

## *Mining Ore Not*



Arizona has a history, which is almost as rich as its soil, when it comes to its populations recognizing value in its precious metals. The first Arizona peoples to take advantage of the riches that lie beneath the surface of the land were the Native Americans. They used the ores in a multitude of manners from making adornments of silver to creating rich dyes from turquoise mixed with oxidized copper ore.

The name “Arizona” itself is thought to have been given by its early inhabitants, the Aztec, Pima, and Tohono O’odham Indian tribes. The name comes from a combination of the word "arizuma," which means "silver-bearing, and the word "Aleh-zone" or the word "Ali shonak" which both mean "small spring." So, Arizona means something close to small stream of silver.

During the 1700s, the Spanish and Mexican governments had small gold and silver mining operations in southern Arizona. These mines were profitable only because their locations provided access to Native Americans who were willing to work as miners. These locations were also close to the most precious resource of Arizona, water. Water was needed for what was called “placer” mining. Placer mining is what we call ‘panning for gold.’

The gold rush in California brought many people to the west looking for gold. Many of those people stopped to mine in Arizona. Towns began to sprout up around the mines. Some of the towns were small because the mines were small and needed few workers, other towns were large because the larger mines required more miners to work in them.

In 1850 gold and copper were found in Arizona. Although, Arizona had gold, silver, and copper ores in its soil, copper became the most profitable ore to mine. Many of the mining towns that originally began because of the gold rush either shifted to mining copper or died. Every time a mining operation closed the miners who worked the mines were out of work and needed to find a new location to live and earn money. Some of these towns were completely abandoned. These abandoned towns became some of our most famous “Ghost Towns.” People from all over the world visit the ghost towns of Arizona.

The mines closed at different times in our Arizona history and for different reasons. The first mine closures in the 1800s were because it was too expensive to mine the small loads or un-pure loads of silver and gold. The second closures of mines were due to the invention of electricity.





Copper is used as a conductor for many electrical devices. At one point in history the value of an ounce of copper was worth more money than an ounce of gold. Many of the miners abandoned their mining of gold and silver in search of the more profitable copper ore. The 1900s brought innovation and machines to mining. It was very hard for the small mines to compete with the large corporate mines and many of the miners closed their small sites and went to work for the large mining companies. The mining companies had their share of struggles as well. As the

number of miners grew, they organized a union, which bargained with the companies for safer working conditions and more money for the miners. This made mining more expensive and the large mining companies closed some of their smaller site, which in turn displaced miners. During these negotiations miners would protest and strike, these strikes were large and sometimes violent. The protests and strikes continued over time, as late as the 1980's.

Through all its troubles, Arizona is a mother load for mining. Although there are many types of minerals and gems to be found in Arizona, the most profitable is still copper. Copper is known as one of the 5 C's of Arizona. By the early 1900s, Arizona produced more copper than any other state in the union; 65% of all of the nations copper currently comes from Arizona.

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