they were rented to shelterless fire victims.³⁵ Other company property was sold off at the same time; the pumps went to the Golden Fleece and surface gear to Pyramid district.

After 1879, the United Brooklyn's sites gained a local reputation for curious incidents. A year after the Emma's close,

a German emigrant named Haag walked away from his job at a Reno lumber yard and hanged himself from a small pine near the mine. The pine thicket can still be seen on Old U.S. 395 near Raleigh Heights. His body, after dangling for two weeks in August heat, was buried quickly on the spot. Haag pinned a loveletter to the lapel of his coat, addressed to a lady in California, explaining that her rejection of his suit forced him to suicide. In 1884, a stranger arrived in town by train and asked directions to Brooklyn. Armed with a pencil sketch, he disappeared toward Peavine and returned several days later. Before leaving a happy man on the next east-bound express - and refusing to give his name - he told a barkeep that he had recovered buried records at the old townsite that would entitle him to a large Scottish estate and title.

Over the years, the Emma progressively filled with water to within forty feet of the surface, but in 1886, John Poe, while passing, tossed a stone down the shaft and heard it hit the bottom with a distinctively dry clatter. For unknown reasons, the shaft had dried. There was talk of clearing the shaft and sampling the vein, but nothing came of it. Poe took the Emma's expensive headframe to another property after the shaft filled again, as mysteriously as it had drained earlier. Brooklyn's site moldered undisturbed on Peavine's southern slopes until 1905 when a shortlived attempt was made to test nearby exposures of lowgrade. Several tons of samples were shipped, but work halted soon thereafter.

The Reno District

When Poesville's mines closed in 1877, attention shifted to the Wedekind Hills and Peavine's southeast flank, site of the area's first strikes in the 1860's. Indefatigable John Poe again led his peers to this rediscovered region in May, 1878 when he prospected old pits dating from 1861 and later part of the English Mill's first claims. Hills near Golden and Panther valleys bore traces of mineralization and were comfortably far from the discredited Paymaster and Golden Fleece. Anxious to retain a boom climate, since euphoria breeds grubstakes and gullible suckers, local miners met on May 16, 1878 in a noisy congregation to establish a new district, named Reno, stretching from Mayberry's to Glendale and north from the Truc-



kee to Lemmon Valley.

Most of this new flurry of speculation and Blue Sky gambling took place on claims within a three-mile radius of Raleigh Heights. Thomas V. Julien, later a Reno attorney, promoted the Consolidated Esmeralda, two miles southwest of the Emma. ³⁶ Julien represented Elias J. "Lucky" Baldwin and other San Francisco backers. By the end of 1878, Julien had driven a shaft almost 100' on his best outcrops and started a tunnel to intersect the vein. He claimed not only free-milling silver, but gold as well. A 32'x50' frame building covered the shaft during the winter of 1878-1879. Enterprise displayed by the Con Es investors elevated hopes in the entire valley and the hills north of town were reported "covered with prospectors." Julien's ore was a dark brown decomposed quartz that improved as miners drifted west on the 100' level. ³⁷ The showing was substantial enough to persuade company directors to finance a water-powered mill on the Highland ditch, a mile northwest of Reno, near the intersection of Keystone & Peavine Road. ³⁸ Stockholders refused more assessments in 1881 and the mine closed.

Two unrelated events brought mining to a halt in areas contiguous to Truckee Meadows; the national distrust - bordering on paranoia - of Comstock ventures after 1880 and a heritage of unbroken failure on Peavine or the Reno District. Venture capital found better speculative options, and even Reno's ever-optimistic suckers finally realized the fleecing they took in local mining deals. During the 1880's and 1890's only Captain Andrew D. Griffen kept to the task of opening Peavine's coffers - using Boston money to finance a series of small operations around Poeville and Granite Peak. Prospectors drifted away to other districts, with John Poe disappearing unsung and unlamented in the late 1880's.

Nowhere in the state was mining in poorer repute than Washoe County during the final decades of the 19th century. The last holdout, Captain Griffen, eventually made bean money by bottling the waters of Peavine Springs and selling them through Henry Riter's general store in one and five gallon casks. Labelled as "the fountain of health found in the Peavine mines," the water became a local favorite after Reno's municipal supply was declared a hazard and worse by University of Nevada chemists. The condi-

tion should have surprised no one since water was taken directly from the river by the Highland ditch and flowed below large cattle corrals before reaching an open reservoir north of Whitaker Academy. Trapped fish clogged the mains, surprising housewives with a sinkfull of decaying, very ripe trout mush direct from the faucet. Griffen's bottled water, natural or carbonated, found a place in many kitchens. From the standpoint of actual profit, it was - hands down - Peavine's most remunerative natural resource.



FOOTNOTES - Chapter V

- ¹Bonham and Papke, Geology and Mineral Resources, p. 81.
- ²Alta California, March 9, 1856, p. 2. Ibid., June 11, 1856, p. 2. A comment in the Placerville Mountain-Democrat, June 14, 1856, p. 2, that "the news from the diggings northeast of the Truckee, is of the most cheering nature," probably refers to exploration north from Peavine.
- ³Marysville Daily Appeal, May 9, 1860, p. 1.
- ⁴Reese River Reveille, November 29, 1865, p. 4. Mining & Scientific Press, (M&SP), February 3, 1866, p. 70. The first Nevada ore hauled over the Central Pacific to San Francisco for treatment was copper from Peavine.
- ⁵Liens and Miscellaneous Book "C," Washoe County Recorder's Office, Reno, NV, pp. 406-7.
- ⁶Mining Book "C," Washoe County Recorder's Office, Reno, NV, pp. 339-40.
- ⁷Nevada State Journal, April 29, 1880, p. 3.
- ⁸M&SP, May 23, 1874, p. 332.
- ⁹Readers interested in Peavine should review A. J. Hatch's excellent Map of the Peavine Copper Mines (San Francisco: Warren Holt, 1867), reprinted in the 1960's, but again out of print.
- ¹⁰Nevada State Journal, March 14, 1895, p. 2.
- ¹¹Ibid., February 22, 1873, p. 3.
- ¹²M&SP, May 21, 1864, p. 357.
- ¹³Nevada State Journal, August 3, 1872, p. 3.
- ¹⁴Ibid. M&SP, January 3, 1874, p. 10. Ibid., March 7, 1874, p. 154.
- ¹⁵Reno Crescent, January 2, 1873, p. 3.
- ¹⁶Nevada State Journal, October 18, 1873, p. 3.
- ¹⁷The Poes' family troubles interested a wide audience. Polly's position was printed in Ibid., November 12, 1873, p. 2. See Ibid., November 8, 1873, p. 2, for John's reply. Also, Reno Crescent, November 26, 1873, p. 2, and Reno Evening Gazette, April 12, 1876, p. 3.
- ¹⁸Nevada State Journal, December 20, 1873, p. 2.
- ¹⁹The position of Poeville shown on the U.S. Geological Survey's 7.5' Verdi Quadrangle is opposite the Golden Fleece. The actual location should be shown a half-mile north, just southeast of the Paymaster. See M&SP, January 3, 1874, p. 10.
- ²⁰Nevada State Journal, November 13, 1874, p. 3. Ibid., November 25, 1874, p. 3. Ibid., December 16, 1874, p.

2. Ibid., January 8, 1875, p. 3. Ibid., January 8, 1875, p. 3. Ibid., January 14, 1875, p. 3.
- ²¹Ibid., January 31, 1875, p. 2. Ibid., February 7, 1875, p. 3.
- ²²Ibid., May 18, 1875, p. 3. Ibid., August 19, 1875, p. 2. Ibid., December 11, 1875, p. 3.
- ²³Ibid., February 28, 1874, p. 2.
- ²⁴Ibid., November 13, 1874, p. 3. Ibid., November 21, 1874, p. 3. Ibid., November 25, 1874, p. 3.
- ²⁵Reno Evening Gazette, May 13, 1876, p. 3.
- ²⁶Nevada State Journal, June 28, 1876, p. 3.
- ²⁷Mining Locations Book "A," Washoe County Recorder's Office, Reno, NV, p. 145.
- ²⁸Weekly Reno Evening Gazette, April 17, 1879, p. 6.
- ²⁹Nevada State Journal, December 16, 1874, p. 2, copied from the Virginia Independent. Ibid., January 8, 1875, p. 3.
- ³⁰Ibid., July 18, 1876, p. 2. Ibid., August 1, 1876, p. 3. Ibid., August 13, 1876, p. 3. Ibid., August 29, 1876, p. 3. Ibid., August 30, 1876, p. 3.
- ³¹Ibid., March 26, 1875, p. 3.
- ³²Reno Evening Gazette, April 13, 1876, p. 3.
- ³³Mining Locations Book "A," Washoe County Recorder's Office, Reno, NV, p. 171.
- ³⁴Reno Evening Gazette, February 8, 1879, p. 3. Nevada State Journal, April 15, 1879, p. 3.
- ³⁵Weekly Reno Evening Gazette, August 7, 1879, p. 7.
- ³⁶Nevada State Journal, October 19, 1878, p. 3.
- ³⁷Ibid., March 19, 1879, p. 3. Reno Evening Gazette, March 17, 1879, p. 1.
- ³⁸Ibid., April 4, 1881, p. 3. Nevada State Journal, December 22, 1880, p. 3.



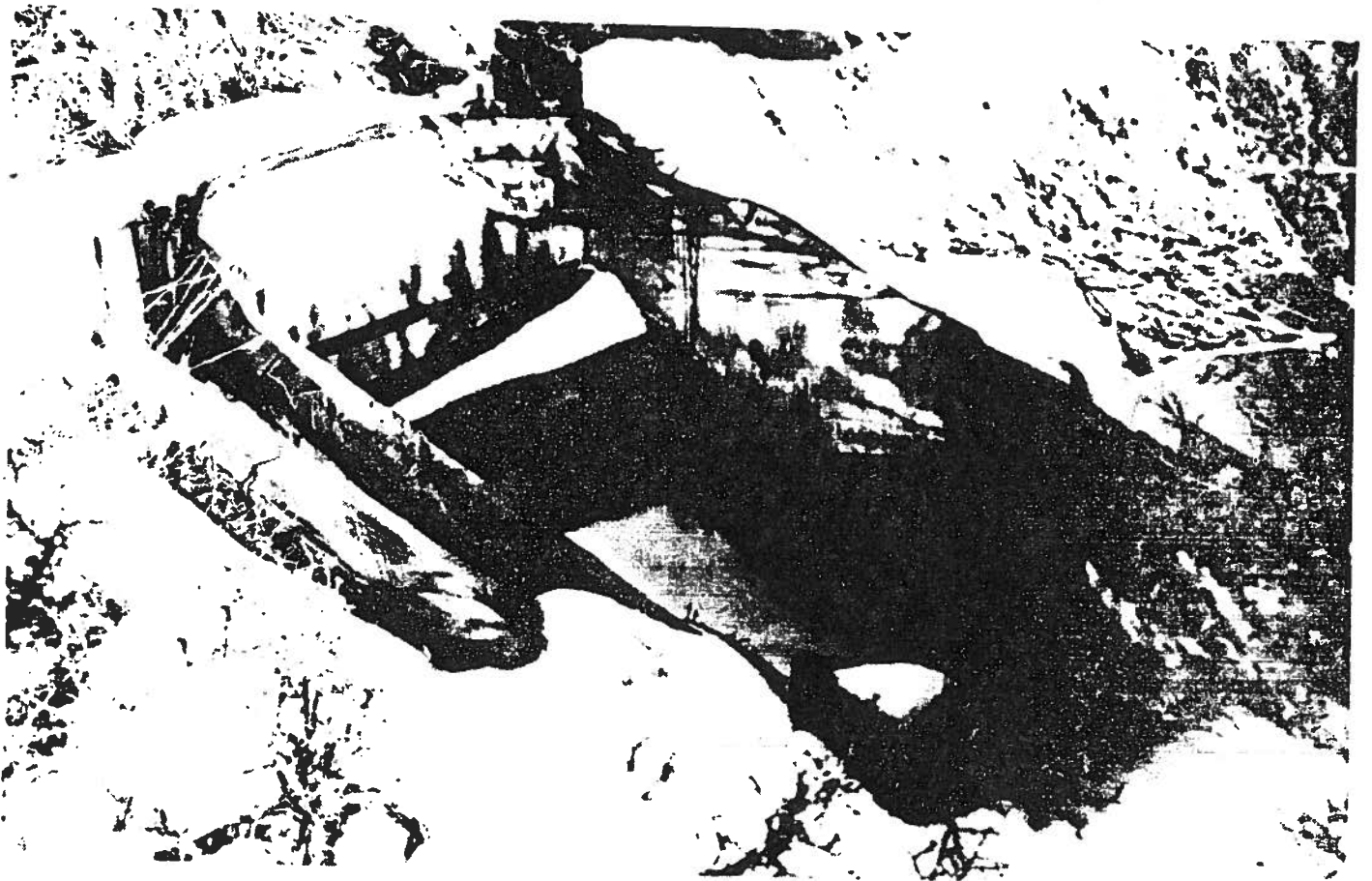
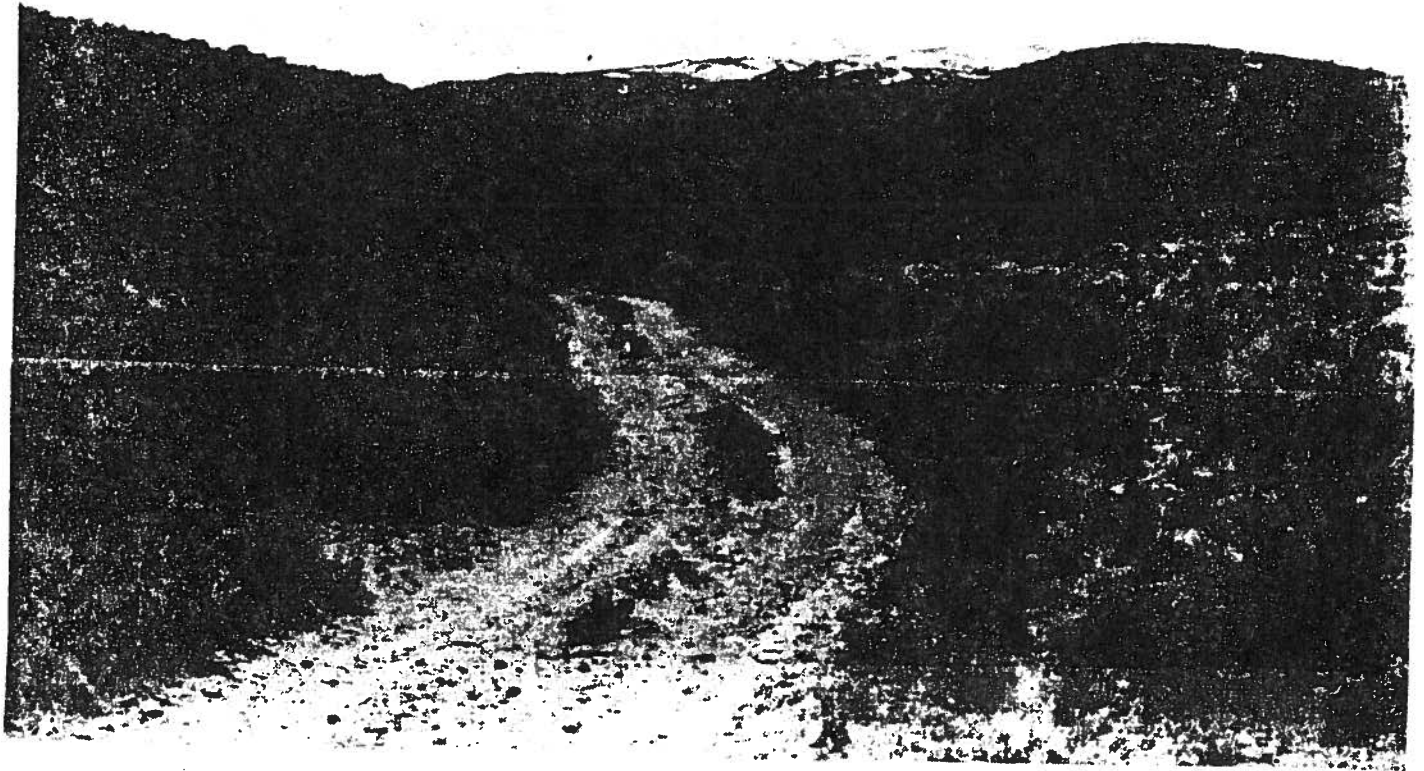


Fig. 36. Peavine Toll Road (above) and Miner's Bathtub Found in West Side of Peavine