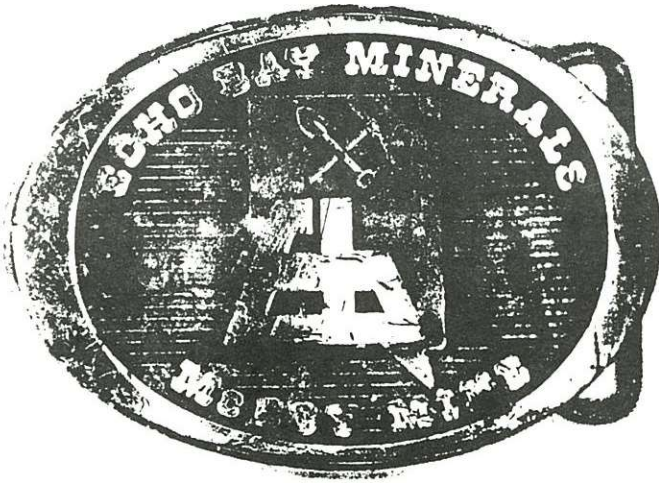


# BELT BUCKLE MINING ARTIFACTS

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As mining artifact collectors, we are constantly seeking to discover relics, equipment, or symbols of mining activities of the past. However, we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that mining continues today and artifacts are being created now that will have significant value in the not too distant future.

The venerable belt buckle has achieved status as a commemorative item, no longer is it just an accessory worn with cowboy boots, but a collectible mining artifact. These buckles are usually made to celebrate the opening of a new mine or some other major event such as completion of a mill. They are also created as a marketing tool for advertising exploration and drilling companies or in conjunction with mining conventions.



During the 1980's, open pit gold mining in the West created new mines and many of the belt buckles seen today are a result of that activity. Several styles of belt buckles are displayed here to represent the different types created at this time. Those buckles made to commemorate mine openings will someday be of particular interest because they were made only once in a limited quantity at a specific date. Some buckles are even identified as to what number they were in the sequence, i.e. 250 of 500. Property acquisition can make for interesting collecting as in the case of Tenneco's McCoy Mine. Just weeks before the scheduled mine opening, Echo Bay Mines bought the mine and belt buckles designed for Tenneco's grand opening and were never formally distributed. Echo Bay Mines then created their own buckles a few months later. (Both buckles are shown.)

Most of the buckles are well designed, often depicting the company logo or some mining scene and are thus aesthetically pleasing to display on your person or in your collection. Brass is the metal of choice, sometimes with black finish for contrast. Other metals such as pewter have been used and some limited edition buckles are silver or gold plated.

Obtaining mining related belt buckles may be somewhat difficult because of their popularity and limited production. The author received his through contacts in the mining industry. However, correspondence with mining companies or attending mining conventions would also be productive.



## Collector's Talk



### Found In An Abandoned Mine

Lane Griffin of Reno, Nevada, sent us this photocopy of a paper box he found underground in a mine in Nevada. The box held 50 single strength Star Fuzes (electric blasting caps). Electric blasting caps were not used to much in underground mining in the West, regular caps and fuse were the norm.

Lane is an avid and experienced explorer of abandoned underground mines. He, along with Martin Jensen, myself and a few other abandoned mine explorers will be writing about some of our adventures exploring old underground mines. If you have any ideas, or would like to be a part of this new project, please write or give me a call.

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