

In 1842, Cameron Smith built a homestead and wedded the woman who had led him to this miraculous oasis. Angela Malika Smith (1825-1895), who hailed from the Hutto-pah Mojave tribe, became Smith's wife. Together, they raised three sons who would eventually join their father in the mining enterprise within the Ship Mountains. Cameron and Angela constructed a modest home and cultivated crops, including corn, pumpkins, melons, and beans, on the small plateau. Over the next four decades, from the 1840s until the mid-1880s, the couple enjoyed a simple life, nurturing their family while discreetly mining gold in the heart of the Mojave Desert.



During these early years, Smith took great care to conceal his gold mining activities. Initially, he was the sole miner, and the entrance to his mine lay hidden deep within the natural caves on the plateau's edge. This ensured that Smith's operation

remained a well-kept secret. To avoid arousing suspicion during the early days of the California Gold Rush, Smith discreetly “smuggled” small quantities of gold out of the desert, using various routes and destinations in California and Arizona to sell his precious cargo.

Moreover, Smith demonstrated foresight and cooperation by generously sharing the oasis’s water with the native tribes that still inhabited the desert. This amicable relationship allowed Smith to coexist peacefully with the indigenous people, who, in turn, helped him keep the oasis hidden from outsiders. Their cooperation bought Smith the time he needed to navigate the complex web of legal ownership, securing rights to the land, water, and mineral resources of the Ship Mountains.