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Prospecting of the middle fork of the Boise River below Atlanta led to a certain amount of success in the spring of 1864, and more important finds farther up the river were only a matter of time. Actual discovery of the Yuba River placers--which in turn led to the location of the Atlanta lode--came from an entirely different direction, though. A party led by John Stanley, which had left Warrens July 4, 1864, and had come through Bear Valley and Stanley Basin before striking over to the head of the middle fork of the Boise, struck gold on Yuba River and organized a new mining district there, July 20.

Early placer mining on Yuba River, which got off to a start at the end of September, 1864, was conducted with considerable difficulty. Then in November, John Simmons discovered the Atlanta lode. Rich both in gold and in silver, this massive discovery held great promise. Two seasons of additional prospecting led to efforts to bring quartz mills to the remote Atlanta district in 1866. One of them commencing operation in the summer of 1867. Even though the initial milling facilities were designed only to save the gold, and not the silver which was more important in some of the Atlanta properties, the trial runs in 1867 looked excellent indeed. Right from the beginning, though, the exceedingly remote location of the Atlanta lode made it far more than ordinarily difficult to develop the district and to bring in the necessary milling equipment. Yet the extremely high-grade ore available in quantity in the Atlanta lode made it easy in 1868 to interest a large number of British investors in the area. Although little resulted from heavy initial British investment, aside from bringing in expensive machinery, a great deal of attention was attracted to the Atlanta lode. Then in 1869, a new company--the Monarch, financed by capitalists from Indiana--acquired important Atlanta properties, and made quite an effort to get stamp milling underway. As yet, little or no effort could be made to save the valuable silver part of the ore being processed, and stamp milling proved to be a failure. By 1869, in fact, all three mills which had made serious efforts at production, had ground to a halt. Atlanta silver ore proved to be extremely refractory, and attempts to process it only to recover the gold did not turn out to be economic.

Even though all major attempts to work the great Atlanta lode had failed by the end of 1869, promoters there had one indisputable advantage: rich ore suitable for large-scale development was available in quantity sufficient to promise a fortune to an investor who might back a successful company. London interests wishing to recover British losses in the original Atlanta investments sent out William Nancarrow to examine the situation there in 1870. Incredibly high grade samples convinced him that the Monarch looked better than anything to be found on the Comstock. Yet terms of purchase never were worked out during several years of negotiation. Meanwhile the Monarch continued to mill a limited amount of high grade rock for its Indiana owners, with its water power turbine running during the winter with natural hot water used to prevent freezing. Other properties were still less productive. Really good ones were being held by their owners pending a solution to the recovery problem. Less promising prospects, however, found a ready sale to investors--some British and others from the East--who invariably met disappointment during those years. Such promotional tactics damaged the reputation of the Atlanta mines severely. A resident there complained, March 22, 1871:

> This country has been infested with a set of "bilks" as trifling as ever cursed any quartz country. They play themselves off on the hard working miners as capitalists who have, or control large sums of money, and bum their way into some wild cat, bogus quartz, then get a little provisions and tools, and leave the boys to work for them on jawbone, which is mighty current in this camp. They go on to New York and London, and try to foist their bogus stuff off on the market. These bilks bring our real resources into disrepute, and they have been a great drawback on the camp. Thank God, they have none of the good ledges in this camp, and they will not get them unless they can show something more substantial than jawbone. . .

Under these circumstances, only small operators gouging out a little of the highest grade ore were able to do anything at all. In the summer of 1874, for example, a rich surface discovery revived the Monarch: 5,500 pounds of selected Monarch ore was packed out to Rocky Bar, freighted to Kelton, Utah, and finally shipped by rail to Salt Lake. Purchased in Atlanta for $5,000, this small lot brought $11,000 when smelted. Warren Hussey, the buyer, thus made a comfortable profit. But that kind of operation could do little to develop the district. And the alternative--milling in Atlanta--was equally unsatisfactory. Recovery rates were so low that tailings processed a third time were yielding more than they had during the first two attempts. Even when Atlanta began to revive in 1874, Rossiter W. Raymond noted the extreme disadvantage under which local miners operated there:

> The fact that nearly all the mine-owners are poor workingmen, unable to put their mines in condition for continuous working during the long and severe winters, the absence of facilities for transportation and of proper works for the reduction of silver-ores, together with the high prices for provisions and mining implements and materials, continue to be severely felt by the Atlanta people; but present indications prophesy that in spite of the drawbacks better days are in store for the district.

Improved transportation and improved technology were the key to profitable, large-scale operations in Atlanta. Neither would be achieved without expanded capital investment in the district. In the summer of 1874, investors from Buffalo, New York, acquired a substantial extension of the discovery lode. (The original Atlanta discovery lode, aside from this extension hereafter known as the Buffalo, went entirely undeveloped until July 26, 1877, when Ralf Bledsoe finally started something more than surface assessment work on it.) With great effort, considering the lack of a decent road over the hill from Rocky Bar, the ten stamp Buffalo mill was freighted and packed into Atlanta in 1876. At the same time, the Monarch (leased to some trustees for most of two years beginning January 1, 1876) began to make some steady high grade production after six years of delay. Neither the Monarch nor the Buffalo mills, equipped for silver recovery with the Washoe process worked out for use on the Comstock, operated very efficiently at first. Their really high-grade ores (over $300 a ton) still were being packed out for shipment to Omaha or Newark. (In 1876, before the Buffalo mill was installed, twenty-seven tons of that company's ore, taken to Newark at a cost of $900, yielded almost $19,000.) When the Buffalo mill started its trial run, May 3, 1877, a 55% recovery was realized. Although this was far better than the 20% or so of the Atlanta mills of the past, the Buffalo management still was dissatisfied. A five hearth furnace with a ten ton daily capacity was added that summer. This improved recovery enough that high grade Monarch, as well as Buffalo, ore was worked at least with partial success. At this point, Warren Hussey tried to sell the Monarch to San Francisco investors, but met with no success.

Atlanta had its early major building boom in 1876 when the Buffalo mill was being constructed and the Monarch leasers were beginning to operate. The two companies had sixty employees for construction and development primarily. These, together with quite a number of smaller gouging and prospecting enterprises, supported a community of about 500 people. With Ralf Bledsoe's construction of a long-awaited Atlanta road from Rocky Bar in 1878, Atlanta was in a position to realize some of its early promise. Milling in Atlanta, while still limited to high grade rock, began to make a little headway after 1878. And the extremely high grade Monarch and Buffalo ore that was being hauled out for smelting at least could go out over a wagon road. Moreover, by 1878 ore was being packed into Atlanta from Yankee Fork for processing in the Buffalo mill. Thus for several years, mainly from 1878 to 1884, the camp had considerable activity.

Yet the sad part of the story was that costs of roasting and processing Atlanta ore were so great that only high-grade portions ($100-$300) of the lode proved to be worth milling locally. Renewed efforts by J. E. Clayton and other noted mining engineers did not begin to reach a solution for the large bodies of lower grade rock. (At this stage, Clayton and some of his associates repeatedly arranged to sell the Monarch and Buffalo to August Belmont for $800,000; if they actually did so, nothing much seems to have come of the transaction.) During the early productive years before 1884, some half million dollars was reported to come from the Buffalo mill. Perhaps an additional $400,000 was milled in Atlanta by the Monarch. Yet fully one of the 1.4 million dollars in Monarch recovery for those years came from extremely high-grade ore (primarily 1,000 tons from the rich surface discovery of 1874) handled by the Omaha smelter. Another fairly significant source of Atlanta production, the Tahoma, operated profitably for something over two years after a $110,000 sale (following eight years of development) to some Meadville, Pennsylvania interests. But by the end of 1884 the Tahoma ceased to meet its payroll. Then, after going six months more accumulating unpaid labor claims, the Tahoma default came out in the open when liens were filed for $18,000. Atlanta was plagued by a general economic collapse when one unpaid creditor sued another, and since the other mills also were grinding to a halt, the initial Atlanta boom came to an end. Even W. H. Pettit's new fifteen stamp Monarch mill, which had commenced operation December 15, 1884, ran only occasionally. By then most of the major Atlanta mines were bonded for sale again, since values less than $30 per ton could not be handled until improved recovery methods might reduce the cost of milling. By now, all available high-grade ore had been processed.

Several years of efforts to sell a combine of the major Atlanta properties to London interests came to a head when V. S. Anderson reported a $3,500,000 deal with London capitalists early in 1891. This sale proved to be decidedly profitable to the original owners who could not figure out a way to work their properties any further. But the Atlanta Gold and Silver Consolidated Mines, Ltd., found that even after considerable expenditure for development (presumably in excess of £150,000) beyond the £650,000 purchase, the recovery problem for lower grade ores could not be solved economically. After a final attempt using new funds raised in 1894, the British company had to search for someone else to purchase and try to work the major Atlanta properties. To some it looked as if some worked-out mines had been peddled to some unsuspecting British investors. Yet by far the greatest production from the lodes the British purchased was yet to come. While the British were searching for a suitable recovery process, concentrating of Atlanta ores began on a limited scale in 1894, and the camp remained somewhat active until 1899. The Monarch fifteen stamp mill resumed under new management for a time in 1902, and after another failure, the new owners undertook four years of Monarch development before installing a new, electric powered mill and tram in 1906. For the next several years the new company tried to figure out an economical recovery process which would allow the new mill to commence work, on Monarch and Buffalo ore. In the meantime, the Minerva--which had less refractory ore--resumed production with an electric powered mill. The Tahoma and a property eventually known as the Boise-Rochester also produced for a time. By 1912 all were shut down again, awaiting an efficient recovery process.

Finally after the Boise-Rochester managed to run for two years after 1915, the Saint Joseph Lead Company purchased the property and eventually solved the recovery problem. Gaining access to the Monarch ores as well, the St. Joe started up an amalgamation-flotation concentrator early in 1932. At this point, the problem of handling refractory Atlanta ore was solved after more than half a century of search for an economical process. Modern production at Atlanta dates from that time. And by far the greatest part of the sixteen to eighteen million dollar Atlanta yield comes from the period of modern production after 1932. With construction of the middle fork road from Boise to Atlanta in 1936, another long awaited improvement in mining at Atlanta was realized, and the last of the old-time problems of that camp was solved.