

A Sulfur Paperweight

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Several years ago I came across a sulfur paperweight in a southern California antique shop. I had never heard of the Newgulf Mine but figured it must be fairly important if they took the time to produce a paperweight touting 50 years of operation.

The Newgulf Mine was located in Newgulf, Texas. The mine was situated on top of the Boling Dome, reportedly the world's largest inland sulfur deposit, in Wharton County. Locating the sulfur deposit came about indirectly because of all the activity in Texas looking for oil. Drilling for oil frequently showed good indications of sulfur. The Boling Dome, the largest Gulf Coastal salt dome, turned out to be an excellent source of sulfur.

Prior to 1919, the primary sources of sulfur in the United States were the numerous open pit pyrite mines in Wisconsin and Missouri. Sulfur was also recovered as a by-product in the production of petroleum. The sulfur was used to produce sulfuric acid and black powder, and to vulcanize natural rubber.

In 1923, while drilling for oil, the Boling Dome was discovered by Gulf Production Company. Boling Dome turned out to be the largest sulfur deposit ever found. Texas Gulf Sulfur Company acquired mineral fee on the dome and in 1927 bought the sulfur lease rights from Gulf Production Company, Texas Company, and others. Sulfur production at the Newgulf Mine started in 1929 and continued until 1993. The mine is now closed.

The paperweight is about 4 by 2 inches. It is completely composed of recrystallized molten sulfur.



Newgulf Mine paperweight.