

Harshaw Mining District

Driving south from Patagonia along Harshaw Road, FR 58, you will see spreading, gnarled sycamore trees scattered among the old oak trees and the rock outcroppings. Curve to the right 6.1 miles down the road onto FR 49, and 2 miles down the road you will come to the Harshaw cemetery. Park under the spreading sycamore tree and view the many manicured graves on the hillside. Several of the graves have well preserved accounts of the history of the persons buried there.

Continue 1.2 miles to Flux Canyon Road, FR 812. Hiking down the road, you will pass through the reclaimed Trench Camp mine site and at FR4685, cross the creek and walk up 4685 to the end of Humboldt Canyon. You will pass many mine sites and walk below



Humboldt Canyon Grotto

spectacular walls of rock. The bedrock of this district includes formations of Paleozoic limestone, quartz diorite, granite porphyry, rhyolite, and adesite, as well as purple altered adesite volcanic rock. The oxidation of the iron content of the minerals in the rocks provides brilliant color.

In the rock wall, .6 miles up the canyon, a cave opening houses a grotto, which has been gilded with gold paint and contains candles and statues. To the left on the cliff is embedded a tile of the Virgin Mary.

Upon leaving Flux Canyon Road, note the remains of an adobe building to the south. This was the Harshaw/Trench Camp Church.

Mining was born in the Harshaw area when silver was discovered in the Patagonia Mountains. Indians and Mexicans discovered “light blue oxidized silver rocks” in the Trench Mines before 1850. It was after the Civil War that American prospectors began searching the area. In 1877 a large vein of silver was discovered by an ex-soldier, David Tecumseh Harshaw who was grazing cattle on his land. Harshaw named the lode of free-milling chloride and horn silver ore Hermosa. He named the boomtown Harshaw, which by 1880 included a 20-stamp mill, a mile-long main street and 2,000 residents.

The Harshaw Mining District encompasses an area 5 miles wide from Sonoita Creek Patagonia 9 miles southeastward to a point 3 miles beyond Harshaw, with the main ridge of the Patagonia Mountains to the west of Alum and Flux Gulches separating it from the Patagonia District. Most of the mining activity was from 1880 to 1903, but the mines were productive from the mid 1850’s to the middle 1960’s. Total production was 1,300,000 tons of ore containing about 86,000 tons of zinc, 72,000 tons of lead, 9,200,000 ozs. of silver, 3,100 tons of copper, and 4,300 oz of gold. (Source: Mindat Web Site).

The Trench Camp group of claims had 57 mine opens, mostly shafts and step out prospects. The total of all shaft mines was about 16,600 feet of underground workings (Source: HAMF). The World's Fair Mine, .5 miles south of Humboldt Canyon on FR49 had 7 mines and an elaborate array of building and shafts on site, with extensive tunnel and shaft operations. The World's Fair Mine "contained about 15,000 feet of drifts, tunnels stopes, shafts, and winzes. The main entrance is a crosscut tunnel at an elevation of 4,680 feet. A 10-stamp mill was erected on the property, worked from the early 1880's to 1954 and produced some 13,000 tons of ore" (mindat.org)



Remains of the 10-stamp mill at the Worlds Fair Mine in Flux Canyon

All of the Harshaw mines were operated sporadically in the early 1900s. The Arizona Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) worked the mines from 1937 to 1956 and is the current owner of most of the mines. In 2003 the Environmental Protection Agency ordered Asarco to apply for discharge permits for the Trench Camp Mine, which was discharging acid mine drainage containing zinc, copper and cadmium above water quality standards into Alum Gulch, which drains into Patagonia Lake. The reclamation of the land can be seen in the Trench Camp area along Humboldt Canyon and is monitored quarterly by Asarco for discharges.

+Unrestricted access into this area is no longer authorized and the hiking club has had to stop the two hikes that explored the area of Flux and Humboldt Canyons. Arizona Mining Incorporated (formerly Wildcat Silver), a Canadian Company, has commenced exploratory mining operations titled the Hermosa Taylor Project and has closed off the area. The company owns 450 acres of patented private land and has filed claims on about 20,000 acres of public land. .

Prepared by John and Bette Bosma, 04/2006. Updated in 2019 by T. Johnson from information contained in articles published by Nogales International and the Patagonia Area Resource Alliance.

Sources: The Resources of Arizona: A Manual of Reliable Information Concerning the Territory. Jerome, Arizona. 1881.

Hazardous Abandoned Mine Finders.

Web Sites: Mindat Organization

U. S. Forest Service

Photographs: Jan Sink, Green Valley.

Additional Material: GVHC Library File 13