

MINING ARTIFACT COLLECTING IN NEVADA

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Earlier in the week we had planned our mining trip for Saturday to go back to the district we had touched upon the previous weekend. It was another one of those turn-of-the-century mining camps that had been developed mostly by shafts, like so many other districts already behind us.

On this particular Saturday, we did not have to stop to buy ice on our way out of town since a winter snowstorm had decided to blow in--the entire week before having been sunny and clear. This untimely weather change made the travelling and exploration a bit different than the norm, but otherwise posed no serious setbacks.

Upon reaching the district, we located ourselves on the topo maps and proceeded to seek out and check several small shafts. Nearby adits were passed, having very likely already been cleaned out. The isolated shallow workings proved fruitless, being characterized either by having essentially no levels or crosscuts, or by the presence of minor concentrations of humidity, thus rendering all the wood and paper products depressingly uninteresting.

Moving off to another portion of the district was the first right thing of the day we did since we had not found any artifacts up to now. We saw a shaft with an intermediate size dump which appealed to us. Seeing no road to it, and with the clouds descending and the rate of snow-fall increasing, we headed for it anyway. Descending into the shaft, a level appeared at about 150 feet down. There, illuminated by our miners' lamp, were a complete 25 pound Giant powder box, a mint condition candle box and various metal cans and cap tins. Further exploration of this short level turned up one more perfect 25 pound Giant powder box. The bottom level was uninspiring, having seen at some time in the distant past a lot of mud, now present as a mud-cracked layer on the floor.

Being re-energized by our success, a shaft close by with a bit larger dump provided the next

target. At about the 50 feet down was a clean, dry level with two mint 50 pound 1908 Hercules powder boxes and a assorted cap tins. The bottom level here was also mud-caked and deficient of any artifacts, and so we exited.

It was now getting late and there was no sign of the snow letting up, but mental persuasion pushed us to one more smaller dump and shaft nearby. Descending, a level about 50 feet down showed nothing, but the bottom level this time--at about 100 feet down--proved worthwhile. The now familiar mud-caked floor was present, but at the end of the short drift, around a tight curve and sitting on a pile of muck, was a complete 10 pound Giant powder box about half full of old sticks of powder. This was recognized immediately as being quite uncommon, and it is probable that, at this time, our day was made, so to speak.

Aside from having to place all of the artifacts into plastic trash bags to keep them from getting wet, the drive home was uneventful. Leisurely discussions of the day's results, as well as plans for the next trip, were made with the anticipation of other as-yet uncollected mining artifacts awaiting our discovery.

