

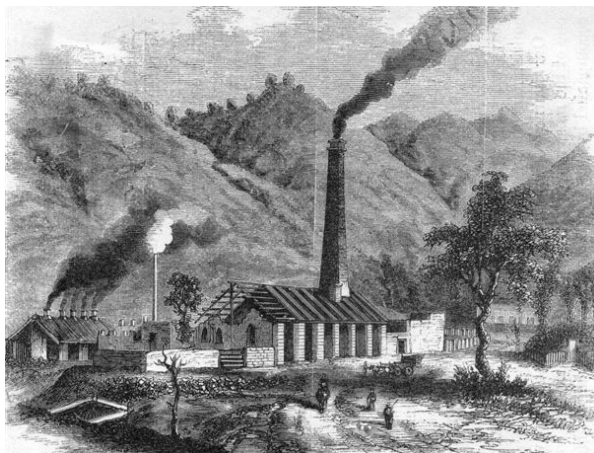
MOWRY MINE

The mine that was eventually to be called the Mowry Mine was probably initially worked during the early Spanish period by natives under the direction of Jesuit Priests. It was rediscovered in 1857 by Mexican prospectors who sold the mining claim known as the Patagonia Mine in 1858 to a group of shareholders (Colonel J. W. Douglas, Captain R. S. Ewell, Lieutenant J. N. Moore, Mr. Randall, Mr. Lord and Mr. Doss). Preliminary operations were started including sinking shafts and constructing furnaces for smelting but soon ran into money problems during expansion efforts.

In 1859, two of the principle shareholders, Lord and Doss, sold their interests in the mine to Elias Breroort who became superintendent and principle owner. Breroort was inexperienced in mining operations and made a number of bad, costly decisions that didn't set well with the other partners. The end result was that on 9 April 1860 the entire Patagonia Mine holdings were sold to Lt. Sylvester Mowry for \$25,000 in cash who renamed the mine the Mowry Mine. Mowry, in turn, sold a 1/5th interest in the mine to a wealthy eastern investor to obtain money to make the improvements necessary to get the operation going again. Between 1860 and 1862, about \$200,000 was spent to construct support buildings, twelve reduction furnaces, a steam engine to work pumps and run the sawmill and various other expansion requirements.

The two primary ores extracted from the mine were lead and silver. Mowry was mainly interested in the silver since the sale price of lead barely justified the cost of extraction. The value of the ore being shipped from the mine was approximately \$350 per ton with Mowry estimating his net profit at \$100 per ton.

Everything was going great for Lt. Mowry until the start of the Civil War and the occupancy of Southern Arizona by the Confederacy. The settlement of Mowry was well established and he was on his way to become a wealthy man. However, in 1862, Union Forces (the California Column under the command of General James H. Carlton) proceeded from Fort Yuma to retake Arizona from the Confederacy. On 20 May 1862 they recaptured Tucson and proceeded on to New Mexico. Enroute, General Carlton's forces stopped at the Mowry Mine, placed Lt. Mowry under arrest and seized the mine holdings under the Confiscation Act. Lt. Mowry was charged with treason for selling lead to the Confederate Army and confined at Fort Yuma from 2 July to 8 November 1862. He was released after a court appearance in which the prosecution could produce no evidence that he had sold lead to Arizona's Confederate Militia.



Mowry Mine Buildings – 1864 sketch by John R. Browne

The status of the Mowry Mine after Mowry's acquittal is rather obscure. Some

references indicate that he was never able to regain control of the mine nor collect compensation from the government. The author John Ross Browne visited the Mowry Mine in January 1864 and stated in his book “Adventures in Apache Country” that the property was in the hands of the Deputy Marshall of New Mexico who held it on behalf of the United States Government. However, he also discussed the assassination by Apaches on 29 December 1863 of the mine manager J. B. Mills who was in the employ of Sylvester Mowry. Also assassinated was Edwin Stevens who was to replace Mills as Mine Manager. Since this information was first, not second hand, it would seem to indicate that Mowry was still involved with the mine. Another indication that Mowry was still involved was that Browne interviewed Mowry during the 1864 visit and made a drawing of him.

After Mowry’s arrest, the Mowry Mine went through periods of ups and downs but never regained the production rates of the 1860 to 1862 period. One of the early reasons was pressure from the Chiricahua Apaches during the Civil War period. After the “Bascom Affair” of February 1861, the Apaches led by Cochise went on the warpath determined to rid Southern Arizona of the Americans. Fort Buchanan, the main source of protection for the settlers was abandoned in July of 1861 when Union Forces were pulled back to fight in the east. Fort Buchanan was periodically occupied by soldiers of the California Column but was completely destroyed by the Apaches in 1865. Mowry was frequently raided during the Civil War period. In August 1867, Camp Crittenden (later named Fort Crittenden) was established near the ruins of Fort Buchanan to regain control of the area. With the Army providing security again, the town of Mowry began to be populated again. A Post Office was opened but only remained open for about a year. The threat from marauding Apaches virtually disappeared for about 4 years after Cochise signed a treaty with General Howard in 1872 that established a reservation for the Chiricahua Apaches. This treaty was abrogated in 1876 and the Apaches relocated to the San Carlos Reservation. Discontent on the reservation led to breakouts by a small band of Apaches led by Naiche (Cochise’s son) and Geronimo. They periodically created havoc in Southern Arizona until their final surrender in September 1886. Lt. Mowry went to London England with the intent of raising funds to rehabilitate the mine but died on 15



Building Ruins – 2009
Photo by T. Johnson



Slag Pile – 2009
Photo by T. Johnson

October 1871 before he could return. From the 1880s to the early 1900s the mine passed through the hands of a number of Tucson firms but never produced much. The Mowry Post Office as reopened in 1880 for a short period and again from 1901 to 1913. Today, there is nothing much left of the town or the mine.



350 Foot Deep Mine Shaft
Photo by T. Johnson - 2009



Structure Ruins
Photo by T. Johnson - 2009

BIOGRAPHY – SYLVESTER MOWRY: Sylvester Mowry was born in Providence Rhode Island during October 1830. He attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and graduated in 1852 as a Lieutenant. Lt. Mowry’s initial assignment was with the army exploring routes for the Pacific Railroad. Between 1854 and 1858 he was stationed at Benecia California, Fort Yuma Arizona and finally at Fort Buchanan near Sonoita Arizona. During this period he became enemies with another U.S. Army officer, James H. Carlton, who would later order his arrest during the Civil War. He resigned his commission on 31 July 1858 and moved to Tubac and continued to make a name for himself in early Arizona history. On 8 July 1859, he fought a duel with Edward Cross (editor for the Weekly Arizonan) who had written questionable things about Mowry. Both men were evidently poor shots since neither was hit during the exchange and they ended up apologizing to each other. Mowry served for about a year (1860 to 1861) on the commission to establish the border between California and Nevada. During his time on the commission he became interested in mining and prospecting which led to his decision to buy the Patagonia Mine. In 1864 he published a book titled “Arizona and Sonora”. He was elected to Congress after the Civil War but never took his seat. The rest of his life is depicted in the paragraphs above.



Sylvester Mowry –
1864 Sketch by John
R. Browne

Summary prepared by T. Johnson in September 2011 from various web sites.

Additional Material: GVHC Library File 13