

# The Earliest Miner's Hat

*by Ted Bobrink*



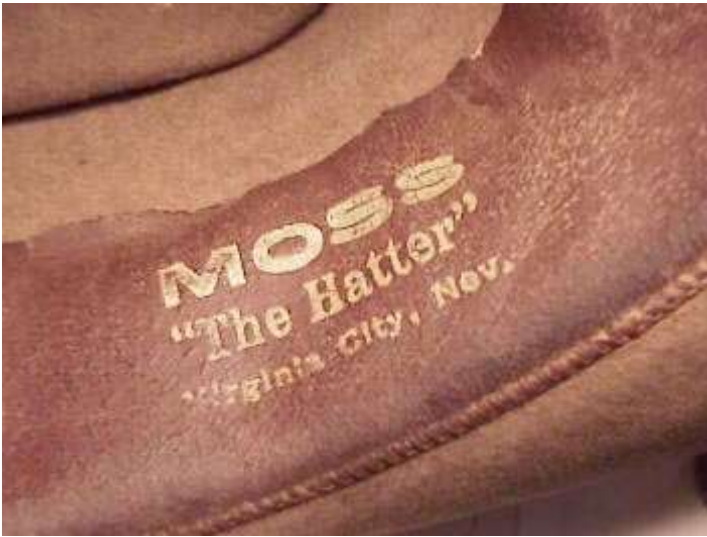
I was chatting with Deric English about a trade for one of my Randsburg Tags and he told me he had returned from a three day trip to Virginia City, Nevada and how his family enjoyed the underground tour they took of the Chollar Mine. It reminded me of one of the best finds I ever found underground.

Back in 1983 a mining company from Canada started strip mining the Yellow Jacket and Crown Point Mine in

Gold Hill, Nevada. I was heading into V.C to do some trading with a friend of mine who collected guns as I would trade him guns for mining related items. As I passed the town of Gold Hill I could see on my left where heavy machinery had started strip mining the whole damn mountain, and they were down about 100 feet.

About fifty feet down a steep cliff below a road ledge I saw a drift or crosscut leading into the side of the mountain. I said to myself come hell or high water I am going to explore that newly exposed drift. I had never explored a mine in the V.C. mining district that had not already been explored by hundreds of people ahead of me. Just about every mine in V.C. is caved and the ones in Gold Hill are all on occupied private land.

When I arrived into V.C. I could not talk my friend or anyone else to go underground with me, though my friend Gary Stevenson said he couldn't handle going underground, but would wait for me in the car. I always carry a 150' rope in my vehicle with a few acinders just for the hell of it, and I'm sure glad I did this time. It was a Saturday night and we lit out for the mine at around 10 p.m. Their were no fences to jump just a short hike to the other side of the pit. In the back of my head I knew I was trespassing, but my belief then and still is today,. that the mining companies don't give a damn about preserving mining artifacts and in those days none of it was worth anything anyway.



Advertising pieces are another collectible from this coal producer. Seen here are two paper scattertags, one advertising the Hudson Coal Co. and the other advertising D&H Lackawanna Anthracite Cone Cleaned Coal. Another item of interest is the round porcelain D&H Lackawanna Anthracite sign pictured on the title page.

It was almost a full moon and I could see for quite a distance all around. Once I worked my way around to the other side, I had a hard time locating the exact spot where I should drop down. Dropping down either

way to the left or right, I would not be able to reach the hole. As luck would have it I dropped down to far to the left and had to climb back up and retie my rope to another bolder. My next decent landed me right in the middle of the drift and the first thing that caught my attention was the dull unusual smell of the air. It wasn't like bad air, just different. There were no foot prints on the dusty floor and this told me I was the first person to be in that drift since the early 1880s or maybe even the 1870s. My adrenaline was running high, very high with anticipation and the fear of being alone made it even worse. There was a nice flat strap rail on the floor and the drift curved left and right to where you couldn't see any more than twenty feet ahead. About 200 feet in I rounded a bend and saw a large amount of post, caps and lagging leading up to an intersection. My heart was really going now wondering about what I should do next. I walked to the center of the intersection and looking down the crosscut to my left and spotted a large ore chute, but my eyes gazed upon something I had never expected to find. To V.C. collectors it is very well known, and seen in just about every early underground photo with V.C. miners working underground. Hanging on a square nail was a fantastic low brim felt hat just like the ones you see the miners wearing in the earliest days of mining in V.C. It was very dusty and when I turned it over to look inside, the shiny dark brown leather brim had gold stamping that read "MOSS-"The Hatter"-Virginia City, Nev." The hat was in excellent condition except for some small holes around the top that were no doubt left from hanging a miners candlestick.

After finding that hat I was ready to get the heck out of there, but my instinct and greediness for mining artifacts led me to try one more venture, so I set the hat down on a rock and with my heart pumping in overdrive I decided to climb up into the ore chute that led to a large stope. I felt the air was good where I was and I really didn't want to continue any deeper into the mine by myself. I found something else really cool up in the stope, but that is going to have to be another story that I would like to tell you about later. When I climbed out of the ore chute I decided I had not better push my luck and leave that wonderful mine with the goodies it had already gave me. I put that great V.C. hat on my head and my other items inside my t shirt and called it deep enough. I needed both hands to climb the 30 or 40 feet of rope and made it back to my car with Gary waiting patiently. When he saw my stash of goodies he couldn't believe his eyes.

To my knowledge that V.C. hat just may be the earliest miners hat known as it dates way before any of the manufactured miners hats we know and collect today. To be continued....