

DEC 58

THE



J A S P I L I T E

Affiliated with the Midwest Federation
of Mineralogical and Geological Societies

TOMBSTONE SILVER

Everybody has heard of Tombstone, that lively brawling mushroom on the slope of the Mule Mountains in southern Arizona. Its corrupt politics, its bloody gun-fights, its elegance and vice are national legends. TV programs rehash incidents of its "Good Guys and Bad Guys", the Reader's Digest this month publishes a very old man's recollection of riding with his famous cousin, Wyatt Earp.

How come? Tombstone was no cow town at railhead where long-isolated cowboys let off steam. There was no railroad there until the town began to decline. Certainly, it lies in the best cattle country of the Southwest, little Wilcox, proudly boasting of being the "Cattle Shipping Capital of the World", only a few miles drive up the Sulphur Springs Valley. The rustlers and bandits who made such a colorful part of the Tombstone scene were euphemistically called Cowboys, but all the cattle they were interested in were hi-jacked to or from nearby Mexico.

It is largely forgotten that Tombstone lies on a virtual hill of silver ore. From the mines under and around the town, millions of dollars worth of rich ore was sent to the smelters, where it was made into ingots weighing two hundred pounds,--too heavy to be carried off easily. Such wealth was a magnet to draw all kinds of thieves, bandits, and thugs to waylay and steal; and, as a counter measure, sheriffs, marshalls, law officers, and "Shot-gyn Riders" to protect and maintain law and order.

A space of about five years covers the whole story from the discovery of the ore to the shut-down of the mines. More wild events were packed into that five years than happen in most places in five hundred years. But, contrary to all casual belief, it was not the Buntline Special six-shooter of Wyatt Earp, nor the later deeds of Sheriff John Slaughter that brought law and order to Tombstone. The mines went deep enough to tap an underground river so big that no pump could control it, with water so hard that in spite of the town's desperate need for water, it could not even be used for irrigation. Plenty of silver still there, but the mines had to stop production, so, no loot, no bandits. They left, not because their leaders had been shot, but because the pickings were so poor. The miners left too for better jobs, the saloons and gambling places closed, and Tombstone was left, a drab collection of one story adobe shacks on its hill of useless silver. The county seat moved to Bisbee where the huge "Cooper Queen" mine is located, and the trains no longer clanked up to the dilapidated station.

Half a century later a new road was built through the town right on its main thoroughfare, Allen Street, one of the first National transcontinental Highways, U.S.80. And on the highway were Tourists! The problem of re-opening the mines was forgotten while all hands vigorously re-opened stories of the lawless past, re-named all the graves in Boothill Cemetary, saw that proper bullet holes were in suitable adobe walls, and worked the new lode of tourist trade to a triumphant success with the slogan "The Town Too Tough To Die".

Here and there among the visitors were a few odd balls who seemed not too much interested in the exact spot where Buckskin Frank Leslie dropped his man, or the number of bullets still in the adobe wall of the O.K. Corral, but when they saw the big hole of the "Million Dollar Stope" near the old fire hall on Toughnut Street. They had to be restrained by force from crawling down into its crumbling maw for a specimen of rock. Across the gully behind the town looms the dump of the former Grand Central Mine. My guess would be that every rock in that young mountain has been pawed over by at least three rockhounds.

Now to get personal. It occurred to me that it would be pleasant to have a piece of characteristic "Horn Silver" from Tombstone in my rock collection. Some years ago while we were visiting in Tucson, we chose a fine winter's day to drive the seventy-five miles up the San Pedro Valley to the little town on its paw of the Mule Mountains. I know from long experience that dumps of mines, painstakingly dug by hand before this fancy conveyer-belt and universal crusher system, left dumps loaded with good cabinet specimens not commercially valuable.

That first trip I dropped an experimental pebbly in the "Million Dollar Stope." I was not at all reassured by the sound it made rolling out of sight and then silence until it hit the bottom of the pit. Steep and deep. There seemed no easy way to get across to the Grand Central dump either. South of town we found the monument erected over the grave of the discoverer of the silver lode, Ed Schieffelin, - a surprising cairn of native rock (no ore), standing alone and forlorn on the desert. The bronze inscription plate praised him as husband, father and citizen, but made no mention of him as a prospector or of his discovery of the silver.

That was all that was accomplished that trip.

At the big rock show in Phoenix a few weeks later, I saw my first specimen of Tombstone's "Horn Silver", a silver chloride making deep blue streaks in a white clayey matrix (not for sale - it was in a private collection). Now I knew what I was looking for.

Another year, from Tucson I tried again. This time we found a way into the Grand Central dump and spent an afternoon turning rocks in the dump itself and in the surrounding ditches. Some interesting quartz chunks, some barite crystals, but no trace of horn silver. At last, hot and thirsty, we returned to Tombstone and, like all good prospectors, made our way to the Crystal Palace Bar. Once the dust had been washed away, I asked the proprietor about silver ore. He waved me majestically to a tall glass-fronted cabinet beside the bar. Certainly it was full of silver specimens, some very imposing, but every last one from Virginia City, Nevada.

"But I want to see Tombstone specimens," I protested.

"Haven't seen a piece of that for years," he answered. "I don't know where you'd find any either. The dumps were all re-worked long ago; nothing is left. For a fact, I ought to have a specimen here myself, but I wouldn't know where to get it."



So that was that, for that year.

Last winter I tried again. A cold drizzle blotted out the early sun as we drove up Allen Street. With a sigh of frustration we ordered lunch in a newly opened pizza parlor (very good, too. Much better than the historic, Chinese-run Can-Can.). I intended to scout the one one "Antique" store on Toughnut Street. As we paid the bill, I remarked, "Not a good day for rockhounding."

The cashier agreed, also adding, "An old feller has just opened a little rock shop this side of the old hotel. He might help you out."

HELP US HE DID! "I only got a couple little pieces," he said and laid a small slab of mixed colors, brown, blue, green and a few silvery gray flakes in my hand.

It was neither wet with sweat nor spotted with blood, but I have my Tombstone ore at last!

HEMATITE (Kidney Ore)

Color: dark steel gray or iron black; when earthy, red. Streak: cherry-red or reddish-brown. Lustre: metallic to sub-metallic. Fracture: uneven; brittle. Hardness: 5-6. Specific gravity: 5-2; Chemical composition: Fe_2O_3 ; Oxygen: 30 percent; Iron: 70 percent.

This mineral was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who gave it the name hematite, signifying blood stone from its blood-red streak (color in a powdered condition). As a result of the red streak the iron mining towns of the Upper Peninsula such as Ishpeming, Negaunee, Ironwood Iron Mountain, etc., are known by their reddish hue. The streets and houses, and in a short time the shoes, clothing, etc., become coated and filled with this red dust of hematite, which is extremely difficult to remove. The ore from the mines contains 60 percent to 68 percent metallic iron and is found in many different conditions; as soft hematite, hard ore, specular ore, and kidney ore, named after its reniform surface. It is the chief ore of the iron districts.

This is from "Notes on The Rocks & Minerals of Mich." at Michigan Tech, 1909.

Submitted by Fred J. Benzie



ERIC REX PLEASES AUDIENCE

Eric Rex, Geologist for the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Mining Co. appeared before the Ishpeming Rock & Mineral Club to present a colored slide travelogue of the Northern and Western part of the United States. Mr. Rex's slides were of excellent nature and his talk clearly pointed out the interesting geological and historical sights one might see on a trip to the West Coast.

The mineral club gathered at the Ski Hall of Fame at 1:00 p.m. of Sunday, December 14, to enjoy the culinary arts of our women folk. Those of you who couldn't come missed a most wonderful banquet, not to mention an interesting program.

The next meeting which will be held in January shall also be a program meeting as well as the night of our Election of Officers. Plan on being present for this very important meeting.



"The scientists say the inside of the earth isn't as hot as was thought."

"No, and neither is the outside."

Current Science



EXCHANGE NEWS

Barbara Engstrom

Here's something about our 49th state:

Alaska's Fossil Field gave up a 20,000 pound harvest last year. The material will be studied by the University there, as well as in the Frick Laboratory at the American Museum of Natural History.

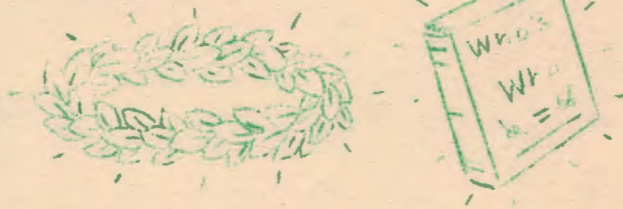
- from August, 1958, GEMMATTER.

And here's something else from the same source: SAN SIMON JADE - Deep sea divers have picked up 5,000 pounds of Jade stones in thirty-six feet of water off the coast of San Simeon. It took three days to get the 3,000 pound chunk aboard! My goodness! This is apt to cause - not a repeat of the '49 Gold Rush - but a '58 "deep sea dive"!

Seems that some of our members are getting famous. This is from the "CONGLOMERATE":

The response to Mr. Charles Robert (Bob) Markert's splendid talk last month was most enthusiastic. His friendly and unassuming manner won his audience, and gave them a better understanding of the Marquette Iron Range as a collecting area and also of the important part that the Iron Mining Industry through its constant research, is playing in the progress of our nation.

-- Nice going Bob!



August Orange Gulch Gazette gives us this gem - DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEUROTIC AND PSYCOTIC: A "psycotic" thinks 2 and 2 make 5; a "neurotic" knows that 2 and 2 makes 4, but it worries him.

An optomist is a man who goes into a restaurant without a dime and figures on paying for the meal with the pearl he hopes to find in the oyster.

MY DAY

I have so very much to do
(What's in that rock that looks so blue?)
I guess I'll get the dishes done
(It had more blue than the other one.)
Bed isn't made -- I must get busy
(Where is that rock? Looked 'till I'm dizzy)
Furniture's dusty -- windows drab
(Guess I'll cut just one little slab)
Have to vacuum up the floor
(Sure is pretty -- I'll cut one more)
Get dinner started -- that's my duty
(A cab from this would be a beauty)
Lawn needs watering and raking
(This is a pretty cab I'm making)
I must hurry -- it's time to eat
(A little polish will make it complete)
I don't know where this day has gone
(But haven't I got a beautiful stone?)



Maude Barnes
Verdugo Hills Gem & Mineral Society

The above taken from the October issue of ROCKHOUND RAMBLING.

MINE DISASTER - ISHPEMING, MICHIGAN

That was the headlines in the Mining Journal 32 years ago, November 3, 1926, to be exact. The Nova Scotia mine disaster on October 24, 1958, prompted the following reminder which appeared in "THE MINING JOURNAL", under the above dateline:

"It was almost 32 years ago - Nov. 3, 1926- and the dateline was not a remote town in Nova Scotia, but Ishpeming.

Fifty-one men lost their lives that day in the BARNES-HECKER Mine near NORTH LAKE. The dead, 40 of them married, included 34 from Ishpeming, 7 from North Lake, 6 from the immediate location of the mine, and others scattered around the area.

It was 11:20 a.m. when a cave-in occurred at a point above the first level, and in 15 minutes the workings of the mine filled with sand and water. The muck, suggesting that the bottom of a rain deepened swamp had given way into the diggings, rose to within 185 feet of the surface.

There was no warning. The men were looking forward to the noon break, when they would come to the surface.

As wives and children huddled around the mine that night, seven bodies were found. Stripped of clothing by the force of the water, they were found a mile from the BARNES-HECKER shaft, in a tunnel connecting the workings with the Morris Mine. They had run for their lives, only to be caught by the onrushing water.

Only one man who was in the mine when the cave-in occurred actually made his escape. He was Ruthford Wills, then 23. He was working in the second level, near the shaft, when he heard the rumbling of the water. He yelled to his co-workers and ran.

He made a dash for the shaft and up the ladder 200 feet to the surface. The rising muck wet his boots before he reached safety. He estimated he made the climb to daylight in ten minutes.

Wills moved to Flint shortly after the disaster and he still resides there.

Five others were coming down from the surface, where they had eaten lunch, when the

waters rose. They clambered up the shaft ladder ahead of Wills.

There were three sets of brothers and three father-son combinations in the mine that day and the casualty list read like a local directory. There were few families having no relatives on the work force there.

Others risked their lives to clear out the mine and bring up the bodies. Three were found - the three men who had been working with Wills. But the pumps made less and less headway against the waters. Today, the BARNES-HECKER remains a tomb for most of its last-day shift.

Editor's Note - Here are some stories my father used to tell about this disaster:

A mine inspection was being held that day and among the men lost were the mine inspector, captains, and the superintendent, all who ordinarily would not have been there.

There were 2 other "luck" survivors. One's car wouldn't start and the other was hit on the head with a falling flat iron. They were lucky to be unlucky that morning.

MAMA'S LAMENT

Today I'd like to cut a rock;
But I have yet to darn that sock.

Maybe I could shine a stone;
But clothes won't wash themselves alone.

To etch a crystal would be fun;
But there is ironing to be done.

My polishing grate has been stopped
By myriad floors waiting to be mopped.

I want to look for rock that's red;
But there are mouths that must be fed.

There is opal to be set;
Also those dishes, that aren't done yet.

My goal is reached, it's in my range;
But what comes now? A diaper change.

To polish rocks, is my bent,
But I've NO TIME - That's my lament.

S. Scheif.
Contra Costa Mineral & Gem Society.



REMEMBER THESE DATES.....

JUNE 18, 19, 20, 21, 1959.

AT

SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

CONVENTION OF

MIDWEST FEDERATION OF MINERALOGICAL

AND

GEOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

Carol Kokko has joined the staff of the Jaspilite, and has taken over the duties of cutting our stencils and most of the art work in connection with the bulletin.

The wood reproductions of the article on George Agricola, which appeared in the June, 1957, Jaspilite, were done by Carol.

We are looking forward to many fine issues of the Jaspilite with her help.

The Whites of Marquette are leaving for Texas for Christmas. We hope they have a Merry Christmas in the land of sunshine. Don't forget to pick a few agates down there, Fern.

Clyde Steel is the latest member of our club to be bitten by the Lapidary bug. He's doing some mighty fine work too.

Keith Carlson has a lapidary outfit now, so we are looking forward to seeing some of his work in the near future.

Harriet and Carl Dunn are planning on spending some time down in Mexico. We hope that you shall come home with some nice crazy lace and luscious agate as well as many fine cabinet specimens.

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!

Treasurer Bud Bamford advises us that we should check our membership cards as some difficulty has been encountered in the wording.

Some cards read, "paid to 1958."
(these are 1957 dues.)

Some cards read, "paid for 1958."
(these are current dues.)

All new cards are printed to show the dues "paid for ____", so that this misunderstanding will not reoccur.

BUD ALSO REMINDS US THAT OUR 1959 DUES ARE NOW PAYABLE TO HIM.



Our next Jaspilite, March 1959, will carry the directory of our paid-up 1959 membership. We hope to see you on the list.



Mr Charles R. Markert
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SHPERING, MICH



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