

American Ores & Asbestos Co. by Todd Town



Along the southern crest of the Sierra Ancha Mountains, eight mile north-northeast of Roosevelt Lake in Arizona, lie 29 unpatented asbestos mining claims. They were originally located by Charles Watkins in 1914. Mining started in 1916. In 1917, Charles F. Sloane acquired the property and organized the American Ores & Asbestos Company. By the end of the 1920's the limit of most known ore was reached and mining ceased.

During the period of greatest activity at the mine, about 275 men were employed. The average production by the skilled miners amounted to 75 pounds of fiber per man per day.

In 1923 W. G. Shanley acquired the property through lapsation of assessment work, and organized the International Asbestos Company. Mr. Shanley confined his operation to experimenting with milling methods, designed to enhance asbestos production at the mill end, from the rock discarded on the dumps, and used to fill slopes. Shanley recovered 65 tons of fiber, and made shipments.

The deposit of asbestos was unique for fiber that was of exceptional length. Some specimens were 14 inches and are believed to represent the longest cross fiber chrysotile yet found in the world.

10,000 feet of working lay dormant until the early 1950's when Mr. Ed Town leased the property from Mr. Shanley. The mine once again was in

operation. The underground workings were yielding fiber once again and a portion of the ore bearing property was open pitted. A mill was set up and shipments of asbestos were made. After only a few years, the mine-able fiber was again depleted. The mine was abandoned, the mill was dismantled, and assessment work was allowed to lapse.

In visiting the mine site on many occasions, my wife and I stumbled onto the town site of the early miners. It consisted of dry stack rock foundations on which tents were used as shelter. At least three permanent wood structures once stood: the largest being a kitchen and mess hall, with two stoves still in place. The other two wood buildings were used as the pay office and the foreman's quarter. After breaking out the metal detectors and finding the usual tokens, coins, and trash dumps, our attention soon turned to the many lamps, and parts and pieces of lamps, that started to come out of their sleep.

The lamp of choice of the early miners was clearly the Justrite cap lamp, beaded base, lever feed. Three Justrite No. 35 candle-stick attachments were found, one still attached to the lamp. Several Inspectors' lamps were unearthed, two being nickel-plated. The only evidence of hand lamps being used were two tops off canister type Wolfs.

Three company time checks showed up (photo above), one unrelated to American Ores and Asbestos Company.

Justrite was a durable lamp and did the job, but the casualties were many. Hooks and hat braces broken off or mashed flat were the norm. Concave permanent reflectors were just that: very concave. Lighter attachments didn't stay attached, and hinged oval water doors found themselves unhinged.

But the early miner at the American Ores Mine had one indispensable ally, definitely an after-market *add on*. There was as much wire on some lamps as there was lamp. Wire was used for hinges, handles, feed levers and hooks. It must have been a constant struggle to keep the lamps in a working manner. American Ores Mine to us was a classic hard rock mine rich in history and plentiful in well used mining artifacts.

