

**A Rare 1838 (NC) Engraved Sterling Silver Cup
produced from silver ore out of the “First Silver Mine in America”
that also shipped silver ore to the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia**

**by Sam Perry, Johnny Johnson and Paul Kluth
(with technical expertise provided by author L. Michael Kass)**

Sam Perry, is a local collector in Carroll County, MD and Gettysburg, PA in the area of historical artifacts including the Civil War period. Recently, we bumped into each other at a local Heritage & History Museum and he shared a recent auction acquisition with me.

Pictured is a rare find, an engraved sterling silver cup with the inscription that reads:

"Presented to Roswell King Hege on his birthday by his grandfather. This cup made from the first silver obtained in the United States."

The bottom is engraved: **"R A King 1838 NC"**. The maker is **"Ball, Tompkins and Black. Successors to Marquand and Co."** Roswell Allen King started the Silver Hill Mine in NC. A lot comes up on the internet and apparently this first silver mine in America provided tons of silver to the Philadelphia Mint for the striking of U.S. coins, probably Liberty Seated too.

Johnny Johnson, another good collecting friend who is an expert on mining in the U.S. sent me a comprehensive journal article on the Silver Hill Mine. "A good friend of his, Michael Kass (retired U.S. Bureau of Mines) wrote this article (shown on the following pages) in the Mining History Journal back in 2009 on the history of Silver Hill."



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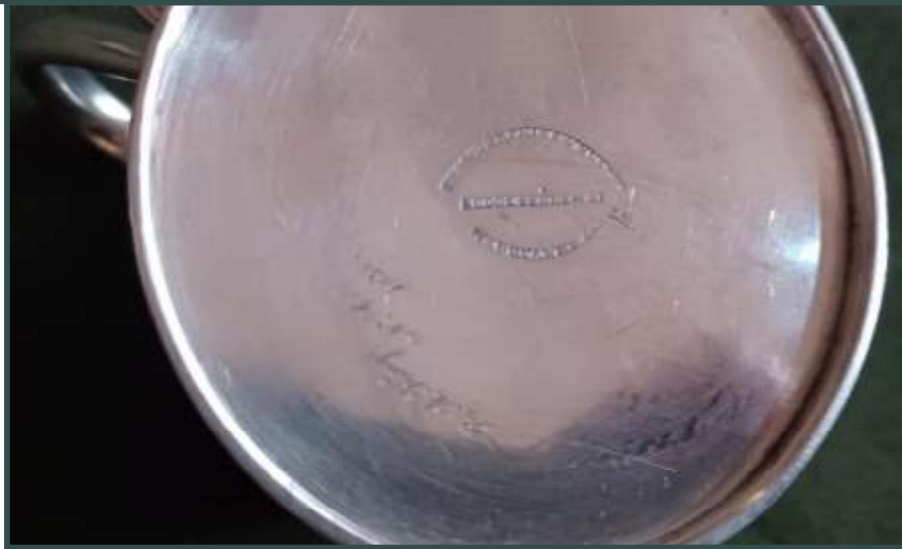
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Inscription reads "Presented to Roswell King Hege on his birthday by his grandfather.
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Inscription reads
"R A King 1838 NC". Maker is "Ball, Tompkins and Black. Successors to Marquand and Co."

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The Silver Hill Mine: First Silver Mine in the United States And Supplier of Lead to the Confederacy

By L. Michael Kaas

The Silver Hill Mine is located in the gently rolling hills of the North Carolina piedmont about ten miles southeast of Lexington in Davidson County. It has the distinction of being the first important silver mine in the United States.¹ The initial ore discovery in 1838 was very rich in native silver and lead and also contained small amounts of copper and gold. As mining progressed it encountered large amounts of lead and zinc sulfide ores. In the mid-1840s, the complexity of the ore caused the owners to undertake an extensive period of experimentation on smelting technologies.

Failing to solve its metallurgical problems, the mine shut down in the early 1850s. During the Civil War, it reopened to supply lead to the Confederacy. Production continued after the war until the mine closed for good in 1882. Since its closure over a century ago, the mine has repeatedly been the target of exploration and development groups. This article distills the unique story of Silver Hill from many local sources, original company documents, and the technical literature of the mining industry.

Published in the 2009 Mining History Journal

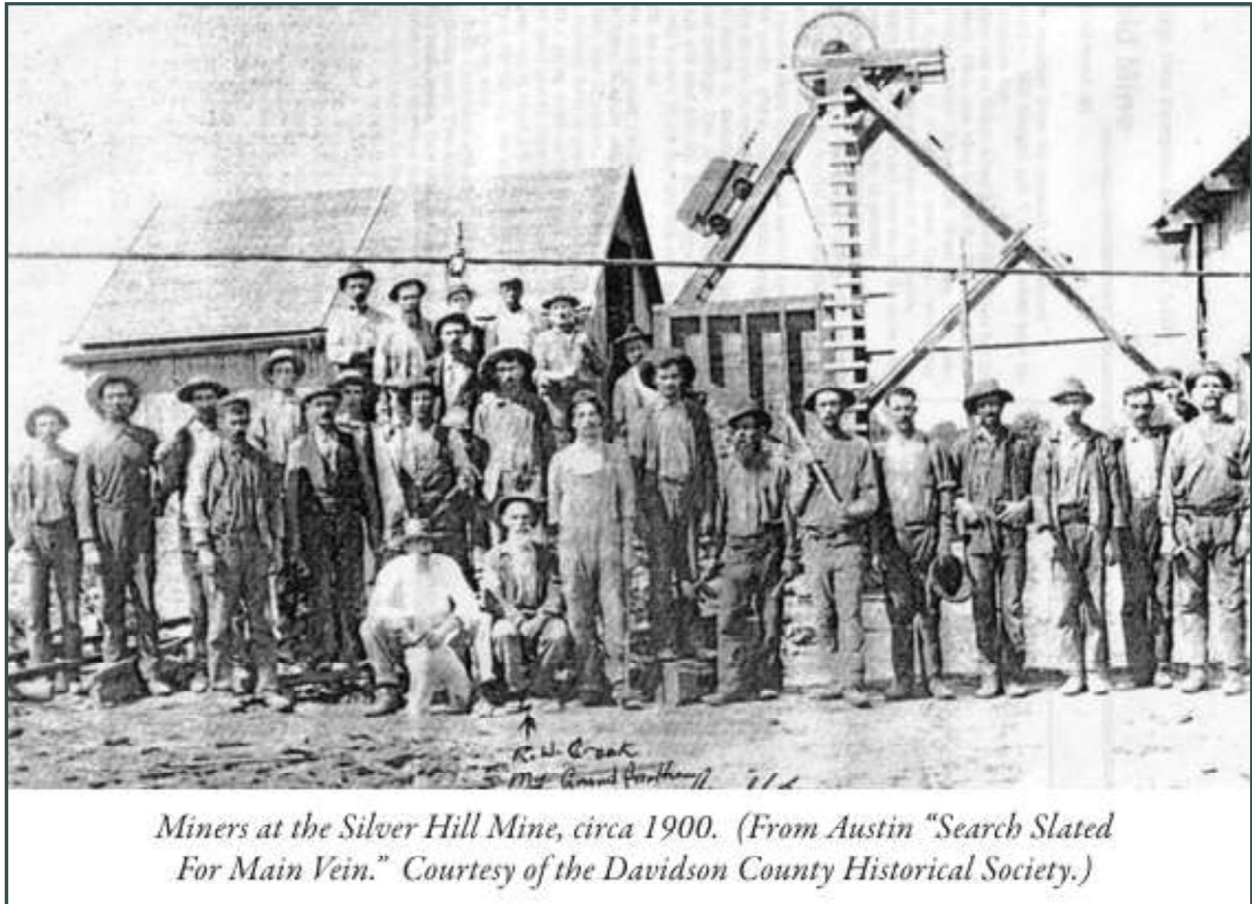
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L. Michael Kaas is a retired mining engineer with a career in government and the private sector. He received a BS degree at Pennsylvania State University and an MS degree at the University of Minnesota. His research interests include the historic mining areas in the eastern states.

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While this is a highly technical journal article about mining in the early U.S., E-Gobrecht readers should still find the information quite interesting especially since it gets to the fundamentals of an industry as to how silver was first produced in this country for the production of U.S. coins and other silver objects of function and beauty. [See link on previous page.]

Excerpts from the article indicate “Silver Hill was a high-grade orebody. Early analyses of selected samples of various ore types from the richest parts of the veins showed metal contents as high as 12 percent silver, 62 percent lead, 29 percent copper, and 27 percent zinc.”

Furthermore “From August 1840 to November 1842, the Philadelphia-based Washington Mining Company produced 2,661 pigs of argentiferous lead containing \$13,288 of gold and silver after mint-processing charges. Mint certificates show that from 13 October 1843 through 31 December 1844, processing recovered \$24,009 of silver and \$7,253 of gold from 160,000 pounds of lead. Gross total value of production from 13 October 1843 to 9 January 1845 came to just over forty thousand dollars, with a profit of nearly fourteen thousand dollars.”

“Transportation from mine to market was complicated. Lead pigs weighing seventy-five to eighty pounds each were first shipped to Fayetteville, North Carolina, a one hundred mile wagon trip. From there they went by sloop down the Fear River to Wilmington, North Carolina. The final leg of their journey was by schooner to Philadelphia, where the pig lead was refined and “test bottoms” containing the silver and gold were sent to the U.S. Mint.” Readers are invited to read the **Conclusion** at the end of the published article.

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