

## Adamson (Panaminas) Mine

After Arch Beauregard and Billie Vaughn located the Blizzard claims in April 1916, Billie told Clarence Adamson of the discovery and encouraged him to prospect the ground to the north. Clarence found the ground favorable and by August had located the Bluebird claim, adjoining the Blizzard group on the north. The claim title was later transferred to his brother Don. The Adamson brothers were stepchildren to Billie Vaughn, who had married Arch's sister. The tungsten-bearing tactite lay at the extreme northern tip of the Pine Creek pendant and was the termination of the massive ore bodies to the south. The southerly ore was more accessible so little was done with the claims during the World War I era.

For some unknown reason the U.S. Vanadium Corporation did not purchase the Adamson claims along with the adjoining Blizzard group in 1935. Walter Lenhart, manager of the Tungstar Mine, leased the claims in 1941 but apparently did little with them. Panaminas Incorporated of New York took an option on the property in 1941. The company, which controlled tungsten mines in South America at the time, began an exploration program of core drilling under the direction of mining engineer Homer C. Neal.

Two ore bodies were subsequently discovered and mined from 1942 to 1943. The Northwest Ore Body was the largest and accessible via an access road from Morgan Creek. The Ridge Ore Body, located at 13,000 feet on the very crest of Wheeler Ridge, was smaller, but higher grade. A two-ton sample contained 20%  $WO_3$ . It was mined by open cuts and the ore brought off Wheeler Ridge via a jigback tram. This was the highest elevation mining done on the Pine Creek pendant and possibly in the entire Sierra Nevada mountain range. All the ore produced was treated at U.S.V.'s mill and sold to the Metals Reserve Company; U.S.V. bought the ore for \$30 a unit and charged \$5.05 per ton for milling. During this time Panaminas purchased the property and later patented eight of the claims. A camp was built near the lower mine workings and over 100 men were employed in the operation.

Mining was discontinued in 1944 due to high costs, lack of laborers, and termination of contracts by the Metals Reserve Company. Total production was 38,609 tons from which 18,109 units of  $WO_3$  were recovered, making it the fourth largest producer in the pendant. In the winter of 1945, the mine camp was destroyed by an avalanche sliding off the east slope of Wheeler Ridge. Luckily the operation was closed and the buildings unoccupied.

Due to the return of high tungsten prices, a core drilling program was initiated on the claims by Northfield Mines Incorporated, in 1952. This work was done under contract with the Defense Minerals Exploration Administration (DMEA). Through this program the federal government provided funding to companies involved in the exploration and development of deposits containing strategic metals such as tungsten. The Northfield program continued into 1957, but the company did not pick up the property, probably due

to a drastic drop in tungsten prices brought about by termination of the government stockpile program. Pine Creek miners Lenny Palmer and Al Decker leased the mine in 1954 and did some mining through 1956.

Union Carbide never purchased the Panaminas claims even though they contained reserves that lay adjacent to their claims. By the 1970s, Union Carbide's underground workings had crossed onto the Panaminas claims and they subsequently paid the company a royalty for any ore mined on the Panaminas ground. Union Carbide last removed ore from the claims via underground workings in 1990.

Hikers can still trace the old dozer trail that switchbacks up the mountain side east of the remains of the Panaminas camp and ends at the open cuts of the Ridge Ore Body. Here at the top of Wheeler Ridge one is rewarded with the same dramatic view seen by miners who labored in the thin air here over five decades ago. To the east, and 8,000 vertical feet below, is Round Valley and to the northwest sets 13,748 foot Mount Morgan. Over 125 years ago members of the Wheeler Survey gazed down from its summit into a remote valley below, not knowing what riches it would eventually yield.