

Greathouse Room



Dorothy Greathouse Collection, EBRPD

R. Marvin Greathouse, the early owner of Hazel-Atlas mine, was president of the G. and M. Gravel Company of Pleasanton and the Silica Company of California. He also owned a sand-mining operation 3 miles from Byron in eastern Contra Costa County, California.

You are about to enter a massive room created by miners in the twentieth century. In 1922, R. Marvin Greathouse began mining sandstone near the abandoned coal mining town of Somersville. This room is the first of nearly eight miles of underground workings created over 23 years of mining.

The sandstone produced a high-quality, fine-grained silica sand. The sand was shipped to the Hazel-Atlas Glass Company's factory in Oakland, California where it was used to produce glass products. Mr. Greathouse eventually sold the mine to the glass company.

Mining ended when less-expensive Belgian beach sand became available after World War II. Local teenagers explored the abandoned workings and this room became a popular party site. Soot from their fires is still visible here, as is some of their graffiti.