

# The Ortiz Mine

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The Ortiz Mine has a fascinating history. The mine itself has significant historical importance to mining in New Mexico. In 1828 placer gold was discovered in the Cerrillos area and has been regarded as the first important gold found west of the Mississippi. Then in 1833, a Jose Francisco Ortiz discovered gold bearing quartz veins at the site of our field trip. Soon thereafter the Santa Rosalia grant was recorded in Ortiz with his mine as its center.

Ortiz took into partnership a Spaniard named Lopez, who was skilled in mining operations of that day. Through Lopez's management their gold operations were made quite successful and considerable money was made.

But jealousy, greed and the love of gold (gold fever) struck Ortiz and he sought a way to rid himself of Lopez. Lopez was forced to leave the country through an obscure decree which forbade any Castilian from residing or operating in New Mexico. But as Lopez left, he was reputed to have recorded a curse over subsequent operations of the Ortiz.

Ortiz then took into partnership several of the rascals who had been involved in the ouster of Lopez. But their new management was quite inept at mining and they never obtained one ounce of gold.

Soon thereafter the New Placer find took place in the San Pedro Mountains and the major gold activity shifted south. This is where the historical importance of the Ortiz takes place, for the influx of mining activity caused by the discovery of gold in these mountains resulted in further exploration for this precious metal in New Mexico with its subsequent success.

After that, the mine was worked during various periods with marginal success. In 1864 the Ortiz grant was acquired by an outfit called the New Mexico Mining Company. After erecting an extensive mill, plus an equal addition at the present ghost town site of Dolores, this operation closed down in 1869 after but a few millruns. Bad management was the reason for this closing.

Dolores, to those on the trip, is where the ranch properties are located, about two miles from the Ortiz.

A few years later another company erected another large gold processing plant involving mercury amalgamation for extraction of this metal from the ore, but again poor management resulted in an unsuccessful operation and subsequent closure.

In 1900 Thomas A. Edison, the inventor, came west to Cerrillos and erected a large plant in Dolores to again extract gold from the Ortiz area by a "secret" process based upon static electricity. It has been told that this operation closed after a few unsuccessful attempts. Edison then decided to invent other things with "some" success.

After that the properties went under lease for 99 years by a syndicate with little mining activity after that. Presently the area around the Ortiz Mine is primarily cattle grazing country, but because of the increase in the value of gold today, renewed interest has been shown in this mine.

Gilbert Rodriguez, a club member, is presently employed as a mining geologist by the AZCON CO., which is looking at the feasibility of a new operation.

Though its history is noted for many unsuccessful operations, still much gold was extracted from the Ortiz. The main shaft ran 500 feet underground with many side shafts, so its activity over the years was extensive. The Ortiz is considered the oldest lode mine in the U.S.

Again, many thanks to Gilbert for a very enjoyable trip.