



THE HISTORY OF WEDEKIND HILLS

The Wedekind Hills landscape has seen many changes over time. Around 16 million years ago, volcanic eruptions blanketed the area. Shortly thereafter, a broad band of geothermal activity existed that extended from Peavine Mountain on the west, to Shadow Mountain Park on the east. Hot, sulfurous water and steam migrated along faults and permeable layers in the volcanic rock, changing its composition in a process known as hydrothermal alteration. Eventually, the geothermal activity waned, and faulting and erosion produced the current landscape. A hard, erosion-resistant type of alteration known as quartz-alunite ledges now caps most hilltops. Weathering also left behind oxides of iron and manganese that color the altered rocks various shades of red, orange and black.

Similar hydrothermal alteration is found near many of western Nevada's gold and silver mines, including those at Virginia City. Knowing this relationship, George Wedekind carefully prospected these hills. George was born in Germany in 1828 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1851, first to New York and then San Francisco via the Isthmus of Panama. A piano tuner by trade, he moved to Virginia City around 1861, and then to Reno in 1895. In 1896, he found a vein of silver, gold and lead ore near here, but on the west side of the Pyramid Highway. Others then staked claims nearby and by 1900 dug more than 50 exploratory shafts and tunnels, some on the park property. Most of the mine workings found nothing of value, and only the Wedekind mine encountered significant ore. After producing more than \$100,000 in gold and silver, Wedekind sold the mine in 1901 to Nevada Governor John Sparks for \$175,000. Unfortunately for Mr. Sparks, in 1903, as miners reached a depth of 230 feet, large amounts of hot acidic water and hydrogen sulfide gas were encountered which made working conditions hazardous. The ore also changed in composition making it difficult to process, so the mine closed.

Wedekind Regional Park

