

The 2026 Mining Artifact Collectors Show

February 7, 2026

Doug Miller

I drove to Tucson today from my home in Phoenix for the 31st Annual Mining Artifact Show. I got up at 6:00 AM to be there by 9:00. The drive isn't especially hard, just tiring. My usual route was cut off by unexpected construction, so I had to make my way through Chandler via Arizona Avenue to reach I-10 East. I count the miles to Tucson by my usual stops along the way, the first of which is the Burger King in Chandler. There, I got a bacon, egg, and cheese breakfast croissant and a cup of coffee. Not bad.

My next landmark is Picacho Peak, a jagged thumb of rock that rises hundreds of feet above the desert floor. Picacho Peak is about 40 miles from downtown Tucson, and the site of the only Civil War battle to have been fought in Arizona Territory. According to Wikipedia, "a Union cavalry patrol from California skirmished with Confederate scouts from Texas and three men were killed."

From Picacho Peak, it's about 50 minutes to Speedway, then another ten minutes to the Tucson Woman's Club on Bellevue Street. Once I turn off the freeway and on to Speedway, it always seems to take me longer to reach the site of the show than it should. I finally turned into the parking lot at about 9:05 and things already seemed pretty busy.

The first person I recognized as I entered the exhibit hall was David Berman from West Virginia. David was a novice collector when I first met him on line through the Eureka Facebook page a couple of years ago. Now he seems like an old pro.

The Eureka Facebook page, established by Dave Thorpe, has made an invaluable contribution to the preservation of our hobby. It's a place where mining artifact collectors from all over the world can meet and share their knowledge and photos of their collections. Cudos to Dave Thorpe.



I made my way to the front of the hall and saw several friends along the way. On my right, one of my fellow collectors of blasting cap tins, Rob Youngs, occupied a table close to the curtained stage. Rob was there with a several blasting cap tins, a nice selection of cap crimpers, and a couple of mercury flasks that looked for all the world like little whiskey jugs. He was also sporting a great mustache. I envy that mustache.

Rob told me that one of my friends from the Blasting Cap Tin Collectors Facebook page was looking for me, Mike Schern. Mike and I had planned to meet in Tucson, having exchanged many a message with one another about tin collecting. Mike is fairly new to the hobby and has sought my advice from time to time. The show had become crowded, and I was afraid I might miss him before he had to leave for the contemporary mineral show at Mineral City downtown, so I shouted in my best big boy voice “MIKE SCHERN”! He turned around and waved to me from near the entrance to the hall. That’s Dave Thorpe in the background. Mike was a mining engineer with Phelps Dodge for many years. Like me, he collects both mineral specimens and mining artifacts. He’s beginning to put together a very nice collection of blasting cap tins.



Mike and Wendell Wilson were contemporaries in graduate school at Arizona State University in the late 60s and early 70s. Mike went on to become a mining engineer, and Wendell became the editor in chief of the *Mineralogical Record*, a top tier mineral magazine with superb articles and photographs, as well as a website featuring articles about minerals and mineral localities. Its website also hosts the most complete collection of articles on mining artifacts to be found anywhere. This is my friend Wendell Wilson on the left and Mike on the right. Wendell and I were also in school together at ASU between 1967 and 1971. Wendell taught me to love mineral collecting, and we made many collecting trips to Arizona’s mines at that time. I used a Justrite Streamlined as my headlamp. Both men had picked up some nice things at the Mining Artifact Show.



Mike's and Wendell's Goodies.

Clockwise, from lower left, Du Pont No. 8, 100-count, patent number blasting cap tin, CIL No. 6, 100-count blasting cap tin, CIL No. 8, 100-count blasting cap tin, unfired, brass Brite Lite carbide cap lamp, Victor carbide cap lamp, two small mining insulators, a nice blacksmith-made candlestick with copper inlay, fancy file work, an unusual grip handle, no hook, from the collection of Roger Peterson, a beautiful Justrite Buddy carbide cap lamp. The blasting cap tins are now part of Mike Schern's collection, and the other items have found a home with Wendell Wilson.

I focus mostly on blasting artifacts these days, but I still appreciate beautiful little carbide cap lamps like the Buddy and the Brite Lite.

Jack Purson showed up again. Jack was sporting a dynamite box from Jefferson Explosives of Birmingham, Alabama. The disembodied hand holding the jug of mercury (empty, I hope) in this photo belongs to Rob Youngs. Jack has posted a nice write up about the box on the Blasting Cap Tin Collectors Facebook page.

As Jack and I were standing there, Rob pulled out a red Du Pont, No. 6, 100-count blasting cap tin. Nothing special, except for the fact that the top of the tin sports a paper label. I'd never seen one of those before. Rob asked us whether we thought the tin was the real deal. I think so. But contrary views have been expressed on the Blasting Cap Tin Collectors Facebook page.





Paper Label Du Pont No. 6, 100-Count tin



I saw and talked to Dave DesMarais at some length. Dave is a real gentleman, and he had some really nice things on his table. Wendell had acquired his new carbide cap lamps, candlestick, and insulators from Dave. I asked Dave if I could take his picture and I did. Unfortunately, I caught Dave in mid-blink. I'm sorry, Dave.



Dave had a 50-count, wooden blasting cap box on his table. I explained that I thought it was probably a World War II (or possibly Korean war era) box used by members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, many of whom came from the mining industry. I've never heard of these wooden boxes being used for civilian purposes, although I'm told they were.

What's that nice folding candlestick below Dave's right hand?



Dave told me after the show that he had purchased the stick at the show, and that that it was made by a fellow named Paxton in the 1980s. Who would have thought?



Andy Martin was at the show. Collectors frequently ask me how to obtain a copy of Andy's *Blasting Cap Tin Catalog*. Andy's book has been out of print for a while now, but when I emailed him recently, he told me that he had reprinted a few copies to bring to the show. I asked him to save me two. Then I bought three. Andy has filled out the last page of his book with a few more

tins. He was giving away free copies of this last page. For everyone's benefit, I'll post a pdf copy of the new last page on the Blasting Cap Tin Collectors Facebook page, so you can download it and print it out. By the way, that's Larry Kuester to Andy's left. I met Larry last year at the 2025 show. Larry helped me identify a skeletal frame, folding knife that I had brought to the show. Larry told me that it's a Schrade pocket knife that was included in packages of Trojan Explosives. The knife was probably an inexpensive, all-purpose pocket knife, not a special purpose blasting tool. I wrote an article about the knife that I'll submit for publication on the *Mineralogical Record* website.



Schrade "Fuse" Knife



I met a new person (to me) at the show, Bob Calhoun. He was manning the table for Neil Gerth from Maple Valley, Washington, who had brought several safety lamps from his collection. Bob is Neil's cousin from Phoenix, and had brought some interesting assay items: a small, shallow crucible and several heavy, rounded copper disks that look like they had popped out of the crucible or ones very similar to it. Bob's mother had worked at the San Manuel copper mine (about 30 miles northeast Tucson), and had picked them up while working there. If I understood correctly,

Bob explained that the disks were the result of an assay process that was used to determine whether the copper concentrates were ready for smelting.¹

My good friend Gary Brinkley was at the show. In fact, we ran into each other in front of Bob Calhoun's table. Until retiring, Gary and I both worked at the Central Arizona Project, Arizona's largest raw water delivery project. We worked in different divisions, though. Gary did a useful job, while I was a lawyer for the Project. We didn't learn about our mutual interest in mining artifacts until we ran into one another at a show a few years ago.



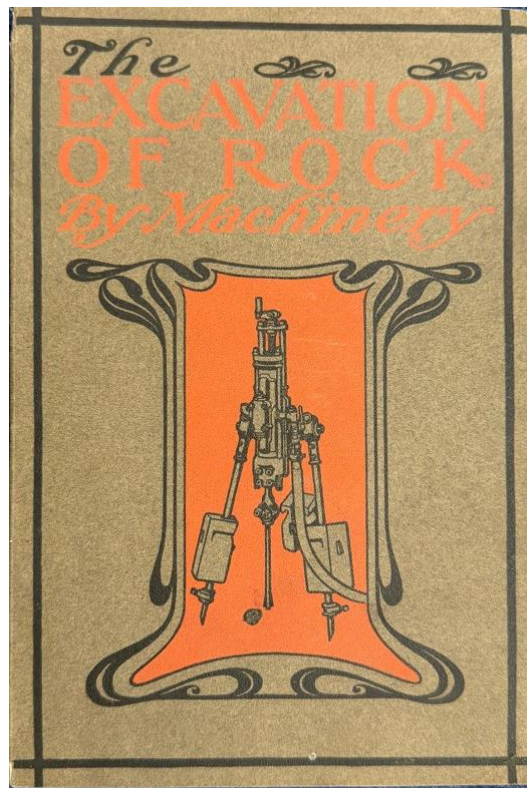
Mark Bohannon was at the table next to Bob Calhoun. Mark has published a brand-new book on safety fuse wrappers, blasting cap crimpers, and related artifacts. It's a wonderful piece of work, and a must-have for collectors of these items. I first met Mark at last year's show. He helped me

¹ For anyone who, like me, doesn't know much about safety lamps, there is an excellent primer on the Smithsonian Museum's website: National Museum of American History, "Safety Lamps," <https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/mining-lights-and-hats/safety-lamps>, accessed 2/9/2026.



identify a rare set of cap crimpers that had been given to me by my great friend, Reg Pattee. They are Larrimore crimpers. I wrote an article about Mark and the crimpers last year.²

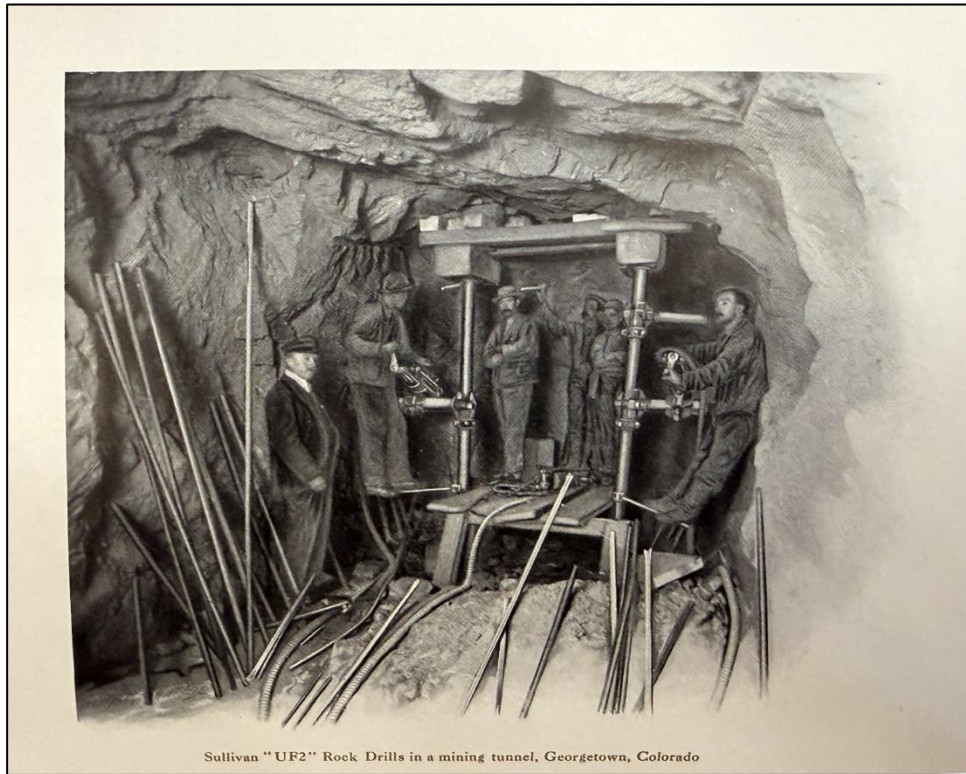
I visited Leo Stambaugh's table next. Leo had some wonderful ephemera for sale, including two catalogues devoted to mining machinery, one from Sullivan Machinery Company and the other from Ingersoll-Sergeant Drill Company. I had never seen either of these catalogs before. These ephemera are increasingly rare and valuable. They were most often discarded by their owners, so very few survive, much less in good condition.



Sullivan

*Machinery Company (1907)
(Cover)*

² Doug Miller, "Larrimore Crimpers," <https://mineralogicalrecord.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Larrimore-Crimpers-by-Doug-Miller-2-15-2025.pdf>, accessed 2/9/2026.



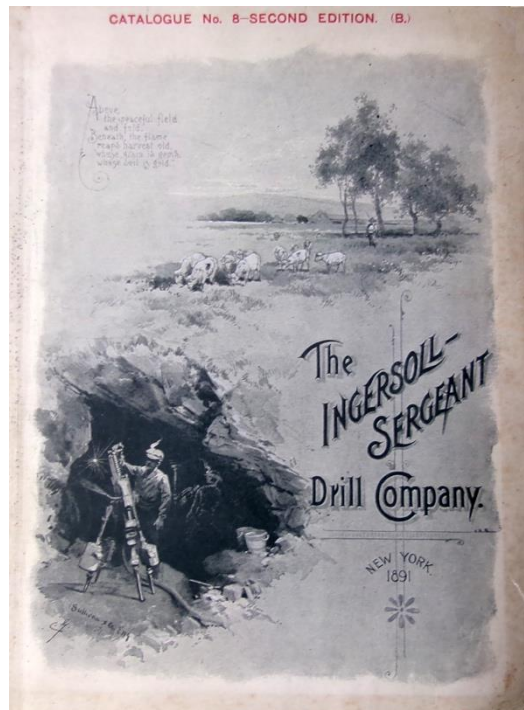
Sullivan

Sullivan "UF2" Rock Drills in a mining tunnel, Georgetown, Colorado

Machinery Catalogue

According to Google AI, Sullivan Machinery Company was founded in 1868 in Claremont, New Hampshire, and was a major manufacturer of mining, quarrying, and industrial construction equipment, specializing in diamond drills, air compressors, and coal cutters. The catalogue illustrations are beautiful.

The other catalogue on Leo's table was an Ingersoll-Sergeant Catalogue from 1891. Leo tells me the Ingersoll-Sergeant catalog is the best drilling catalogue he's ever owned. Again, according to Google AI, The Ingersoll-Sergeant Drill Company was formed in 1888 in New York City by the merger of the Ingersoll Rock Drill Company (founded in 1871) with the Sergeant Drill Company. It became a premier manufacturer of pneumatic rock drills and compressors, significantly advancing mining and tunneling technology before merging with the Rand Drill Company in 1905 to form Ingersoll Rand.



MINING AND TUNNELING.



FIG. 147.
STOPPING AND PIT MINING WITH INGERSOLL AND SERGEANT DRILLS.

YELLOW JACKET SILVER MINING CO.,
NEVADA.

"We are drifting on 2,480 foot level; dimensions, 4½ x 7 feet. Nature of rock, conglomerate, feldspar, porphyry and quartz. Number of feet drilled per month, 1,160; cost per foot for drilling as follows: Steam, \$0.381; labor, \$0.621; repairs, \$0.026. Total cost per running foot of tunnel: Wood, \$6.126; top labor, \$2.333; oil, etc., \$0.133; sharpening drills, 0.190; pumping water, \$0.275; hoisting rock, \$3.853; labor in tunnel: \$6—\$18.91 per foot. There is a saving in the use of power over hand drilling of 50 per cent. We prefer the Ingersoll drill, because it is less liable to get out of repair than other makes.

Yours truly,
T. E. JAMES, Supt."

SILVER KING MINING
Co., SILVER KING,
ARIZONA.

"I have to acknowledge your esteemed favor of October 1, making inquiry as to the result of the work accomplished in the mine by the plant of air drills and compressor furnished us by you. In general I can say the results are extremely satisfactory. We can break one-third more ground now than at the same time last year, at a trifle over one-half the cost, using sometimes three, but generally two, of the 2½ inch 'Eclipse' drills and including a certain amount of necessary hand drilling. Aside from this, I can hardly estimate the benefit derived from forcing air into the mine during the hot season. The repairs have been very light, amounting to just \$6.00 for the past three months, and this with their use by a number of green hands. Our 18 x 30 inch 'Straight Line' Compressor works beautifully, although as yet it has had but comparatively light duty to perform; but I am well satisfied that it will do all claimed for it, easily, from experimental tests we have made. It runs easily and smoothly, and takes a surprisingly small amount of lubricants.



FIG. 148. INGERSOLL DRILLS AT WORK IN A TUNNEL.

The repairs have been very light, amounting to just \$6.00 for the past three months, and this with their use by a number of green hands. Our 18 x 30 inch 'Straight Line' Compressor works beautifully, although as yet it has had but comparatively light duty to perform; but I am well satisfied that it will do all claimed for it, easily, from experimental tests we have made. It runs easily and smoothly, and takes a surprisingly small amount of lubricants.

Very truly yours,
ARTHUR MACY, Superintendent."

The Ingersoll-Sergeant Drill Company Catalog, page 113 (1891)

(Note the testimonial from Silver King Mining Co. in Arizona, Arthur Macy, Superintendent.)

I also got to stop by the tables occupied by Siggy Zecha from Germany,



and Todd and Lori Mitchell.



Both had some beautiful items for sale. Siggy was offering miner-themed beer steins and beautiful, hand-illustrated booklets of mineral specimens. The Mitchells had great dynamite boxes and box ends and some very rare blasting cap tins.



Another friend should be mentioned, Roger Becksted. Roger contributed to my article on the Schrade fuse knives. Roger also helped organize this year's Mining Artifact Show.

All in all, it was a great show. However, some old friends were missing from the show, including Neil Tysver, John Kynor, Sr., and Tony Moon. Another collector I'd love to meet in person is Hal Post. I've developed a wonderful relationship with these folks as I've corresponded with them over the years about the articles I've written, and I hope to visit them soon.

That's about it for this year. God bless everyone!