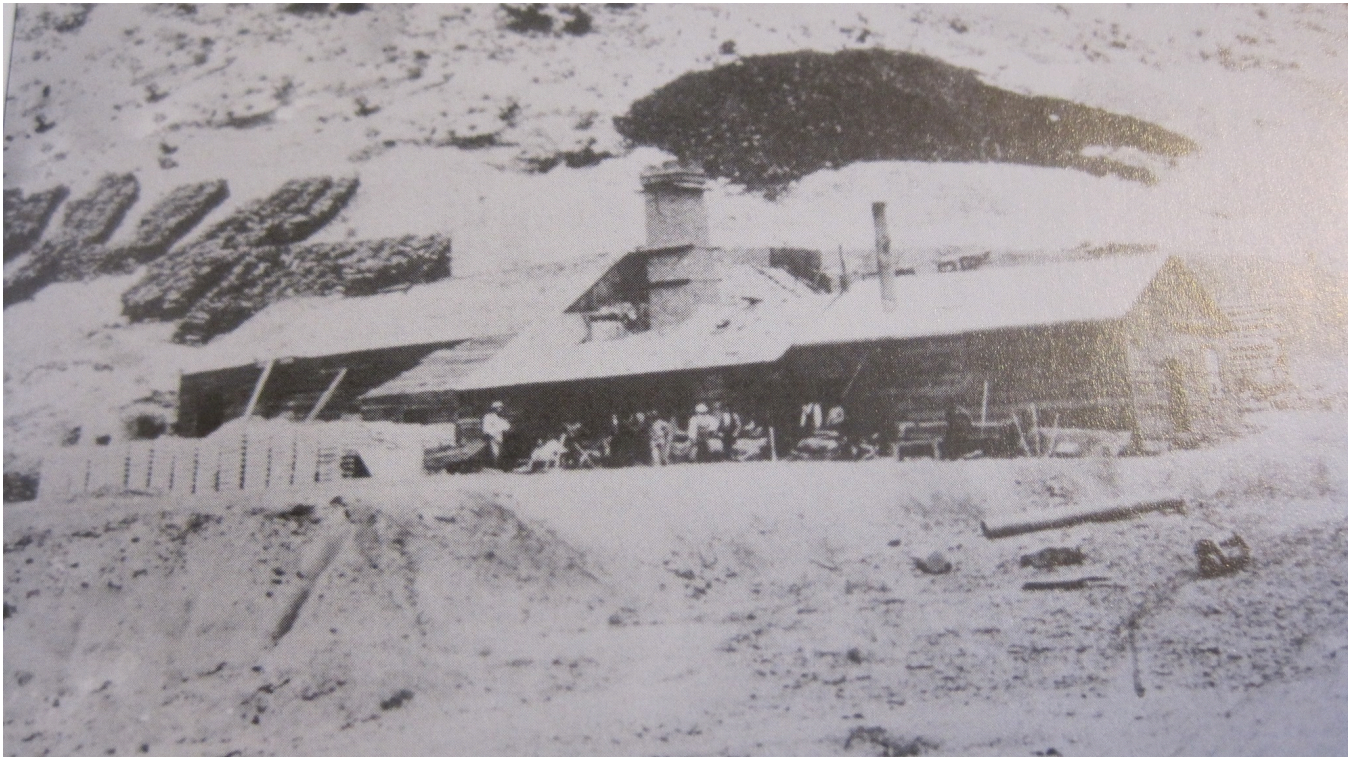


Stacked Up Bullion Bars

by Friends of Cerro Gordo

In 1873 18,000 bullion bars worth \$600,000 waited at Cartago landing. Bakersfield freighters were in trouble, heavy winters rains ruined the wagon road, making it impassable most of the way. A fatal horse disease also paralyzed the trade. Cerro Gordo was falling into stagnation. Furnaces were forced to shut down or run light, and all night shifts were discontinued. Bullion shipments across the lake were halted and inbound freight dwindled from lack of business. By May 30,000 ingots were stacked like cordwood at Cartago and Cerro Gordo. It has been said that men built miner's shacks out of the silver bars until the operations could be continued and the silver marketed.



The Belshaw smelter is long gone, but this rare picture shows us what it looked like. Note at the front left a stack of bullion bars can faintly be seen. Cordwood fuel for the steam boiler is stacked on the mountainside behind the building. The blast furnaces were the highest technology of the day, producing 5.25 tons of bullion in 24 hours. Above the furnace chimney the dark area that looks like smoke is actually an outcropping of rich galena that ran 15 - 70 feet wide and 750 feet deep.



Silver ingots stacked like cordwood at Cartago.