

# A c1900 Manufactured Gold Dry Washer From Randsburg, California

*by Ted Bobrink*



This portable manufactured dry-washer was recently found in Randsburg, California at a local yard sale of a local miners estate. It was manufactured by the B & M Co. and has a heavy brass tag that says "B&M-GOLD FINDER-PATENT APPLIED FOR" This machine stands 36" high and by simply pulling out the two vertical rods, folding in the top side rails and pulling off the four legs it folds up to the size of a small suitcase 15' long 8" wide and 10 " deep. It is in excellent working condition and even came with two extra leather drive belts.

Portable dry washers similar to this one were mostly homemade affairs, and though much of the fine gold was lost in the process of this dry-mining, these machines did recover a great deal of the coarser placer gold.

The claims in Randsburg were too far removed from water to permit the miners to take their gravels to be washed. Therefore they had to use the wasteful dry-washing methods.

The early day dry-washers were of various sizes and contours, but the principle was the same in all. It simply substitutes air for water. Instead of using water to wash the gravel over the riffles the dry-washing machine uses air which is forced up under the fabric bottom across the riffles. As a rule heavy muslin was used for the bottom of the riffle box that you see in in the third photo. Air could easily get through for good agitation of the gravels, and to help keep them flowing. At the head of the dry-washer is the hopper or feed box, and it has a heavy 1/4" screen going across the top. The miner would shovel his placer material through the heavy screen first to eliminate any large pebbles or rocks. This preliminary screening also permitted the gravels to lay in the sun and dry as freshly dug earth and gravels contain small amounts of moisture, and moisture interfered with proper dry-washing.



The air is created by the heavy canvas bellows at the bottom. The bellows is connected to a crankshaft (the small wheel at the bottom) which is leather belt-driven by the large hand operated wheel at the top of the dry-washer. When the wheel is turned at a high rate of speed it develops a strong flow of air that literally blows everything but heavy metals clear off of the riffle box.

