

THE BISBEE DAILY REVIEW, SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1918.

MOLYBDENUM FIND OF ARIZONA MAN ROMANTIC STORY

Prospector, R. O. Boykin, Hits Better Than Gold Ore;

Capture of Busy Bertha Reveals Krupp Secret

(Harold Blake Schumm in the Philadelphia Ledger)-

In December, 1913, a lone prospector was wandering over Southern Arizona on an optimistic search for "gold."

Robert O. Boykin was his name, and mail addressed Tucson, Arizona would reach him some time. He was a tall, sturdy young frontiersman, born fewer than thirty years before in Texas of old Texan stock. In his youth he was a cow puncher, then a broncho buster, later a Texas Ranger, a miner, a deputy sheriff in a mining community, a rodman on a geological survey, and then, spurred on by the call of "gold," a prospector in the out-of-the-way corners of civilization.

He was tracking through a deserted town — ghost town of Arizona, called Mammoth — a place that years ago, when the mine was running, was worthy of the name it bore. On his burro the prospector had packed his canvas bedding and cooking utensils, and in the rain had started on his way to a Mexican adobe hut that offered a lodging. On the long way through the cactus and mesquite the burro and the prospector had wearily plodded along.

As he approaches the deserted town the rain was falling. The burro would not increase its pace. Using a switch he had cut from a mesquite tree. Boykin whipped the animal, and the burro gave such a kick that a frying pan became dislodged and clattered to the ground.

Boykin stooped to pick it up and as he did so he noticed yellow streaks in the beds of the rivulets running down the side of the road into the San Pedro River.

A Strange Yellow Metal

Here was something new! What was it?

With the eye of a connoisseur Boykin started to investigate. The rain was now pouring down, but oblivious of the fact he kept on. Like a trained surgeon performing an operation under shell fire, he wandered all around wondering what these deposits could be. He traced the "yellow streak" to the tailings of the obsolete and deserted mine, and then dumping the tobacco out of his tin into his pocket he filled the can with the "unknown" and went to his bed in the Mexican hut to dreams worthy of fiction.

Boykin took the tin can to Tucson, where in the laboratories of the University of Arizona the tests were made. "Wulfenite" its chief constituents being "molybdenum" and lead was found in abundance.

But what good was "molybdenum?" For what could it be used. It surely did not — experts thought — amount to much, for in the entire United States in 1913 there were but thirteen tons of such ore.

At this point the scene shifts to Germany. While the world was peaceably going about its affairs, the kaiser's general staff, through its underground agents, heard of this discovery in far away Arizona. Boykin was told to send a sample to a firm in Hamburg, representatives of the Krupp Gun Works. Came a cable right back to Boykin:

"How much have you, and when can we get it? Cable reply Immediately." Boykin, lacking finances, took the proposition up with a capitalist of Tucson, and through him was able to get a plant started. The price the Germans offered Boykin was, to his mind, staggering. Fortune, he thought, was his.

Contract Void By War

But just as the first delivery was to be sent to Hamburg the war broke full force upon the world. Boykin looked at his contract, and for the first time realized that the harmless — as he had thought — clause "void in case of war" left him with it on his hands. Financial ruin stared him in the face. He had the plant and the product on his hands, and shipments to Germany were impossible.

Then came Liege. Antwerp, and finally the Marne, with its capture of a "Busy Bertha" and the discovery of the use of "molybdenum" in the manufacture of the great German guns.

Immediately the English subsidized the molybdenum mining industry in Canada and Australia, and then the entire products of Boykin's plant at Mammoth were taken by the British and French. Today the United States has first call on the output.

It is today no military secret the importance this metal is to play in the war. One has only to view the town of Mammoth, and compare it with four years ago. Then it was deserted, lonely and ghostlike, a few people here and there still living around the shell of the old place. Today it hums with activity. Day and night the huge new plant is turning out molybdenum for Uncle Sam and the allies. Daily shipments, aggregating thousands of dollars, are going to the world's munition centers. The development that the Germans started is now full grown and working with prodigious strength against the kaiser and his army.