

Frank -
please try
to figure
which mine
this is.

Ruth



The mine is located in typical mountain country with pines, piñons and oaks



Original mine tunnel—1902 photo showing Nelson Weddle, left, and Nathan Hall

A Prospector in the Magdalenas

By Thomas Edwin Smith

I WAS DRIVING south on Highway 85 and had not intended to stop in Albuquerque, but a flat tire changed that. While I was having the tire fixed I walked downtown. An old friend, Vernon Foy, saw me but lost me in the crowd before he could get to me.

Immediately he began calling around town, leaving word for me to get in touch with him, and his message reached me quickly and we got together.

Mr. Foy owned a mining property in Copper Canyon in the Magdalenas that had not been worked for years; he wanted to try to develop it into a copper mine. I knew the

property, having made a trip down there with him several years before when I had located some ore for him.

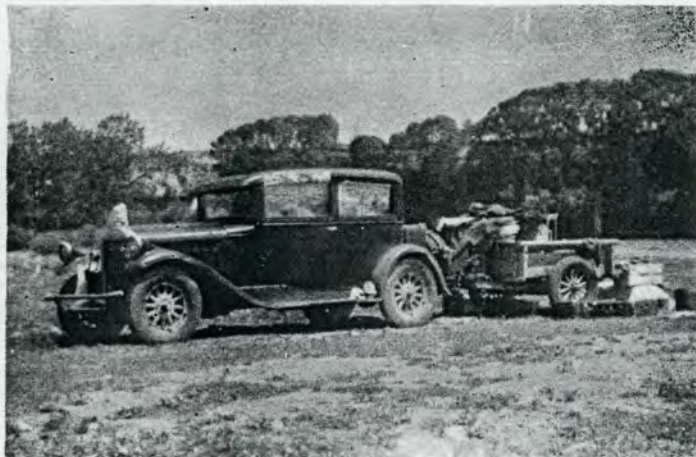
The prospect of doing a thorough job of geology with no "hurry up" was too good to pass up. So Mr. Foy arranged to rent a house for me not more than half a mile from the mine that would be ready as soon as the hunting season was over, since some hunters were now occupying it.

In the meantime I pored over maps and reports, studied what little had been written about the geology down there, trying to learn what I could in advance.

Mrs. Foy and I spent much time making a list of the



The Pierce-Arrow serves as a truck to haul timbers



The car and its trailer load arrive at the mine

supplies I would need. Winter was coming on, and while the mine is seventy miles farther south than Albuquerque it is at an elevation of more than seven thousand feet. At that elevation the snow might get deep enough to block all traffic over the last two miles. I must be prepared for several weeks isolation. I spent money like a drunken cowboy, but when I had finished I knew I could live like a hermit for six weeks and never miss a meal. I loaded food stuff into the back of my old Pierce, then loaded the trailer with the rest of my impedimenta and on top of it, a lot of short lumber and the like that might come in handy.

There was one more thing. A large dog-house was perched on top of all and lashed down with rope. The dog, a tramp pooch with half a dozen bars sinister in his family tree, rode in the car with me. He belonged to a friend of the family and he was thrust upon me to take down to the country where he could run and bark and not annoy the Albuquerque neighbors.

I started early, for my car is old and slow, but still it was nearly noon when I drove up to the Hall Ranch house where I was to live.

The house, built more than half a century ago, simply

does not fit into any classification. It is perched high on a steeply pitching terrace of limestone debris, and rock walls had been built up on the low side and filled in to form a foundation. Even then the upper side is dug nearly four feet into the hill.

It looks like a vacation house for visitors yet Nathan Hall and his family lived in it for many years. Above the mantel is a fine set of elk horns, while old photographs of early mining and prospecting days hang on the wall. There are two photographs of his corral and one colored photo of vaccination-time which tells of the days when Nathan Hall ran three hundred head of cattle in addition to his mining and fruit raising activities.

The ranch proper consisted of two mining claims, but long ago it had been patented and transformed into an orchard. I could see dead apple trees by the hundreds where twenty years of sub-normal precipitation had been too much for them. I was told there had been twelve hundred of them at one time and that Nathan Hall had shipped twenty-five thousand boxes one year. That seems like a big figure, but he must have harvested a lot, for his apple house, of rubble and mortar, (Continued on Page 41)

The descent into the mine



The track from mine mouth to dump



The magazine where powder and tools are stored



(Continued from Page 39)

the Rio Grande and the Rio Puerco both had to be forded, but we freighted between the points all the time, and I did not anticipate too much difficulty when I sent Joe Buck, one of our mule-wranglers in for my prize. Four stout mules were hitched to the wagon, and Tomasito, a Navajo boy, rode along on his pony to help wherever needed. I prepared myself for at least four weeks delay before my impatient fingers could run over that keyboard.

It was just about that long when Tomasito rode in with the grim news that Joe had let the wagon overturn on the trip home, and the Baldwin piano was upside down in the sand near Rodeo Springs! Joe knew full well that I would have a suspicion that the bright lights of Albuquerque had dimmed his senses and had prudently returned there with the wagon, giving the excuse later that there was freight for us in the warehouse and he was sure that I would not want him to drive in with an empty load!

There was nothing to do with the fingers but twiddle them until that wagon got back, but the second time it went, it was manned with a crew of dependable Navajos. When the piano finally arrived, it had been exposed in the sand one month!

Today, getting that sand out with a vacuum cleaner would be simple, but fifty years ago it was practically a grain by grain process. We all worked feverishly as Richard was due any day and I wanted my surprise to be all set up and in place. We made it! With the case oiled and polished and the ivories carefully washed, no one could guess the mishap.

The day my husband came I could hardly contain myself until he reached the door of the living-room. There in all of its shiny black glory, in the midst of blankets, baskets and ancient pottery, stood the Baldwin upright. Richard stopped short in the doorway.

"And what is that?" he demanded, pointing his finger at the strange object.

"That is my new piano," I replied smugly.

"And HOW did thee pay for it?"

The words tumbled out fast as with pride I related my fling into the world of finance. There was a long pause when I finished. Then he drew himself up with all of his Quaker dignity and looked down at me.

"My dear, I am sorry if I have failed thee in something thee so much desired, but for the future"—another long pause, "DO NOT OVERSTEP AGAIN!"

I never did. There was no occasion for it. I had attained my heart's desire.

A Prospector in the Magdalenas

(Continued from Page 17)

is large enough to hold two carloads of boxes. Perhaps a hundred and fifty trees are left alive, and most of them are more dead than alive.

I can trace old acequias that had led water around the hills and up the gullies. I counted four masonry reservoirs and later discovered a fifth among the junipers and piñons outside his fence. At one place a dam of masonry ten feet high blocked off Copper Canyon to form a level orchard behind it. Now there is a drilled well with both a windmill and an engine to run the pump which sends a flow through a system of pipes instead of ditches to water the remaining trees. Inside a high woven wire fence are perhaps a hundred young



GRANT COUNTY

The County Seat is located in the rolling foothills of the mountains. The altitude is 6,200 feet. The town came into existence early in 1869 and has a colorful history, spiced with tales of Apache raids, sagas of Billy the Kid, a silver and gold bonanza, soft-handed gamblers and two-gun cowboys. One of the original settlers of the City, John Bullard, made the discovery of the Chloride Flat silver bonanza; rich pockets of almost pure silver were found. Millions of dollars of virgin silver were removed almost at grass roots. A smelter was erected and the once sleepy little settlement became a riproaring mining camp.

Today Silver City is a prosperous community with a net population of 8,000. It has a long record as the shopping center of Southwestern New Mexico. It boasts a trade territory of approximately 50,000 persons.

With a climate unexcelled; a beautiful country of rangeland, farms and forest; and untold millions of wealth in the ground, this portion of New Mexico has been truly blessed by a beneficent nature. For hundreds of years the Indians roamed the rugged mountain country and left much evidence of their having been here. Many fine specimens of pottery and other Indian relics can be found by even the most casual tourist.

The population of Grant County is 21,286. It stands third among New Mexico's counties in total assessed valuation. The principal industry is mining. The total value of metals mined is approximately \$38,792,425.00 annually, out of a total of \$42,350,200.00 for the entire State.

From the earliest days, cattle raising has been one of the major industries in Grant County, the cow country atmosphere still persists. There is an annual cattle crop of over \$1,500,000.00. This being an arid section of the country, a successful ranch necessarily has to be very large, usually 50 sections or more. Ranches comprising 350 sections of land are not unusual. Along the Gila River, where there is irrigation, there are a number of prosperous farms and fruit orchards.

Bank deposits of the American National Bank in Silver City and the Grant County State Bank at Bayard total over \$8,000,000.00.

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1870 - 1951

It was at Cimarron on September 3, 1870, that the articles of association of The First National Bank of Santa Fe were executed. The papers, undoubtedly drawn in the law offices of Elkins and Catron in Santa Fe, were in the usual form suggested by the Comptroller of the Currency, with the unique interpolation that the seal adopted by the Bank shall be, "a wild Indian (as distinguished from a Pueblo Indian) surrounded by 'The First National Bank, Santa Fe,'" thus testifying to Maxwell's interest in the aborigenes whom he had lived amongst a good share of his life. The seal is still in use by the Bank.

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long, high heap of material that had been removed in its sinking.

The shaft had been sunk alongside a sheet of brown rock that had been squeezed up as a liquid through a crack in the earth twenty million years ago. That intrusion had hardened the adjacent ground so that the shaft walls were hard and straight though all the timber had rotted and fallen in.

I lay on the ground like a snake and, clinging to a juniper, I could look eighty feet down into the shaft and see planks criss-crossed in all directions like some giant's jack-straws, effectually blocking the shaft at that depth.

Here I must do my work. Here I must try to learn the combination of factors that had brought about the deposition of the copper that had already been mined out. Then I must study the surrounding area to see if I could find the same combination of factors or a similar one, which had deposited more copper ore, now hidden.

It was a pioneering job in 1950 for I must do my own prospecting regardless of what had been done before. The claim had first been located by some prospector in 1877, but to me it was virgin ground to explore. The men who had discovered the ores and mined them out were dead, and nowhere could I get one bit of information as to how the old timer had found it nearly three generations ago. Now here I must tap underground stores of copper, zinc and silver and must direct the miners who will dig them out.

I tackled the job hopefully. We had a mine, there was pay ore in the stope, lots of land for expansion—but we were chronically short of money. I had to economize, to improvise short cuts so that we could make one dollar do two dollars worth of work.

Entrance to the underground workings is through an inclined shaft that dips about forty degrees; that is as steep as a church roof. In the thirty-odd years that it had been idle, rock, mud, pine needles and the like had fallen, washed or blown into the opening to pile up all the way down but especially against the remains of an old mine car, around up-turned ends of mine rails, with a lot of rotten cross-ties, pieces of heavy timber and other unclassified rubbish. It wasn't deep at the top and I tied a small rope to a peg in the limestone wall and holding to this, I backed gingerly downward.

A hundred feet down, the muck piled against the old car was deep. Only a foot and a half of space remained between the roof and pile of rubbish. Here I let go of the rope and wiggled, feet downward, through the opening. I was on broken rocks that were hard and the edges sharp. I wished I had knee pads before I had gone four feet.

A little farther and the pile was deeper. There was an opening along one side barely large enough for a man. Just below that, fragments of rock were stacked precariously, just waiting till some incautious foot sent them tumbling.

To clean out that mess was the first job on my list in order that we might lay new rails on new ties and make that gosh-awful mess look like someone was working here. That meant we must buy rails, ties and a couple of mine cars to haul that stuff to the surface and get

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to bend that curved rail ourselves instead of taking it to Magdalena. I had already located two eight-inch oaks that stood right close together only four hundred feet down the road so we dragged the rails there.

We laid one on the ground to serve as a pattern to shape the other one. We stuck one end of this other rail between the two oak trunks, wedged it so it would bend straight and hooked a chain to the outer end and fastened the chain to the car. I knew about how much we must bend it, but a mine rail is as springy as a willow withe, and we'd have to bend the end way too much so some of the bend will stay in. Clive backed the car a few feet and the rail bowed nearly three feet. He came ahead and saw that the rail had retained about four inches of bend. He backed off again and put on about as much more.

We unhooked it, laid it by the pattern rail to compare them. We saw it must have some more. Back between the oak trunks it went, but a little farther this time and twice more he bowed the rail. This time it was right. We took it up to the mine. It had taken not more than half an hour and had cost nothing. If we had taken it to town, it would have meant four hours time and three dollars in cash.

We bolted the ends to the rails that lay down the incline, spiked them to ties, then proceeded to lay the half dozen lengths of straight track out to the edge of the dump. That took another day, but now we were ready to go down to the mine.

In the meantime a little gasoline power hoist had been delivered.

It was only a short job to dig out trenches for the timbers to which we bolted it, pile rocks on the platform so it would not kick up its heels when a hard pull came on it, put on the cable, try out the engine and get ready for the next project—a car body to use for removing rock.

I built a light wooden car out of scrap lumber lying about. It was only twelve inches high and the front end projected two feet ahead of the front wheels while the rear end was directly over the rear wheels. I arranged it so it would dump ahead or to either side, and it was ready for the job. Total time three hours, total cost perhaps two dollars. Not so bad.

We lifted it on the track and tried it out. It worked fine. We could haul an eight-hundred pound load without having it rear up at either end. Being so low, shoveling was only one-fourth the effort.

Our work went pretty well from that time on. I showed the two young men a few things I had learned in more than forty years of mining and they caught on quickly. Two different days they loaded and hoisted twenty-one cars each. Altogether we removed one hundred and thirty cars of stuff from the track. We laid new rails on new cross-ties and by the time we were down to the bottom it really looked as though some one had been working who knew how to mine.

Editor's Note: This is the first of several articles on prospecting in the Magdalenas. A second article by Mr. Smith will appear in next month's issue.

J. H. RYAN

General Contractor

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LOS ALAMOS

Is Here to Stay

Los Alamos — the AEC's atomic laboratory — is being re-built as a permanent research center, according to R. G. Elliott, AEC information director, speaking at a forum in Carlsbad.

"The Atomic energy program may be reduced when the national emergency is ended," he said, "but Los Alamos is here to stay."

The AEC's spending in New Mexico has a tremendous effect on the State's economy. In the past six months the AEC has spent \$60,000,000 in the State. The annual payroll for Los Alamos and Sandia is about \$31,000,000.

The organizations and firms listed on this page are happy to have a part in this city which contributes so much not only to the scientific knowledge of the world and to the welfare of our Nation, but also to the economy and business well being of our State.

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