

**The Oro Copia Mine, Orocopia Mountains, Riverside California  
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Dos Palmas Spring, located 15 miles southeast of Mecca, in the early 1860s was an important stop on the Bradshaw Trail – the road to the La Paz, Arizona gold diggings. Just to the north of the spring is the Orocopia Mountains, and the location of a long forgotten gold mine, variously known as the Sommerville, Fish, Dos Palmas, Gold Canyon, or Oro Copia.

Edward G. Fish and his son G. B. Fish of San Bernardino and C. O. Barker of Banning, began working the Sommerville, gold mine located in the Orocopia Mountains, around 1892. The mine made news in 1894 when large specimens of quartz, laced with gold, were brought into San Bernardino. At that time a “few men” were working the mine but apparently they had accomplished a lot – they had driven two adits, 90 and 300 feet long. (Could it be that this was an old mine that was being reactivated?) One 1895 newspaper article stated that this mine, “is one of the most promising prospects in Southern California, and conservative mining men estimate that the present developments put \$160,000 in sight in the property.” Yet operations remained relative modest. It was reported in 1896 Fish and son were processing 3 tons of ore a day at a 2-stamp gasoline powered mill located at Dos Palmas Spring. This mine is often referred to as the Fish Mine due to their early ownership of the property.

In December 1897 it was announced that the Gold Canyon Mining Company had been organized to work the mine. Company executives included D. E. Mitchell, president; E. B. Fish, vice-president and C. C. Doran, secretary. In the same press release, it was stated that a 10-stamp mill would be built. The *Riverside Press and Horticulturist* in February 1899 related the company had completed a wagon road to the mine, had graded the mill site, graded a 400-foot long mine rail line to connect the mine to the mill, and were constructing a tramway. Edward Fish pronounced, “the ledge being opened to be the largest and best in this southern country, barring the Gold Cross at Hedges.” A 5-stamp mill was running by June, 1899, but they found the nature of the gold was too fine to be recovered, and in September indicated they would install a cyanide plant.

On August 25, 1902 the Oro Copia Mining and Milling Company was incorporated in Arizona for \$3 million to develop the mine, with Charles Foreman, president; Richard Mercer, and J.L. Johnston vice presidents; W.F. Winnie, secretary; and G.L.A. Richter, superintendent. Apparently east coast (one report – “old Comstock men”) were the principle investors.

In 1904 the Ora Copia company announced the intention to spend \$100,000 developing the property; a well was sunk near Dos Palmas Spring, and a 9-mile long 2-inch pipe

line was laid to the mine and mill. The stamp mill was replaced with three roller mills with a combined capacity of 40-tons per day. A cyanide plant was also constructed, and by 1905 it was planned to increase the capacity of the mine to 200 tons.

According to a 1912 article, litigation brought work at the mine to a halt around 1905. The General Manager, C. C. Doran, showed a reporter from the *Indio Date Palm* around the place. In the 1912 article the following improvements were noted: the well, 9-mile pipeline, a roller mill, a cyanide plant, a tramway and 400-foot of mine rail track. Doran indicated he hoped to be producing bullion in a few week.

Finally, in 1915, the *Date Palm* reported Mr. Doran, of Long Beach, present lessee of the Oro Copia Mining Company, expected to open up the Oro Copia in a few weeks.

John Hilton, in his 1940 article in *Desert Magazine* describing an onyx location in the Orocopia Mountains, stated this mine was said to have produced a fortune. He also stated, "the old mine camp is about demolished. The tool house and blacksmith shop which survived many years of weather and vandalism were blown down in recent times by a desert twister. Some tunnels, inhabited by bats, the tailings and the foundation of the mill are all that remain."

#### **1960 Description of the Dos Palmas Mine by R. B. Saul, (Saul, Gray, Evans, 1961)**

Location: Sec. 16 ?, T. 7S., R. 12 E. SBM., [note: this map did not have the public land survey grid shown on it.] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Canyon Spring quadrangle, 15' 1944, 3/12 miles northwest of Clemens Well, on the south slope of the Orocopia Mountains. The mine is reached by an unimproved dirt road up a wash which leaves the range near the triangulation station marked Can 890 on the topographic map.

Ownership: Undetermined. The claims were held in 1955 by John C. Brinton, Eileen Brinton and George W. Robinson, under the name Black Jack Claims.

Geology: The country rock is gneiss. A quartz vein lies in the plane of a fault: which strikes N. 55° E., and dips 50° - 55° NW. The fault zone is as much as 5 feet wide and contains a soft gouge of chlorite schist. It is well exposed for several thousand feet across several ridges and intervening canyons. The full northeasterly extent of the fault was not determined but to the southwest it is truncated by a wide, northwest-trending fault zone which probably is part of the San Andreas system.

The quartz vein pinches and swells, ranging from 0 to 4 feet in thickness. It is fractured. Contained pyrite is altered almost completely to iron oxides which have filled fissures and cavities. Small amounts of secondary copper minerals and calcite are present. Several samples of ore contain visible traces of gold but no assay data were found.

Development: The vein was explored by means of adits driven northeast on 3 levels in the southwest slope of a ridge immediately north of a mill and camp site. The adits are drive northeast and are joined by stopes which appear to be as much as 30 feet wide.

The ground stands well, being only slightly caved at the portal. The adits are untimbered. The stopes are timbered with stulls. Ore was milled at the mine but water was probably in short supply.

**My visit.**

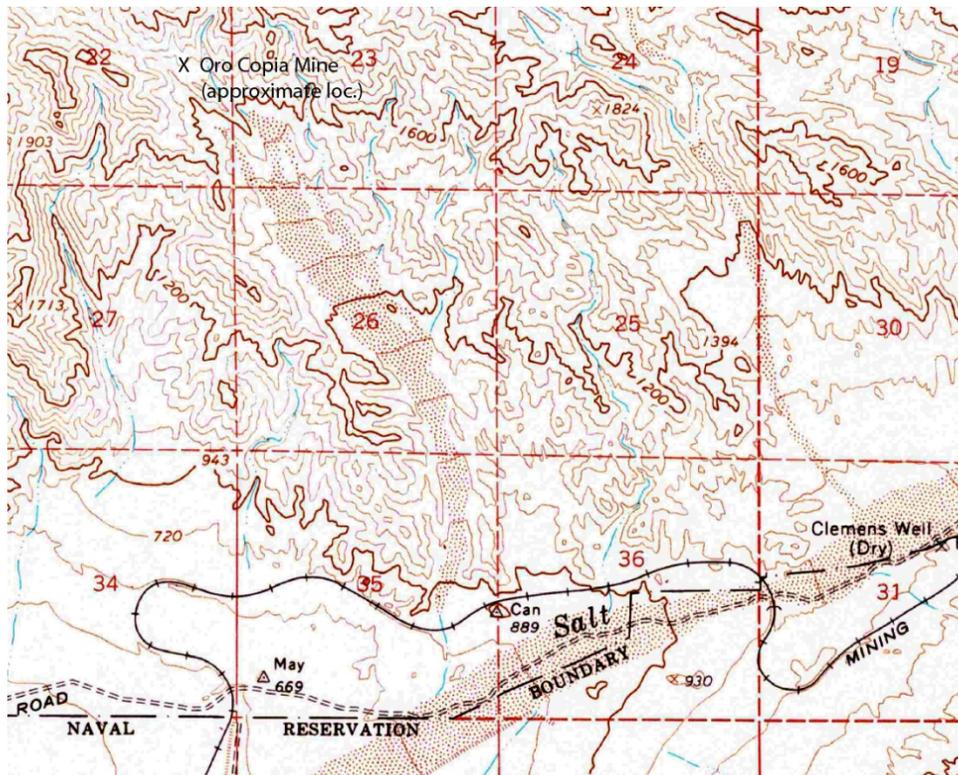
I visited this mine on October 1, 1981 and placed the location of this mine (on the Hayfield 15 minute quad) as in T. 7 S., R. 12 E. Sec. 22 NE1/4NE1/4SE1/4 SBM. While there I noted the bed of a 400-foot long mine rail track, the trace of the tramway, and ruins of the cyanide plant referred to above as well as the 3 adits that Saul noted.



1981, Mill Ruins



1981, Bed of mine railroad.



Map showing approximate location of the Oro Copia Mine.

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