

# FIRST BIG BUSINESS WEST OF HASSAMPIA RIVER

## Western Desert Association

Beginning in the early 1920's the Tonopah Belmont Mine began producing lead and silver from within a mountain core. This mining operation represents the first significant business west of the Hassayampa River near present day Wintersburg and Tonopah (western Maricopa County).

Mining occurred on multiple levels that began at a mountain top entry point. The tunnel went down for over 600 feet. Each level had a 400 foot horizontal shaft. Mine was located about 20 miles northwest of Buckeye Arizona at a time when no other industrial development existed west of the Hassayampa River.

The mine and the working community site are on State Trust land. In the 1920's Tonopah Belmont Mine was the largest mining development in the region. Old Maricopa County maps show the distinctive road in that area - it was the only one and it still goes 'cross-country' between the mountain top mine and the Hassayampa Railroad siding. Today various parts of the 'diagonal' route to the mine can be seen on aerial maps and labeled Hassampia -Wickenburg - Aguila.

Dates of operation are estimated to have been from 1924 to about 1941. Today, the age of the mining site give it historic status. In the April 1985 Buckeye Valley News article, four-year employee at the mine Don Besack provided these comments;

*About 50 men were employed at the mine. Water tank (well was six miles south at windmill today), half dozen tent-houses were divided for men and families. A power house provided DC current for lighting. Foundations still exist for several structures including a recreation hall, cook shack, and bunkhouse for single men. School children went to Palo Verde Grade School. Mail was received at the Palo Verde Post Office. Shopping was done at the Hassayampa Store or in Buckeye.*

*The Hassayampa Rail Road Siding\* was where equipment was delivered and the 'concentrate' that had been mined was delivered so it could be shipped to a smelter in El Paso, Texas. This productive mine was owned by the Tonopah Belmont Mining Company of Tonopah, Nevada.*

Today, the abandoned mine contains many dangerous shafts and hazardous materials. Not many remnants remain of the buildings and equipment used to find silver within the 10 story mine.\*

Stay out for safety sake - the main shafts are blocked. Going into this mine has killed others.  
**Stay Out.**

Notes: From Arizona Names X Mark the Place by Byrd Howell Granger. An early rancher in the western desert was E.H. Winters; who lived near the rail-line siding supplying equipment to the Tonopah Belmont Mine. He wanted to attract miners and homesteaders to a general store and post office and tried to gain "Tonopah" for the post office name but was denied with a note 'could be confused with Tonopah in Nevada'. So in 1930 the United States Post Office, Tucson, choose the second name - Wintersburg\*\*.

Four years later, John Harvey Beauchamp owner of a small general store north of Salome Road and tagged as 'Lone Peak' (at Indian School and 411th Avenue today) sought the name of Tonopah to attract the miners. This time the USPO staff in Tucson Ok'd the application's first choice so in 1934 the USPO in **Tonopah Arizona was born!**

Parts of a faint dirt road from the Tonopah Belmont Mine to both the rail siding and the Tonopah post office location (411<sup>th</sup> Ave and Indian School) can still be seen today. In the 1930's there was a great interest in hot springs but it took wells of about 100 feet deep to reach the aquafer ,that in this small area, happened to be heated up by a volcanic crack. Water temperatures range from 85-120 degrees Fahrenheit. Several 'hot water' bath house resorts have existed near 411<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Indian School.

The Belmont Mountains were named for the mine by the United States Geological Survey, 1963.

\*Tonopah Tribune newspaper 2013.

\*\*Arizona's Names X Marks The Place, Historical Names of Places in Arizona by Byrd Howell Granger, 1983. (Wintersburg pg. 681.) (Tonopah pg. 618-619.) The Falconer Publishing Company, Tucson Arizona.