

CALICO GHOST TOWN'S
MAGGIE MINE TOUR



Calico Ghost Town is the site of what was, for a time, the greatest producer of silver in Southern California. Over 50 mines were in production at the peak of the “boom years,” with an estimated total of 13 to 20 million dollars worth of the precious metal recovered.

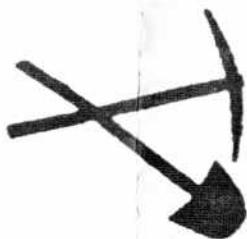
By the 1880's time period when the mining was heaviest here, techniques and engineering procedures had become refined all over the country. Many ideas were developed during Northern California's Gold Rush period. Basically, the main idea was how to get the minerals (ore) out of the mountain and how to do it most efficiently!

Since the silver had formed into seams or veins in the rock, miners were able to see the directions these went, and simply followed along. This is why tunnels could go in various directions. But here at this part of the Calico Mountains, most of the major veins went in a north by northwest direction.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MAGGIE MINE TOUR

As you enter the main tunnel (also called a drift or adit), you would normally be walking on the iron rails for the ore cars, but the rails that were here were taken up, so no one would trip and fall on them. You may notice the tunnel is rather narrow—the average size was five feet wide by seven feet tall, just large enough for a man to pass the ore cars through with no wasted space! This was a working situation in here, with few comforts.

You may also notice that there are not many places where wood or timbering is shoring up the walls to support the tunnels as other mines have. This is because the tunnels were blasted into a volcanic ash which over millions of years turned to such hard rock that it was not necessary to support the walls or overhead in a lot of locations. This is why this type of mining was called “hard rock mining.”



DISPLAY #1 MINER ON A LADDER

This is a vertical shaft, which the miners used to go from one level of tunnels to another. Wooden ladders were so well used that they often had to be “re-rung,” since the steps would wear out, making them unsafe.

DISPLAY #2 MAN WITH HIGH PRESSURE DRILL

By the 1890's, some miners had the latest in technology for getting silver ore out of rock! This is an example of a hydraulic drill being used. There may have been a few drills driven by steam power here at the Calico mines, but most miners relied upon their picks and blasting with gunpowder or dynamite to break things loose.



DISPLAY #3 ORE CHUTE

Here is how the silver-bearing ore would be transported from a level above us to where it could be loaded into an ore car and pushed outside the mine. A system of bell signals was used to communicate between the levels, since some of these chutes were almost 100 feet long! The man high above would only send ore down when he heard the right bell signal, since he would then know it was safe. Removable gates were installed at the chute openings to further prevent accidents.

DISPLAY #4 DEAD MAN'S DRIFT

Large open areas like this were often called stopes. Here is where a multitude of ore veins were concentrated, so an entire room was created as the material was dug out. This is called Dead Man's Drift because this could be a more dangerous area to work in than in a tunnel. There was no shoring of the walls or ceiling done at all in this soft material, so chances of a cave-in were greater.

DISPLAY #5 MULCAHY BROTHERS

The widow Mrs. Catherine Mulcahy and her seven children arrived in Calico in 1884. The boys were Fred, Ed, John, Jim and Maurice. By the time the mining was dying out in 1896, John, Jim and Maurice were still at Calico as miners. By 1916, John Mulcahy did buy the Maggie Mine and was known to have used it as a place to sleep during winter. The story has it that he was inspired to name this mine the “Maggie” in keeping with the words to a song that was popular at the time.

DISPLAY #6 GLORY HOLE

The massive ore bucket you see here was hoisted up to the surface for emptying, since at this point in the mountain it was closer to the top than it would have been to load up the ore cars and move them out the main tunnel entrance.

DISPLAY #7 BIG JOHN

This would have been a common sight in the mines at Calico! A miner working by himself, using a heavy sledge hammer to drive in a drill bit to prepare for blasting, or just chiseling away some of the rock surrounding a silver vein in order to break it out.

EXIT OF THE MAGGIE MINE

Aren't you glad you don't have to go up on one of those old wooden ladders? This exit has been widened beyond its original size in order that plenty of air can come in the Maggie Mine tunnels for our visitors. Calico miners often dug extra air shafts, in order to intersect the tunnels, providing ventilation for the men working inside them.



A WORD OF CAUTION! DANGER!

This is the only mine in the Calico area that is safe for the public to enter. All others are extremely hazardous and must not be approached for any reason.

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