The Humboldt smelter today stands as a silent reminder of livelier times. (Max Kegley).

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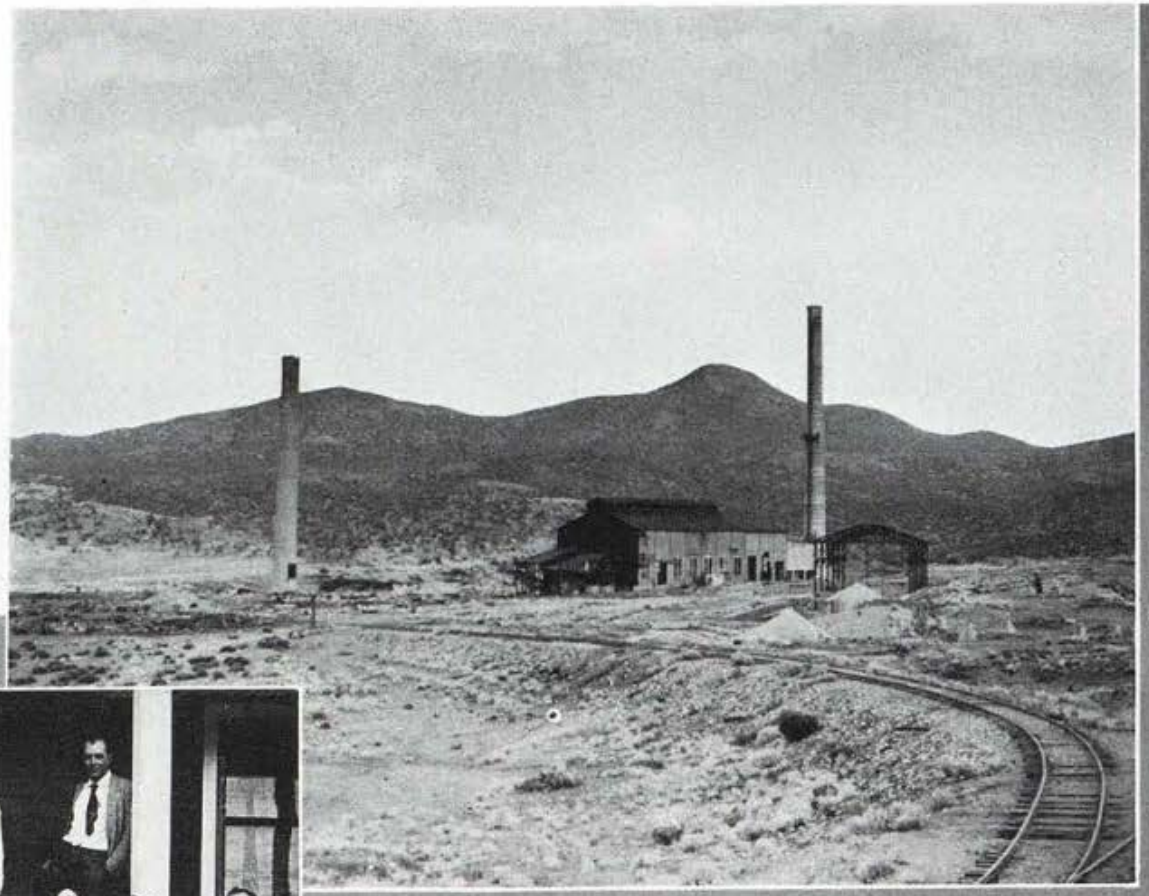
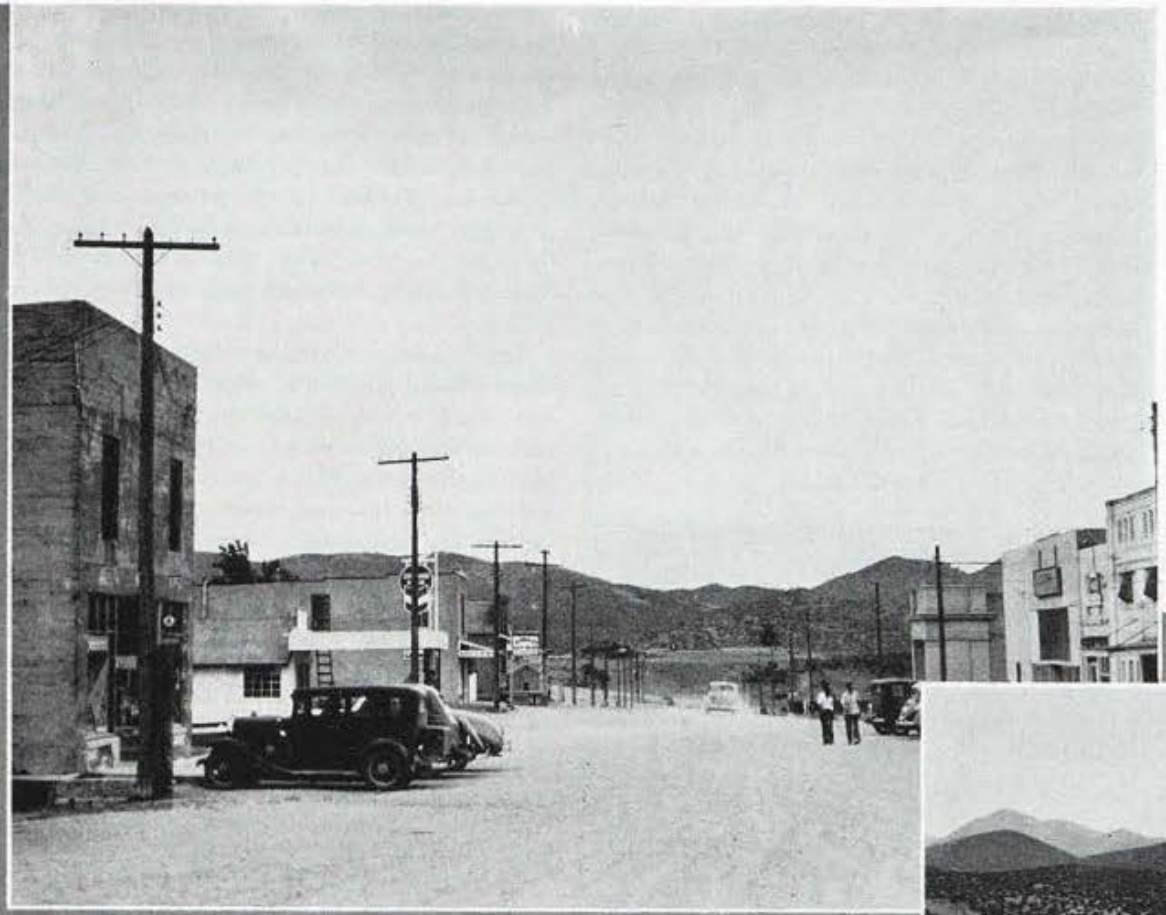
Some of the department heads and their families at Humboldt in 1907 when that camp was one of the busiest copper camps in the West. At center, in black, is Superintendent Hamilton; at his right, in grey, is Manager Oxnam.



You Remember

BY TOM



Humboldt, its greater glory vanished, lives on today. State Highway 69, the Black Canyon Highway, passes through Humboldt's main street. (Max Kegley).

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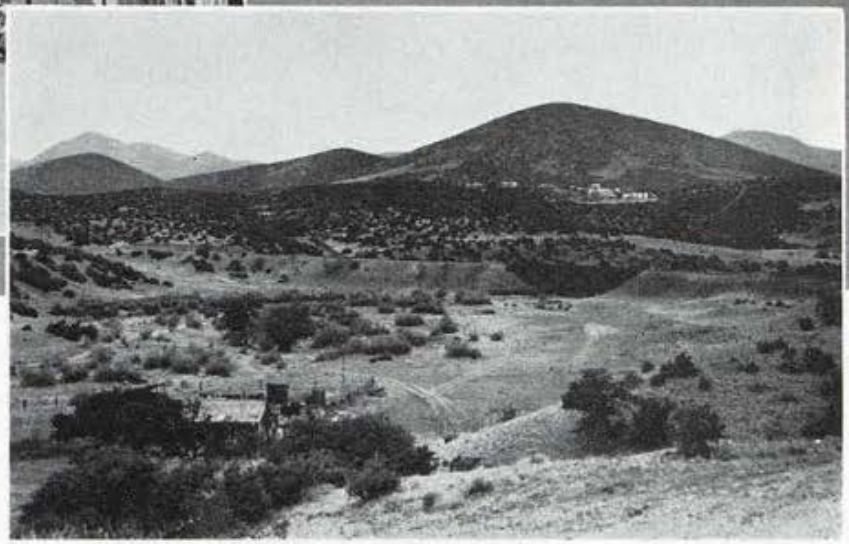
In the hills around Humboldt are many scars of previous mining operations. Humboldt enjoyed several periods of brisk prosperity, may again some day. (Max Kegley).



HUMBOLDT?

WHITE

IF YOU'VE LIVED IN Arizona for eighteen years or more—surely you remember Humboldt. Had you lived here, especially in Yavapai County, thirty-five years ago, you couldn't very well have escaped knowing it. You must have heard of that hottest little copper camp in the Southwest; and heat in this case had nothing to do with temperature within the twin reverbs that rumbled and roared day and night, and the dragon-like converters that coughed orange and purple flame into the dust-chamber.

Humboldt is that tiny spot on today's road map, lying twenty miles east of Prescott on State High 69 (Black Canyon Road) leading to Phoenix, and just south of the cutoff feeding U. S. Route 89 that runs between Prescott and Flagstaff via Jerome, Clarkdale and Oak Creek Canyon.

In the mind of the old-timer—and his whiskers didn't *have* to drag in the dirt—the little old hot spot is remembered most vividly as being bounded on the east by El Capitan, on the south by the head of Agua Fria Canyon, far to the west by the Bradshaws and sky-stabbing Mount Union, and to the north by all of Lonesome Valley.

All of which smacks too much of schoolroom geography. Humboldt was something more than a spot on the map: it was a copper camp with character. True, its character may have been, especially at the outset, a matter around which debate might become heated; still, it was as respectable as any young copper camp in 1906. Essentially, it was a spot where men worked hard and played hard; so it was no discredit to any of them, if the proceeds of the pay-checks handed out by Paymaster Lewis and cashed by Joe Bethune at the Humboldt Commercial Company—where they pushed out the clinking, dull yellow double eagles—if these proceeds, more often than not, went straight to the bar and the tables and certain silken receptacles down at Schwanbeck's and similar resorts of glitter and glamour.

These men earned their money—at the ore bins and the crushers and rolls in concentrator and sample mill, at the roasters, and at skimming and tapping the furnaces, especially when the blast furnace froze up, mostly at night, when the shifter had to rouse Furnace Super-

Humboldt Hall.

The old church.

On a busy corner.

intendent Yaeger from his sleep. They worked, too, at the general office under Don Kurtz, and in the lab. under Chief Chemist Scofield. General Manager Finney, as head of the 400-man plant, was the unofficial mayor of Humboldt; his aide was Superintendent Hamilton, who kept the smoke rolling out of the stacks.

Like every other copper camp, topography permitting, the town was spread all over the scenery. It extended from the sacred precincts of The Hill, almost half way to Dewey, and from the steep banks of the Agua Fria, clear across to the farthest reaches of Cooktown. Tents galore dotted the townsite, though when Humboldt achieved civic consciousness in a matter of a few months, frame stores and dwellings replaced canvas. There was one notable exception in the bakery: this was partly brick, and while such construction was a matter of necessity, it did impart a certain air of permanence.

No liquor was dispensed in the townsite, proper, yet there was one establishment on Main Street that enjoyed loyal, wholesome popularity—Doc Francis' drug store. The Doc's patrons were loyal not so much because his liquid refreshments were wholesome, as it was because his was one of the first drug stores in the Southwest where you could buy almost anything, which made it a popular meeting place; more than that, the genial old boy was always willing to "put it on the cuff 'til pay-day," which was more than they'd do in The Hollow. This made for loyalty.

It wasn't long after the furnaces were blown in and blister copper was being turned out, when the plant became a must-see point on the itinerary of metallurgical engineers and technicians: they came even from Japan—serious and inquiring, bespectacled and be-camera-ed. They came to see the oil-fired reverberatory furnaces in action, and to pore over the highly gratifying results of such pioneer smelting practice. Keen interest also centered in the use of waste heat from the furnaces, applied toward making steam for the power house.

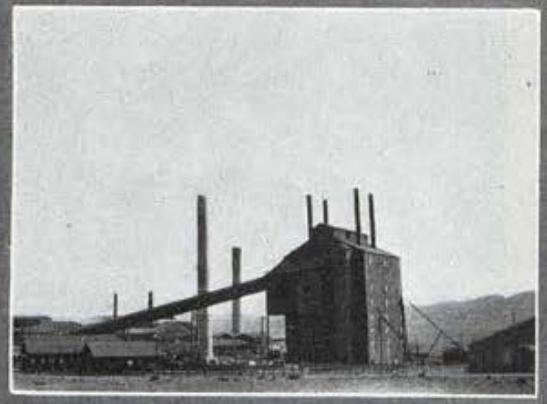
These forward-looking practices were not enough to offset the high cost of unloading and handling incoming ore. Thus, even during the Arizona Smelting Company's first operating

(Continued to Page Thirty-Nine)

Humboldt residence.

Panorama of town.

The smelter of yesterday.



You Remember Humboldt?

(Continued from Page Twenty-Seven)

year, the plant got away to a bad start; so when the near panic of mid-1907 jolted the country, Humboldt was the first smelting camp in the Southwest to feel it. And it was hard hit. During August and September, the little combination train pulled out daily with eight, ten or a dozen smelter stiffs outward-bound for Douglas or Bisbee; and those perennially impoverished souls who lacked the required price of a ticket, shouldered their packs and trudged off over the hills, mostly toward Jerome—a stiff climb and a weary hike. Some even declared they'd "do a bit of prospectin', maybe, 'til she opens up again."

Gradually, The Hollow, Little Mexico and Cooktown, and the double row of tiny cottages at the lower end of Main Street felt the pinch of the lay-off order. The Hill felt it, too. Then one day, came the order to "shut 'er down." . . . Smoke no longer billowed from the stacks; the furnaces went cold; even the chimney from the mess house where the staff ate, became lifeless; houses and stores went gaunt and empty; there was no more shift whistle at three and eleven and seven. . . . At night it was worse than ever: in place of the sparkle and brilliance of thousands of electric lights, occasionally overshot with the warm, crimson glow from brimming slag-pots when they dumped their hellish loads, the place was blacked out, except for the bobbing light from the watchman's lantern as he made his lonesome rounds. The converter floor, once an inferno of heat and noise and blinding light, was now cold and still and very dark. . . . Also cold, still and dark were the once gay and giddy night spots down in The Hollow. . . . A screen door at Schwanbeck's banged and squeaked listlessly, almost in time with the hoot of the lonesome owl perched atop the brick facade, as he watched and blinked at the full moon rising over the Black Hills.

The ten to fifteen-car train, with oil from the Coast, limerock from Puntenney and ore from half a dozen mines—and the combination baggage and passenger car at the very end—was now cut to two cars. And in the wake of the shut-down, a similar fate overtook a score of small mines near-by, such as the Yaeger and the Iron King, the Jones mine at Chap-

arral, the McCabe, the Henrietta and the Poland mines, and the properties in and about Mayer and Crown King and Walker and Prescott. The smelter-owned Blue Bell near Mayer and the De Soto at Middleton likewise languished when paralysis set in at Humboldt.

For six long years the little camp was definitely a ghost; the only activity was marked by the daily arrival of the much abbreviated train from Prescott, followed by the desultory shuffling of the figures of a few die-hards, always hopeful "she'll open up soon," as they followed the postmaster up the hill carrying an all but empty pouch.

Then came rumors; before long the air was electric with a contagious sense of imminent good times. "Yes, sir; she's goin' to reopen this spring—summer at the latest." The well-known grapevine throbbed and sizzled, as men came in from all over; these included such former Humboldters as Clem Pederson, reengaged as purchasinig agent, Otto Janssen as auditor, Walt Goeglein as yard foreman, Arthur Marshall as sample mill shifter, and dozens of others. It was a real story-book reunion, accomplished to the exhilarating sound of the hammer, saw, riveter and the unloading of new machinery and fresh supplies.

Some of the staff at the Humboldt boarding house, including the cook. This picture was taken in 1922. (Tom White).

The company had been reformed as the Consolidated Arizona Smelting Company; the new general manager was G. M. Colvocoresses, a mining and metallurgical engineer of wide experience, and an able executive. He "clicked" immediately, with the entire force. Once more the camp came to life, and with it a dozen mines in the district. Main Street again throbbed and throve, and so did The Hollow. This was in the spring of 1914; by May, the furnaces were blown in and the smoke began streaming down Lonesome Valley. . . . Then one night in mid-August when Gary Vyne was giving his weekly movie drama at Jones Hall, the feature was suddenly cut in favor of a slide proclaiming "England declares WAR on Germany!"

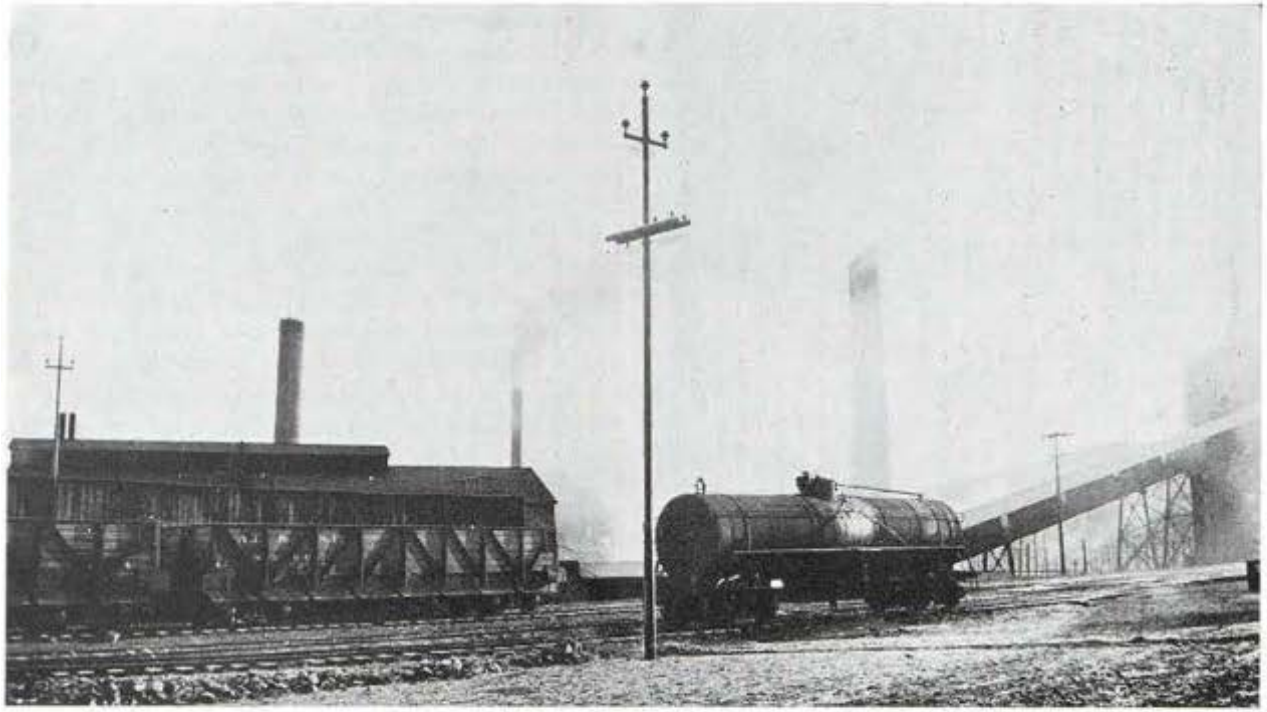
This was destined to mean great things for Humboldt. The price of copper zoomed and soared until it reached a 32-cent price level during '16 and '17. Those were banner years for the camp, especially while the Little Daisy (later "U. V. X. Mine") shipped its ore there, pending completion of its own smelter at Clemenceau. So rich was this ore that for every three carloads arriving in Humboldt, one car of blister copper was dispatched to eastern refineries. . . . In one of the hectic war years, the C. A. S. Co. set up the astonishing precedent of declaring a dividend! . . . Money flowed freely. . . . Guns spat out hot lead twice—once fatally; the "toter" lit out for hills ahorseback, and Deputy Marks, after a futile chase, had Doc Vivian attend a nasty arm wound resulting from a slug from the toter's gun. . . . A bad fire destroyed the sample mill and storage bins. . . . Badger fights being outmoded, mountain lion "hunts" gained vogue—and victims! . . . Home guard "incidents" occurred on The Hill, under General Scott and Colonel Brunskog. . . . Deputy Smith raided a polite bridge game on The Hill, freezing visible funds totaling 40 cents, causing feminine hearts to skip a beat at the prospect of doing a stretch at Florence. . . .

Then came the Armistice—from which the last echoes of the Humboldt power house whistle haven't yet died out! . . .Bert Banks, as captain of Royal Canadian Engineers, returned from France with certain signal honors spelled with initials. Bud Gilbert, Johnny Peel, Mort Smith and others brought o. d. and navy blue to the streets of Humboldt. . . . One who failed to return was Billy Kinsman: the local Legion post was named in his honor.

Meanwhile, the ore kept rolling in as the blister copper went out; but the long overdue ebb in the market finally set in, and late in 1920 the warmth and breath of life again departed Humboldt. Again the camp was gripped with discouragement, though not so tightly as before.

So in April of 1922, back she came, with a bang. Once more the compressor thumped rhythmically, the furnaces roared and converters breathed flickering color. Again the ore trains rolled in from Blue Bell and beyond, to dump their clattering loads into the bins to be crushed and rolled, then digested by flotation, or perhaps fed directly to the furnaces.

This time, it was the plant of the Southwest Metals Company, and still under the direction of G. M. Colvocoresses. "Tony" Smith was his assistant, Frank Corwin the smelter superintendent, Arch Scott chief chemist, "De Soto" White superintendent of mines; and in the office, Otto Janssen still was auditor, with Tommy Connell as chief clerk; "Soss" Henry was purchasing agent. . . . The ultimate on the social side of all this revived prosperity was achieved with the arrival from New York of Colonel Thompson, who financed the revival. His guests included Lord and Lady Louis Mountbatten, close friends of the then



Humboldt wasn't just a spot on a map. It was a copper camp with character. Through the sulphur smoke in busier days looms the great converter stack bespeaking activity.

Prince of Wales. While their private car stood out on the siding below the tennis court, the home of Manager and Mrs. Colvocoresses became the scene of a four-day series of brilliant receptions and dinner parties.

The late summer of '23 brought disquieting signs; the copper market was again edging away from prosperity levels—and so was Humboldt. It was a matter of only months before the camp was shut down, tight. . . . Right here, asterisks alone could best point the picture of what happened.

Both the plant and the townsite were denuded of everything of salvage value: machinery was yanked out, whole rows of houses knocked down for shipment elsewhere. . . . But there's still a store, post office, garage, and the district school—where maybe the history course includes an outline of Humboldt's happier days. This wasn't so long ago, either; Humboldt hasn't yet attained senility as a ghost camp, for it's only the son of the son of the first owl, that blinks and hoots at midnight while the full moon swings over Lonesome Valley.