

GEOCACHING ADVENTURES

Finding Cache in Mina, Nevada

BY Betsy Fessler

Years ago I read an article in an *RV* magazine about Mina, Nevada, an old mining town located on highway 95, south of Hawthorne. The article was written by a snow bird that stopped there on his way home from wintering in Arizona. He talked about how *ATV* friendly Mina was, and how much exploring there was to do.

Mina made my list of places to see. My chance came when my dad told me he was going there with some old friends. I invited myself to go.

The group dad was camping with watched me grow up off-roading. It had been many years since I had camped and ridden with them. They knew that I was the *Geocaching Adventures* gal for *Sand Sports* magazine, and they were familiar with geocaching. However, they had never really tried it before. I was anxious to show them a little about it, and they looked forward to off-roading with a twist.

The group had reservations at the Sunrise Valley RV Park on the south side of town. Sunrise Valley offers pull-through sites with full hookups, along with bathrooms, showers, and fire pits. There was also a group fire area, and easy access to hundreds of miles of trails.

Available at Sunrise Valley's office is a book written by Tom Willis called *ATV Trails of Mina, Nevada*. The book offers descriptions, history and GPS coordinates for places to go and things to see in the Mina area. Ironically, the author, Tom, was also camping at Sunrise Valley, and offered to lead us for our first ride of the weekend. It was a perfect opportunity for a first class day trip, complete with history narrative from the author himself.

The next morning, I introduced myself to Tom, explaining that I was on a geocaching mission with intent to do some writing myself. He was familiar with geocaching, but was not familiar with how many caches were in the Mina area. Together, he and I teamed up for a fantastic day of sightseeing and geocaching.

The group suited up, one riding a Yamaha Raptor 900 for the weekend. Dad had his KTM dirt bike. The rest of the group had side-by-sides, ATVs, and a Land Cruiser. The trails of Mina were suitable for all of us.

Tom led us south from camp that day on an old railroad bed. Our first stop was an old boxcar loading area. A pile of boxes was still there, frozen in time with the re-



ins of its loading equipment. According to Tom, the site "was used to load the Carson Colorado Railroad approximately 1882 to 1883. Prior to that, salt was harvested at the site and shipped to Virginia City by camel during the 1870s."

Knowing that geocaches are often located at places of interest, this boxcar site was no exception. A cache is located there called "A Day at the Beach." It was easy to locate. We signed the log and suited up for our next destination.

Tom led us to an old house constructed of stone. Walls and the foundation were all that remained. Ironically, there was a geocache located there too, called "The Rock House." Mike Wallace, an old friend of my Dad's, had bright advantage, and found it located high up. The log was signed, and the cache was carefully stowed where it was found. Next stop — Tomopah Junction.

I had heard of Tomopah Junction before, but I actually got to visit it that day. There wasn't big rain to see. However, Tomopah Junction was the intersection of three Carson Colorado Railroad tracks operational during the booming mining days in the Tomopah area. Nearby was a sandstone field, as well as a geocache. The cache, an ammo box, is



One of the first stops we made on this trip was an old boxcar loading area, which appeared frozen in time with equipment and everything ABOVE, is a enormous granite rock with a cabin underneath that was built by Andrew Bees during the early 1800s. Interesting!

called "Tomopah Junction."

Tom then led us to a few old mining sites, one of them called Belleville. According to Wikipedia, Belleville was an ore processing mill site founded in the 1870s. It was also known for it's "Wild West" atmosphere; murders, drunken brawls, and "sporting" practiced jakes were commonplace. Today foundations are still present. You can drive up to the area and explore them. Be careful, there is some very soft soil there. If you are not prepared, you could get stuck. Outside of



the Belleville site is a cache commemorating its presence. One of the ladies, Sharon, found this one.

The ghost town of Candelaria was our next destination. Amazingly, no caches are located there. Candelaria was really neat to see, as there were still building ruins, an old cemetery, and a massive mine in the background. Candelaria thrived in the 1800s when silver was being mined at the Northern Belle mine.

We stopped for a final geocache that day. It was located at the Moho Mine and is called the "Moho Cache." The sun was getting low, and we were sunbathing around in an old foundation when I spotted the largest rattie snake I have ever seen in the wild. I decided quickly that it might have friends nearby, and called off the cache search. We headed home for the evening.

They two we decided to take a trip out to the well-known Bass Camp. On the way, our new geocaching created group decided to go back to find the Moho Cache — the cache that was guarded by a huge rattie just the evening before. I was pretty freaked out, not wanting to participate. However, Mike Wallace came up with it, while standing right over where I had seen that rattie just a day



before. Now that is dedication to geocaching!

The area west of Mina is designated the Marietta Wild Burn Range. The burn area there are reportedly decedents of the burners used by miners during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Some of them had escaped, while others were released into the desert; when mines went bankrupt and towns became deserted. We got pretty close to some of the burners. I was surprised that they didn't run. It seemed they were more curious than scared.

We stopped for lunch at a Nevada Big-horns Unlimited Gazelle. Gazelles are structures built to catch and store rainwater for

wildlife to drink. After lunch, we started a somewhat challenging one mile climb up to Bass Camp.

Located at Bass Camp (elevation approximately 7,200 feet) under an enormous granite boulder, is a cabin built by Andrew Bass in the early 1900s. Also located there is the mine that Andrew worked. Additionally, there is a cache located there called "Cabin Under the Rock." This cache was far from its original coordinates. However, our group's diligence paid off. Newbie geocacher Joe Schenk found it. We signed the log and placed it back in its hiding spot.

We came back down the one mile hill from Bass camp and traveled through part of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest on the way back to camp. The trails there were well traveled, and there were many interesting granite outcroppings to see.

I only scratched the surface of what can be seen in Mina. I can't wait to go back. The mining history and ruins are extensive, and run in every direction.

If you have questions about Mina, or would like GPS tracks from our rides, please e-mail me at <benj@windanacollective.com>.

— The Buggy Bunch



TOP: Mike Wallace found "The Rock House" cache, and that's the old ruins at Candelaria. Clockwise from above is Sharon Wallace retrieving the Belleville cache, and that's Joe Schenk with the Bass Camp cache. Mike Wallace was the brave one who returned to the location where a big rattie snake deterred us, and here he's holding the Moho Cache. It was hidden near the location of the Moho Mine.

