

D-M Field Trip

Goodsprings Mining District



Located roughly 30 miles southwest of Las Vegas, NV, the Goodsprings Mining District is famous amongst mineral collectors, and samples of its vast suite of mineral species are represented in museums the world over.

However, the area boasts far more than just mines and minerals, offering outdoor enthusiasts all the best that Nature has to offer. This makes Goodsprings a coveted destination for visitors to the region who seek a unique experience beyond the artificial glitz and glamour of nearby Las Vegas. For weather, fauna, and flora, April is the best time to visit and explore the Mojave Desert in general, and the Goodsprings area is a great place to start.

Such was the case for Concord, NH, resident Dawn Ruddy who came to Las Vegas to attend a Domino's Pizza convention with her husband, Rik, a franchise owner. Being more interested in nature than pizza, Dawn sought a more rewarding experience than roosting in a boring convention her entire trip. Following referral to DM Fieldtrips, Dawn set out with Discover Minerals publisher G. Miles Lehman and fellow guide Dennis Morrison on a venture she would never forget. An early start found the morning receptive and rewarding.

The route from Las Vegas west on Charleston Blvd skirted the fringe of the **Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area** (see Vol. 2 Issue 4) along SR159 to its terminus at SR160. Heading west towards Pahrump, NV, for several miles led to a well-traveled dirt road that marked the entrance to Goodsprings Valley between the Bird Spring and Spring Mountain ranges—and the beginning of adventure.

Historical Background of the Goodsprings District

The area that eventually became the Goodsprings Mining District was first described in 1856 by Nathaniel V. Jones at the behest of the Mormon church headed at the time by Brigham Young. Following reports of lead deposits in the area, Jones set out to ascertain the extent of the deposits, establish claims, and ultimately begin smelting operations the following year.

The first—and one of the largest—mines in the district, was the Potosi Mine (see Vol. 2 Issue 4). Although over 9,000 pounds of lead ore (primarily galena) were initially smelted, the effort was ultimately abandoned due to the poor quality of the ore; despite the presence of some silver, the high zinc content made the ore too difficult and costly to work economically before significant advances in processing techniques!



In ensuing years, while minor amounts of gold, silver, and copper were being recovered from various operations in the area, it was the eventual recognition by geologist T.C. Brown of *oxidized* zinc minerals (smithsonite, hydrozincite, hemimorphite, et al.) in



the ore that changed the district's fortunes dramatically.

This recognition, along with completion of the **San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad** in 1905 (which heralded the incorporation of Las Vegas as a city in 1911), stimulated development of the mines in the nearby mountains, which became the principle source of zinc in Nevada. Peak production occurred during the years of both world wars, then dwindled to dormancy by 1964. The district has remained idle to this day.

According to the *Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Bulletin 62, Geology and Mineral Deposits of Clark County, Nevada*, "the district had yielded 109,000 tons of zinc, 47,000 tons of lead, 2,500 tons of copper, 90,500 ounces of gold, and 2,102,000 ounces of silver" by the end of 1962!

Mustangs abound in Goodsprings Valley during Springtime

Back to the Adventure

The off-road trek through Goodsprings Valley soon revealed the first "gem" of the day—a small herd of feral horses. Over the next 11 miles, three more groups of mustangs (27 individuals, including foals, in all) made their appearance. Along the way, numerous flora was in full bloom, carpeting the valley in a rainbow of colors that provided some great photographic dividends!

carefree browsing



a cautious approach

keeping a close watch



foaling around with mom



Upon leaving the rutted path near the outskirts of the small community of Goodsprings, the journey continued on a well-packed dirt road through Wilson Pass to the margin of Sandy Valley. Here, the famous (among mineral collectors) Boss Mine presented an opportunity to explore one of the most notorious of Goodsprings' mines, and collect some impressive—and rare!—mineral specimens (see pages 6-15).



ready to hike

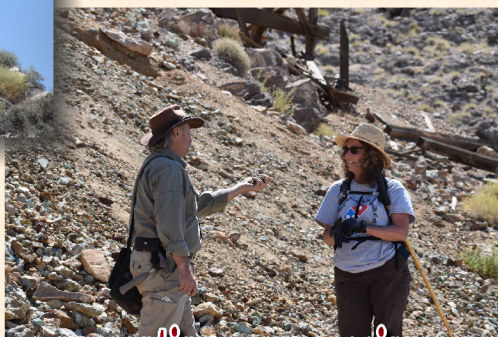
long trek to the top



one step at a time



close-up inspection



presenting some specimens

On to Goodsprings

The field trip continued on to the former mining town of Goodsprings, Nevada. Natural springs in the desert oasis were known to, and used by, Ancient Puebloans and Paiutes, and then utilized by travelers along the Old Spanish Trail starting in the 1830s. The first settlement, however, would not be established until later in the century.

Originally known as Good's Springs, after founder/cattleman Joseph Good who settled in the area in the 1860s, Goodsprings became a booming mining town when the nearby Yellow Pine Mine opened in the early 1900s.

Located on SR161 about 8 miles west of Jean, the community is enjoying a rebirth in popularity as more and more visitors from around the world flock to Las Vegas, the gambling-turned-entertainment mecca just 28 miles northeast on Interstate 15. Due in large part to the internet, the town is being re-discovered by history buffs who seek more than what Vegas has to offer.





For one, the town hosts the oldest school in Clark County that was built specifically *as a school*. Opened in 1913, the Goodsprings Elementary School is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is still in operation today! Unfortunately, that status may change in the future due to a shortage of funds.

However, the crown jewel for tourists and locals alike is the **Pioneer Saloon**, one of the oldest pubs in Nevada. Built in 1913 by businessman George Fayle, the tavern may well be the last of its kind in the United States; its interior and exterior walls, manufactured by *Sears and Roebuck*, are made of stamped tin!

But the saloon's main claim to fame arises from the role it played following one of the saddest events in the region's history. On the stormy, fateful night of January 16, 1942, TWA Flight 3—a DC-3 taking off from Las Vegas—crashed into Mount Potosi. All 22 crew and passengers were instantly killed, including film star and wife of Clark Gable, Carole Lombard!

The Pioneer served as a center of operations, and proudly houses a memorial to both movie stars in its small adjoining dining room. Newspaper clippings on the wall testify to Gable despondently waiting three days at the cherrywood bar for news of his wife's fate, indelibly burning cigarette holes in its surface that are still preserved today.

Lunch and a couple beers at the Pioneer Saloon was the perfect way to conclude an exploration of the geology, flora, fauna, and history of a world-class mining district that still rewards visitors from near and far, and left Dawn Ruddy with an experience she will always cherish.

