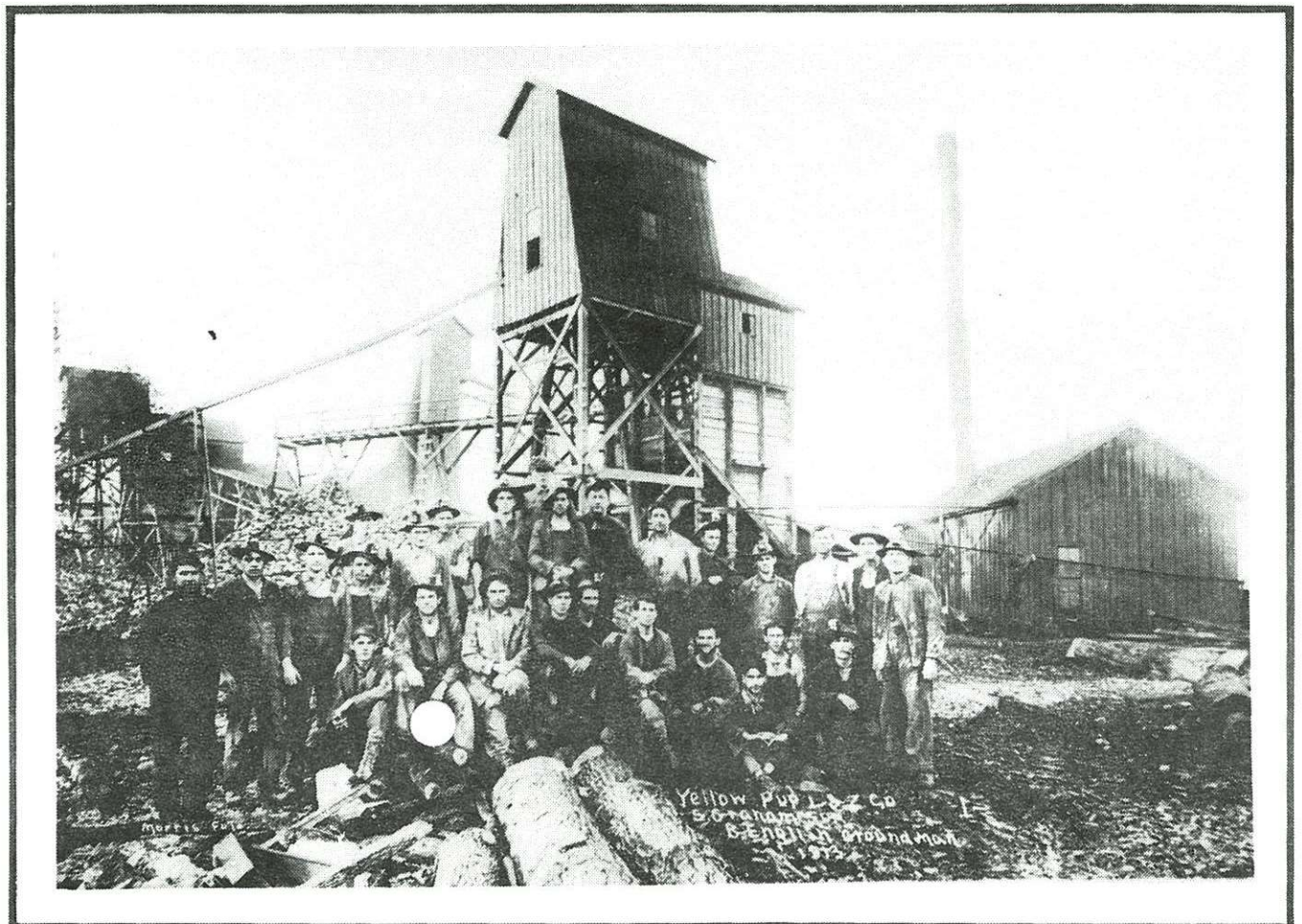


# TRI-STATE TREASURES AND GREAT-GRANDFATHER

by **Deric English**  
Boron, California

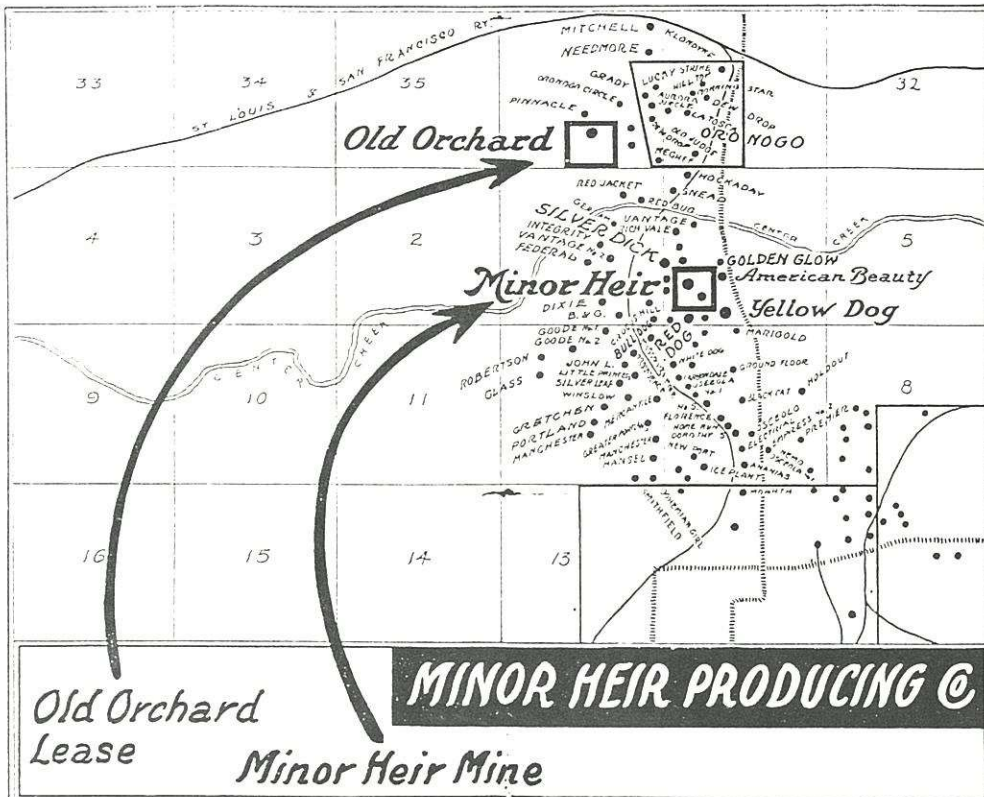
There are a myriad of reasons for collecting mining artifacts and we all experience some enjoyment from it or we wouldn't be doing it. Some collect for the friendships they form along the way, some do it for money, others collect items from favorite regions, and others collect to amass the most prestigious collection of a particular artifact. As for myself, I have found great enjoyment in collecting artifacts that pertain to the mining districts where my ancestors once worked.

Approximately five years ago, when my father passed down the family (mining) photographs, I became a mining artifact collector--the bug had bitten me. It seems that paper collectibles, photographs and letters, seem to endear themselves to the sentimental collector. I think we all have at least one item in our collection that money can't buy. Many times I have sat and pondered over these photographs; journeying into the past and experiencing a mining camp at the turn of the century.



Photograph of the Yellow Pup Lead and Zinc Company's mine. The writing in the foreground reads: "Yellow Pup L & Z Co., S. Graham, Sup., B. English, Ground Man, 1913." Bert English is the second man from the left in the front row (white dot).





At left, a map from the Minor Heir Producing Company's prospectus. The Yellow Dog and Red Dog mines mark the general vicinity of "Dog Country." "Dog Country" was an area around Webb City, Missouri, just north of Joplin in the Tri-State District. The Tri-State District comprises parts of Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Shown below is a photocopy of O.W. (Ol) Sparks from the *Tri-State Tribune*, August 9, 1990.

Anthony Colbert (Bert) English, my great-grandfather, was a miner, timberman, and ground boss in the Tri-State lead and zinc mines of the Joplin district. From the late 1890s to the late 1920s, he worked in the Silver Dick, Gibson, Barnsdall, and the Yellow Pup. The Yellow Pup mine, located in "Dog Country," was similar in name with other mines in the area—the Bulldog, Red Dog, Yellow Dog, and the White Dog. "Dog Country" was an area around Webb City, Missouri, where the Underwriters Land Company had erected a mill and painted it yellow. Even though the company named it the Golden Rod Mill, the miners nicknamed it the "Yellow Dog" mill and because of that, the area was known as "dog Country."

Senator O.W. (Ol) Sparks was the developer of the Yellow Pup mine, where my great-grandfather worked for four years. Oliver W. (Ol) Sparks was born in 1863, came to the Galena, Kansas, mining field as a young man, and became a leading mine operator. He was active in the Democratic party, being mayor of Galena, Sheriff of Cherokee County, Kansas, and Kansas state representative. Despite his wealth and prominence, O.W. Sparks was a friend of the miner. During times of low grade



O.W. (Ol) Sparks



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS  
CHAIRMAN LABOR  
MEMBER ENGROSSED BILLS  
FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS  
FISH AND GAME  
GAS AND OIL  
IRRIGATION  
MINES AND MINING  
SUPERVISION OF THE JOURNAL

STATE OF KANSAS



TOPEKA

SENATE CHAMBER

O. W. SPARKS  
SENATOR TENTH DISTRICT  
GALENA, KANSAS

June 26th, 1928.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

MR. BERT ENGLISH was foreman for me for four years and gave as perfect satisfaction as any foreman I ever had. Anything you can do for him will be appreciated and he will sure give you satisfaction.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "O.W. Sparks". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Yours truly,".

OWS:NS.

A letter of recommendation from O.W. Sparks, senator of the tenth district, to Bert English. This letter was drafted shortly before Mr. English relocated to the Coeur d'Alene district.

ore, O.W. would have to lay off workers, but not without going to the Galena merchants and telling them to extend credit to his men. He made good on those debts when paydirt was hit. He would put up capital to pump out wet mines, even when these mines were not the best producers, so that the men of the district would have work. O.W. Sparks died June 30, 1932 of a heart attack while inspecting a mine he was dewatering.

Four years before the death of O.W. Sparks, Bert English left the Tri-State for the Coeur d'Alenes and became an agent for the Hecla Mining Company of Burke, Idaho. Because of his familiarity with the Joplin district, he was called upon to recruit and transport

strikebreakers from the Tri-State to the Coeur d'Alenes. I have always heard that finding strikebreakers in the Tri-State was not that difficult. In the November, 1901 issue of the *Miners' Magazine*, the official organ of the Western Federation of Miners, Joplin, Missouri, was called the "Scab Incubator." On April 2, 1907, the *Socialist News* of Carl Junction, Missouri, described Joplin as "that great scab market." Regardless of the ease of recruiting strikebreakers, my great-grandfather's participation in this aspect of mining was a real point of contention with his son (my grandfather), but I guess the Coeur d'Alenes and union busting is another story.