



WHITE BEAR



Perched at 5,300 feet elevation high above Goodyears Creek on Saddleback Road, the White Bear mine has an equally rich history in gold and stories. Sharing the same gold-bearing gravel lead of the mighty Monte Cristo, White Bear mine tunnels into the earth beneath a lava cap known as Fir Cap. A curious story about the mine workers and one unfortunate skunk was printed in the April 27, 1922 edition of the Sacramento Union:

“DOWNIEVILLE, Sierra Co. April 26 – During the recent cold snap, Gabe Aricla and Rinald Daneri kept up a roaring fire at the boarding house of the White Bear mine, near here, and the eleventh-hour sequel of hours of squealing on the part of some “strange animal”, finally was discovered to be emanating from the oven of the cook stove, and upon ultimate investigation the boys discovered they had unwittingly roasted a live skunk – aroma and all.

The find was made just as the miners were sitting down to their evening meal and the subsequent odor necessitated the removal of the boarding house to different quarters – temporarily established in the main office building. The skunk had frequently called on the men during the winter and had been fed, growing quite tame. It is believed the polecat was looking for a warm place on that particular day and crawled into the oven through a hole in the ash compartment before the men built a

fire. When the latter had been started the animal was unable to get out.”

Life at the White Bear was just as treacherous for humans, as evidenced by this story printed in the August 11, 1914 edition of the Morning Union:

“An accident which cost Guiseppe Basso his life occurred in the face of the tunnel at the White Bear mine about midnight Monday. Basso and Jacob Brandt were working as partners on the night shift and one of their holes “missed” fire. They both went back to the face immediately to fire the hole, and discovered that another of their holes had not broken as much ground as they had thought it should.

The deceased prepared to fire the missed hole, and also declared his intention of re-loading the hole that had left a “boot-leg”. Brandt felt the gas and smoke getting the best of him, and he testified at the coroner’s inquest that he urged Basso to leave and come outside, but that he refused.

Brandt went out and Basso not coming in a reasonable time Brant went down to the White Bear boarding house, about a mile, and summoned William Dubuque and the day shift. They made all haste to the works, but when they reached the face of the tunnel Basso was lying on his back dead.”

