

Moss, John

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MOSS, JOHN

Born at \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_ 18\_\_.

Son of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

The following is the beginning of an article about him printed in the San Francisco Call on March 9, 1877:

Captain John Moss has been introduced to the readers of the Call through his narrative of Mormon implication in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. His career as a frontiersman, oscillating as a guide, trapper, explorer, Indian interpreter and mining prospector, is not a little remarkable. His life has been spent, from boyhood until middle age, in the wilds of United States territory, and were a tithe of his adventures to be woven into narrative-- a measure of his information on Indian life and language, or his knowledge of topographical surface in the wilderness, committed to publication, a ponderous volume, both thrilling and interesting, would be the result.

There is very small extent of territory between the Missouri River and the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and from well nigh the northern boundary of the United States to Mexico, that the Captain has not travelled over on mule back or on foot, and when he overcomes his habitual reticence and permits himself to speak of his experiences, he rarely fails to unfold a startling chapter of anecdote enlinked with himself or men whom he has met on mountain or plain.

The article then gives his account of how he descended the Colorado River from Lee's Ferry to Fort Mohave alone on a raft during a perilous run of three days and a half in the summer of 1861; the tale, as thus reported, represents an impossibility since it would take at least that long to float with the current from the mouth of the Virgin River through Boulder and Black Canyons to Fort Mohave which he may possibly have done at some

time; the Kolb Brothers took six days in good boats to make the last 175 miles of the voyage to Needles in 1912; his statement that he was serving as Guide with the troops at Fort Mohave when he made the voyage cannot be verified and it is of record that there were no troops there that summer, the post having been abandoned in May, 1861, and was not reoccupied until 1863.

The San Francisco Alta California on June 12, 1863, printed a letter from a correspondent from which the following is extracted:

At the Fort (Mohave) we met John Moss, Frank Skinner, and William Francis, who had been out several weeks prospecting among the mountains. They were in fine spirits, having discovered a very rich mineral district, about eight miles in a northeasterly direction from the fort, which they called San Francisco District.

That same newspaper published a letter from Fort Mohave on September 26, 1863, which stated:

On the 2nd of August Mr. John Moss, an old and experienced mountaineer, and Mr. B. Howard Coit, son of Dr. Coit of San Francisco, left Fort Mohave for the new mines, (Weaver's and Walker's diggings).

At Weaver's there is quite a little town of rock and brush shanties, and from six to seven hundred inhabitants, mostly Mexicans. At Antelope there are some forty Americans. All who worked were making, with two or three hour's labor from half an ounce to five ounces per day by dry washing--there being no water. The Americans own a claim on a side gulch which pays from \$1,200 to \$2,000 with a rocker and butcher knife crevicing.

The party remained but a few days at Antelope and then started for Joe Walker's diggings, forty miles distance on the stream known as the Haciemp or Sunken River, a

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tributary of the Gila. Following the river up four miles they came to Walker's first camp, where they found about sixty white men making from five to fifty dollars per day with rockers. Water is abundant.

The Haciemp prospects well for forty miles and will afford ample scope for thousands of miners. Provisions are scarce; the mines are supplied from Altar and the Pima Villages. Flour sells at twenty dollars per hundred. The miners subsist chiefly on turkey, elk, deer and other game.

From Walker's first camp they crossed the main divide of Pine Mountains, and traveled twelve miles to Lynx Creek, the principal diggings, where they found Walker's party of about 150 men exclusively Americans--the laws of the district forbid the presence of Mexicans and unnaturalized foreigners in the district.

The miners are doing well--all making good wages and some "big strikes"; everyone has his buckskin purse of dust, shaking it around, and the place generally reminds one of California in her harvest days. The diggings, so far as prospected, extend 14 miles down Lynx Creek in a northerly direction, and 25 miles in an easterly direction, on tributaries of a stream called Big Bug.

Instead of returning as they went, they (Messrs. Moss and Coit) struck out across an unexplored country in a direct line for Fort Mohave, steering a little north of west; they found grass and water in abundance and reached the Fort on the 2nd of Sept. having made the trip in less than 150 miles--at least 90 miles nearer than by William's Fork--over a good grazing and agricultural country well watered and heavily timbered, and giving abundant indication on mineral.

His name does not appear in the Territorial Census of the Second Judicial District taken in April, 1864, but at the election held on July 18 he was defeated for election from that District to

lower house of the 1st Territorial Legislature; the Alta California reported his unsuccessful candidacy in this manner:

Secession was astir at La Paz. A sweet batch of traitors were nominated, composed of Mexicans and mongrel Americans. John Moss announced himself a candidate and ran here on the Copperhead ticket. Yesterday the polls were opened at Lindsay's ranch. Thirty-eight good Union votes were polled and 32 Sesesh.

He discovered a mining property of which mention was made in the Yuma Arizona Sentinel of April 6, 1878:

The famous "Moss" mine, up the river, is to be opened again and worked by a New York company raised by that old veteran, Jim Hitchins. We bet that, under his supervision, they make a grand success of it.

In 1883, Patrick Hamilton gave the following description of the property:

The San Francisco District is in the Union Pass range, ten miles east of the Colorado river. Here is located the famous Moss mine, whose extraordinary richness created such an excitement some years ago. The noted frontiersman, John Moss, after whom the mine is named, was guided to it by a Mohave Indian. The mine has produced some magnificent specimens of gold quartz, and has yielded over \$200,000. It has been worked at intervals since its discovery in 1863, but no attempt at systematic development has been made.

The Arizona Bureau of Mines in a bulletin issued in 1934 mentions the Moss mine, located about 7 miles northwest of Oatman, stating:

This deposit was probably the first to be worked in the district. During the early days, it made a reported production of \$240,000 from near the surface. Since that time, considerable intermittent development has been carried on,

but little ore has been mined.

The largest ore shoot consisted of free gold in iron-stained quartz but extended to a depth of only 65 feet. Several smaller ore bodies were mined from near the surface at various places along the vein.

On August, 1, 1864, he was appointed Agent for the Moqui (Hopi) Indians at a salary of \$1,000 per annum by Charles D. Poston, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Arizona; in his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs made on September 30, 1864, Poston said:

Upon my arrival in San Francisco, two chiefs of the most powerful tribes in Arizona were awaiting the arrival of a representative from the Great Father at Washington. Iretaba, chief of the Mojaves, and Antonio Azul, chief of the Pima tribe of Indians. These chiefs are both of high rank and great consideration in their respective neighborhoods, and were treated with liberal hospitality in San Francisco by citizens and officers of the government.

Iretaba was so much pleased with the customs of civilization that he extended his visit to the Atlantic cities and Washington, under the patronage of Captain John Moss, an amateur representative of the Americans in the remote region inhabited by the people of his protégé.

J. Ross Browne in "Adventures in the Apache Country" states that he met Poston, who had lately arrived from the East via Salt Lake, in San Francisco on December 5, 1863, and left for Arizona with him at 4 P.M. that day accompanied by Ammi White and Anton Azul, the Pima Chief who:

had paraded the streets of San Francisco with his illustrious friend, Iretaba, Chief of the Mohaves, who has since created such a sensation in New York and Washington.

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Edward D. Tuttle in "The River Colorado" published in the Arizona Historical Review for July, 1928; states that John Moss took Ir-s-ta-ba to San Francisco and thence by steamer via Panama to New York and on to Washington.

In 1871 Philip Arnold "salted" some ground in northeastern Colorado with rough and uncut diamonds which he had purchased in Europe with the result that for a time there was a general search for precious stones in which Moss took part as is indicated by an article printed in the Alta California on November 27, 1872:

Capt. John Moss, an old Arizona miner, the discoverer of many very valuable mines, has also been hunting diamonds, and claims to have found on the waters of the Little Colorado and the San Juan, about one hundred and fifty miles northwest of Fort Defiance, diamonds, rubies, garnets and other precious stones. According to Moss, the diamond fields--those which give indication of being the richest--cover an area of from 20 to 25 miles east and west, and from 60 to 65 miles north and south. 40 or 50 miles north of this locality, disappear all signs of the valuable gems, but on the fields, diamonds have been found weighing as high as thirty carats.

Capt. Stanton, who has just returned from the diamond fields, bringing with him a large quantity of gems, indicates his district in the same region travelled over by Moss; in fact, Capt. Moss states that he was with Capt. Stanton when he picked up his big ruby, which Prof. Huggins declares is worth \$250,000, and which we described yesterday morning.

Died at San Francisco, California, April 11, 1880; aged 55; buried from the Masonic Temple by Oriental Lodge No. 22, F.&A.M.; the following announcement of his death was printed in the Prescott Arizona Miner on April 23, 1880:

Captain John Moss, well known throughout Southern Utah, Nevada and Northern Arizona as a veteran mountaineer and prospector, died in San Francisco on the 11th inst. Capt. Moss was a distinctive character, peculiar in many respects, and made himself known and his influence felt wherever he went, which embraced nearly every mining camp from British Columbia to Mexico. His ramblings are over; his race on earth is run and henceforth other explorers and other frontiersmen will spy out hidden lands and make known to the world the wonders of the Grand Canyon and other unfrequented and difficult places that are in after years to attract millions of curiosity hunters to these western wilds.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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The Alta California, San Francisco, June 12, 1863, 1:4, September 26, 1863, 1:4; August 8, 1864, 1:5; April 13, 1880, 4:4 (death notice).  
The San Francisco Call, April 9, 1877, 3:3.  
The San Francisco Bulletin, April 12, 1880, 3:4 (obituary).  
The Arizona Sentinel, Yuma, April 6, 1878, 2:1.  
The Arizona Miner, Prescott, April 23, 1880, 1:6 (obituary).

## ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Jackson, W. H. - Picture Maker of the Old West 1947, pp. 212-214.
- Gemung, C.B. - Los Angeles Mining Review, p. 13 (says that Moss and Pauline Weaver made a peace treaty with the Yavapai Apaches in 1863.
- Arizona Highways, Phoenix, July, 1939, p. 40; July 1940, p. 26; February, p. 41 and May, 1946, (portrait).
- The Los Angeles News, July 19, 2:2 and November 1, 1864, 2:1.
- The San Francisco Bulletin, April 9, 1:4 and September 21, 1863, 3:4; May 9, 1864, 1:3.
- The Sacramento Union, September 23, 1871, 4:5 (reprint from the Alta California of September 22).
- The Arizona Sentinel, Yuma, October 4, 1873, 3:1.
- The Arizona Miner, Prescott, May 11, 2:3, July 20, 2:3, August 24, 2:3, September 21, 2:3 and October 5, 1864, 2:4; January 1, 2:2 and January 22, 1870, 2:1; December 14, 1872, 2:2.

## WANTED

Any mention of him in the A.A. Johns file. ✓