

2024 Mining Artifact Collectors Show

by Doug Miller

Sunday, February 4, 2024

On Saturday, February 3rd, a large number of collectors and visitors attended the 2024 MAC show in Tucson. A great time was had by all. I was so glad I was able to attend.

I saw a number of fellow collectors and good friends. Sadly, each year the collector ranks are thinned by a few who have passed away. This past year, the collector community lost Neil Prenn and Dustin Schillinger. Neil was an avid collector of blasting cap tins. Dustin was an avid collector of mine signs and other mining artifacts, and by all accounts, a really great guy. I knew Neil from having met him at the 2023 MAC show where I photographed several of his rarest tins. I knew Dustin from having co-authored an article with him and Todd Mitchell about California Powder Works.¹ Dustin had obtained a wonderful early calendar from California Powder Works that formed one of the centerpieces of the article. I only wish I had gotten to know both men better.

At this year's show, I got to spend some quality time with some of my favorite fellow collectors of blasting cap tins and related artifacts, including John Kynor, Sr., Jack Purson, Rob Youngs, Tony Moon, and for the first time in quite a while, Neil Tysver.



Neil Tysver

Neil and I had been corresponding before the show and I had told him that I really wanted to find an embossed Aetna Powder Company Triple tin, the earliest tin used by Aetna Powder Company, and a very hard tin to find. I have done a great deal of research about Aetna Powder Company and am attempting to build a comprehensive collection of Aetna tins. Neil hinted that he might be able to come up with an Aetna Triple for me.

When I got to the show, Neil had a very nice example of the tin waiting for me. I tried to pay him for it, but Neil told me that it was a gift from my collecting buddies John Kynor, Rob Youngs, and Neil himself. Rob Youngs and Neil Tysver had acquired Neil Prenn's impressive cap tin collection. The Aetna Triple was among the tins acquired, and my three friends covered the cost of the tin for me. I was really touched by that. That tin means a great deal to me now, especially because it comes from my friends John Kynor, Rob Youngs, and Neil Tysver.

¹ Doug Miller, Dustin Schillinger, Todd Mitchell, "California Powder Works," *Eureka!* (Issue 54, September 2022) 35-42, <https://mineralogicalrecord.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-September-EUREKA-Issue-no.-54.pdf>, accessed February 4, 2024.



John Kynor, Sr.



Rob Youngs

I also got to speak at some length with David Berman, a new collector from West Virginia. I had first “met” David through the Eureka Facebook page when he purchased several oil wick and carbide cap lamps that I had listed for sale. David is a real gentleman and is eager to learn more about our hobby. He helped me in my efforts to secure and scan all known hardcopies Eureka magazine. David loaned me his copies of issues 1-12 of Eureka for scanning since my copies were hardbound.



David Berman

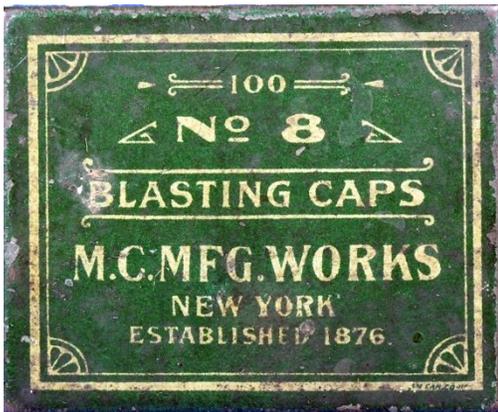
I had the opportunity to chat with Tony Moon, something I rarely get to do. Tony showed me photos of his very impressive collection of blasting cap tins. He had stopped by Jack Purson's table earlier while I was talking with Jack and mentioned that he had acquired a very nice tin from Neil Prens's collection. I was curious, so I sought Tony out to ask him about it. Tony had acquired an extremely rare and attractive example of a Canadian tin, a Curtis & Harvey "Dragon Brand" tin. Only three examples are known.



Tony Moon



I also spent quite a bit of time with my friend Jack Purson. Jack and I have been discussing the possibility of putting together a new catalogue of blasting cap tins. Many new tins have been discovered in recent years, in large part because of the influence of eBay. A new or very rare tin appears on eBay with some regularity. One such tin is a newly discovered example of an early version of the painted Metallic Cap Co. tins, a 100-count, No. 8 tin. Jack acquired this tin on eBay recently, and I suspect that it is the only known example.



Jack Purson

I also got to see and visit with my long-time friend, Wendell Wilson. Wendell and I were in school together at Arizona State University between 1967 and 1971. I was pursuing a degree in political science, with the intention of going on to law school. Wendell was a graduate student and teaching assistant in the geology department. We met when I began to take courses in geology, mineralogy, and geochemistry. After Wendell introduced me to mineral collecting, we explored a number of Arizona's hard rock mines together, seeking quality mineral specimens. I also later became interested in mining artifact collecting, partly through Wendell's influence and partly by virtue of what had become an intense interest in mining and mineralogy. I always enjoy seeing Wendell, and I try do so as often as I can.



Wendell Wilson (left) and Me (right)
2018 Tucson Gem and Mineral Show