

# 99ER'S NUGGET NEWS

**Northwest Montana Gold Prospectors Club**

**February 2009**

**Editor: Milah Gano**

**Quote of the Month: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."**

*George Santayana*

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In Columbia Falls

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## **GOLD PRICES:**

As of February 4, 2009

**GOLD—\$903.50/OZ.**

**SILVER—\$12.51/OZ.**

*Our Website:*

NWMTGoldprospectors.com

## *Greetings,*

Happy Valentines Day to all of you. We have had some days that seem to be warmer and melting. My mind is on Spring and the chance to get a look at those rocks and maybe find some GOLD!

Gold Prices seem to be on the rise again, they are up \$39.40 from last newsletter. Maybe that is a trend and we will again see it going over \$1,000. With so many uncertain changes in our economy and world situations it is hard to guess where it will all end up. It doesn't seem to matter when you find a spec of that precious gold metal. The excitement always seems to be there no matter what the gold prices are or how big the piece is. Gold fever seems to grab us all.

Speaking of "gold fever", I watched the entire 1st and 2nd seasons of HBO's "Deadwood" this winter. Shows you how slow the winter can be. Now if you can stomach the crude language and brutality of what I am sure was the "West" in those days, it appears to be a quite accurate portrait of those gold rush days, with no romance and comforts added. It seemed to be not so much on the acquiring of gold, but the spending of it and the entrepreneurs it took to start up a wild west town in the middle of Indian Territory, where white man was not supposed to be in the first place. I enjoyed the sheer determination and ingenuity of those individuals who ventured forth from their soft warm homes. Was it desperation or greed that drove them, I wondered. This is a show that you have to watch all the way through and pay attention. If you are not following the entire show, the brutality of it will keep you lost and not appreciating it.

If you have any items for our newsletter. Please contact me. Input is always appreciated.

Milah Gano

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# Some Gold Seekers Came Late

By Russ Leadabrand

*(taken from Gems and Minerals June 1985 "Gold Special")*

How did the word spread so fast? Historians still good-naturedly disagree on the point. Without the telegraph, without the Pony Express or the railroad, without a flood of people that moved in both directions, the news of discovery of gold in California did spread—and incredibly fast.

It was all by word of mouth.

Emigrants were on their way to the West in the 1840's but not because of gold. It was the land in California and Oregon they were after, and that itch to move westward, ever westward. It was one of the phenomena of the country, of the people.

But almost overnight the Mother Lode, as it would quickly be known, was an anthill of men who had come from almost every corner of the country. They came by whatever means available, as fast as they could.

And, of course, many of those who arrived came too late. Hundreds of men actually walked the thousands of miles across America. Some joined others in wagon trains, some sailed the rough passage around the chilly tip of South America in the tall-masted sailing ships, and some sailed to the waist of the Americas, then hiked through the little-known jungles of Central America in to sail north again from a Pacific port if and when they could get passage.

Hundreds of would-be miners—those who came "to see the elephant," as the humorous writers of the day called it—got to the half-dozen rivers that flowed west out of the Sierra Nevada to find the banks of the Merced, the Tuolumne, the Mokelumne, the Consumnes, the American and the Yuba dotted with Argonauts (a name given to the gold seekers in the days of '49), some loners worked with a goldpan, or a small sluice box or a crude rocker. Others came with families and worked their claims as companies, large informal bands of those more skilled at the art of winnowing gold from the Sierran gravels.

Talented miners came, including the English Cornishmen who had generations of hardrock experience and a fat book of mining folklore to back up their skills. Burying deep into the Sierra croppings, veins, ledges, lodes. Some were lucky. Some spent back-breaking months grinding into the mountains, seeking to find where the thread-fine veins ballooned into the richer fat pockets deep inside the mountains.

And while the rivers and each of their tributaries were clotted with prospectors—"in places it is so crowded a miner has to bring his own rock to stand on," wisecracked the cynical—there were many who simply came too late.

And behind them, more and more men and families, hoping to strike it rich in California were still on their way, slowly. West. There was gold in California.

The late-arrivals calculated, over campfires dimmed with frustration and disappointment, that if there was one spot in California—the Mother Lode—where nuggets of pure gold could be pulled from the gravels, California had to have other bonanzas hidden away. And, after one final look at the ten thousand campfires outward from the place on the American River where the excitement all began on January 24, 1848, after seeing the seedling gold towns with their wonderful names spring up, these latecomers spread out across the state, prospecting very carefully.

One band of Argonauts, in their haste to get from the Middle West to California, took a fateful shortcut and became participants in that classic drama of the Death Valley 49ers. After having slain and eaten their oxen, they were forced to leave their wagons and all their large possessions behind, to hike on west across the Panamint Mountains. And, by leaving Death Valley thus, they started a legend almost as great as that of any of the stories of the Gold Rush itself.

One of the emigrants had knocked loose and lost the front sight from his rifle. Somewhere in the Panamints, this member of a group called the Jayhawkers spotted a bright piece of metal imbedded in a fist-sized rock on a plateau on a high frosty mountainside. The Jayhawker picked it up, recognized it as brilliant, native, metallic silver. With a pocket knife, he fashioned a new gunsight of silver. He and his partners noticed other specimens of silver in rocks scattered across the Panamint tableland. Laughingly, they said that when they made their pile in the Mother Lode, they'd come back and top it off with some of this easy-to-pick-up silver for dessert. But not now. Now they were in a rush to make up the time they'd lost in Death Valley. Now they were in a rush to get on to the Mother Lode. And, or course, when they arrived they were already too late.

## *Some Gold Seekers Came Late (Continued)*

The Jayhawkers had told the story of the silver gunsight at many campfires as they walked from the Panamints and around to the Mother Lode and all the excitement.

Now that the Mother Lode was beginning to play out, some of the 49ers, and some of the men they'd met along the way, remembered the lost gunsight story and formed expeditions to look for this other California bonanza.

All manner of men—those experienced in mining and prospecting for silver and those as green as cooking apples and without any manner of map—headed for the Panamints. None found the Lost Gunsight. It is possible that it is still there today, still waiting for an idle hiker to stumble across.

But the pattern of prospecting in California now had taken on a new look.

Every story (whether it was true, or rumor, or outright fiction about gold and silver "somewhere else" in California) was investigated. These stories were checked out by men who had come too far, with too much hope, with too much pride to turn around and walk back to Missouri or New England.

Gold and silver were found aplenty in the years that lay ahead for those who prospected the Death Valley area.

True, it was as inhospitable a piece of California as any could imagine. By summer the heat was more than they could understand or anticipate. More than one single burro prospector died in Death Valley country because of lack of water or provisions. In the winter, the mountains that were laced with high country silver were blanketed with snow and ice. In summer there were sudden desert rainstorms, cloudbursts and windstorms. But, out of the hardships and frustrations, there were big strikes in the Death Valley region to rival those along the Yuba and the American Rivers.

Gold was found in a hit-and-miss pattern in the desert sprawl. Some discoveries became camps, some camps became towns, some towns given enough time became cities. Still, almost all are ghosted and gone today.

In the Panamints blossomed Harrisburg and Skiddoo. Gold and silver were there, but this was not simple placer mining; this was back-breaking hardrock work. Old, but not the Lost Gunsight.

Atop the Funeral Mountains, Chloride City and Chloride Cliff blossomed. The living was primitive, but the gold was still magic.

Rhyolite and Bullfrog (both in Nevada) came up on the eastern edge of Death Valley. Rhyolite became a giant in its time—three-story stone or reinforced concrete commercial buildings, a grid of streets and cross streets, all manner of fancy goods and services for those who had struck it rich, a town linked with a new railroad.

Today almost nothing remains of Bullfrog, and Rhyolite resembles the remnants of a city torn apart by cannon shell and bombs. Here and there a corner of a three-story building remains. It was a rich strike, but a short-lived one. It can be traced back, however crooked the path the researcher must follow, to those who looked for the Lost Gunsight or the Lost Breyfogle, or other "lost" folklore lodes in the desert.

In the same area, gold and silver were found in the Coso Mountains, opposite the Panamints to the west. Here, Darwin, Reward, Lookout, Modoc, and Minietta were the rough silver boom towns. Only Darwin remains, and it has known more than one boom. Darwin produced much more silver than gold, but it refuses to completely ghost.

Many of those who worked in the Coso moved north when the high desert mines played out and hired on at strikes starting up in places like Masonic, Aurora and, the Queen of them all, Bodie.

Bodie was big enough, lasted long enough, to boast it's own railroad, a segregated graveyard. And, in spite of repeated fires that destroyed huge parts of the original town, Bodie happily was protected until today it is an official state historic landmark. The score or more of first generation boom camp buildings that remain are carefully protected, an honest mining camp from yesterday—in no way "fancied" up.

Bodie and Aurora were sister communities. Bodie, when it ghosted, was preserved. Aurora, to the east, because of a dubious state line, moved on surveyors' maps back and forth from Nevada to California many times, Aurora (now in Nevada) was one of the few of the remote boom camps that was graced by fire-proof brick buildings. It had fancy saloons and attractive and ornate home—wooden construction to be sure, but wood was a premium building material on those tree denuded hills.

Aurora suffered total destruction by the board robbers, the razing of all the brick buildings, by the bottle and curio hunters, and the metal-locator enthusiasts who came at the last. Today it is little more than a scar across a handsome high country borderland between Nevada and California, east of Bridgeport, California.

### ***Some Gold Seekers Came Late (Continued)***

There were several post-Mother Lode camps that boomed spectacularly, and contributed enough to put down substantial foundations miles distant from civilizations.

In the Inyo Mountains just east of Owens Lake, a large mountain called Cerro Gordo (fat hill) by the Mexican prospectors who found the first silver sign there much earlier became a U.S. of the same name. Cerro Gordo in its heyday spawned tons of rich silver-lead ore which was floated across Owens Lake (now dry) on two tiny steamers and thence shipped to Los Angeles. There are historians who will give you proof indelible that Los Angeles would never have blossomed had it not been for the load-of-bread sized ingots of lead-silver that poured out of "fat hill." The mines are quiet now.

In San Diego County a group of prospectors who arrived too late for the rich picking in the Mother Lode, who lived by hard scrabble and catch-as-catch-can, moved through the hills until they were camped in Coleman Creek, not far from where the giant telescope dome of Mount Palomar now stands. There was a modest strike and they voted to call the camp "Julian" after Mike Julian, a member of their group. They staked out many claims; some were good, some little more than dry holes. Other gold seekers got the good news via the prospectors' telegraph (which as times seem little removed from ESP). More miners moved in—single prospectors, families, companies.

The biggest, richest strike of all in the area was the Stonewall Jackson in the Cuyamaca District, around the hill to the southeast from the burgeoning camp of Julian. Again, historians attribute the sudden spurt of growth witnessed by the city of San Diego to the wealth that came out of this mine. There is not much left of the Stonewall Jackson. Most of what is there is protected by the state park system and the Cleveland National Forest.

Today, Julian boasts a mine open to tourists typical of the boom days. Tourists can see the stopes, laterals and interior stairways, and a delightful guide takes groups through the complicated diggings telling the Julian saga. This town has a fine museum and one or two small original buildings.

It has been said that of all those who came to the Gold Rush in the Mother Lode the only ones to hit it rich and to hang onto their riches were the merchants: the people who hauled provisions and hardware from San Francisco into the diggings.

There was something about those who found the giant nuggets, those who saw their pans filled with grain-of-wheat sized nuggets that first day they tried their hand at this new business. They were poor one day, millionaires that next, and often as not, poor again a week later. Once rich, they grubstaked a hundred of their friends, enjoyed an incredible party, spent what they found that first day—wouldn't there simply be more of the same tomorrow? And sometimes there was, and sometimes there wasn't.

But the memory of the glorious discovery was so ripe, and so strong and so heady that they prospected on and on until they hit it rich again, or just faded away. And, if they hit it rich again they acted the second time around exactly as they did with the first strike. When the send bonanza was frittered away, there were still no regrets, it had been a wonderful party.

Thanks to those who came to the Mother Lode late, we have the strikes at Lundy and Tioga, Shasta and the Trinities. We have Randsburg and Johannesburg. Red Mountain and Atolia. There are the Dales, Goldstone, and we have Dundenburg and Gold Cliffs, and glory holes and sites all across the state.

Because these men never stopped prospecting, they not only found gold and silver but also tungsten and borax, uranium and precious metals without end.

The banks of the six rivers might be busy again today; there is a new generation of prospectors winnowing through the old gravels to discover what might have been left behind. Their gold finding equipment is more sophisticated. Some have done well at this latter day winnowing, but from such it is doubtful that any camps such as Bodie or Harrisburg or Lundy or a Calico or Holcomb Valley will be erected.

(I hold, perhaps foolishly, that the Lost Gunsight has still to be found. I hold that the legend of Gold Lake, with its shoreline dotted with gold nuggets, might not be as wacky as it seems at first blush. And I feel that somewhere in those flinty peaks behind Alleghany, above the Yuba, a very rich gold strike is still to be made.)

Until these strikes are made, let us enjoy the fruits of the second efforts of the Argonauts. Julian and Panamint City and Bodie all came into being because prospectors—skilled and unskilled—came to the Mother Lode to make their pile and, when they discovered that the Mother Lode had already been picked clean, refused to go home and kept right on prospecting.

# Minutes from NWMGP Meeting January 10, 2009

- ◆ Braxton called the meeting to order. There were 24 people present.
- ◆ There were no minutes to read because of Christmas and the Treasures report was read and approved.

## OLD BUSINESS:

- ◆ Clarence took the floor while the ballets were being counted. He was explaining to us how to find out what gold was in a ring. If anyone would like this please call Clarence and he can give you that.
- ◆ Gary gave us an update on Suzie, she is doing well and "Thanks" all of us for the well wishes and prayers. At this time Clarence also told us that Gary E. Hall, who has been a member of this club for a long time is not doing well and could use all of our prayers. For those of you who don't know Gary he was the editor of our newsletter for many years and was the clubs treasure. *"Gary get better!"*
- ◆ The ballets have been counted. Please welcome your new officers and if you have the time and would like to volunteer your extra time there is always something they need help with. There was a tie this time and it was broke by the person saying they would only do it if the other person would not.

President Braxton Walborn

Vice President Herb Robinson

Treasure Gary Henry

Secretary Vicki Walborn

Sergeant of Arms Bob Liston and Rick Lance

- ◆ We are not going to do the Butte show this year. There are just too many problems with it and our Spring Kick off is that same weekend.
- ◆ On that note we need to come up with some idea on how to make some money for the club whether it is a raffle or something else. We have a gold nugget and a set of Bunker Hill Silver Round for prizes. We would need some other things, but it is a start.
- ◆ We talked about the Miners show. We need to find a place and a time to do this. Clarence asked us to put a committee together and asked for volunteers. Volunteers were Clarence and Jill Taber, Kevin K., Herb Robinson, Rick Lance, Braxton and Vicki Walborn, Sandi Randle. There was also a suggestion that we have a gold panning seminar at this time and charge \$5.00 or something for them to learn how to pan. Do we want vendors, and who do we want to come and talk to the people. These are all things we need to think about, and if you have any suggestion please contact the people on the committee.

## NEW BUSINESS:

- ◆ Clarence asked the club if he could pay for two new members dues with gold. The club said yes so he weighed it and Gary gave him a vile. Someone asked where the gold came from, it came for Alaska.
- ◆ Jill Taber asked for some new ideas for the spring kick off. It seems like the attendance has been down a little the last few years. Debbie has come up with some great stuff for the kids. Now we just need some for the adults. Debbie suggested that we have some different entertainment. We could put on some kind of show. If you have any suggestion please call Jill, Debbie or Vicki.
- ◆ Braxton and I also put it out there that we have a contest to see who could come up with the news and most creative way to process black sand or concentrates. Clarence made a motion the club do this, it was seconded and the club voted and it passed. So shake off the winter blues and start creating. We will figure out the prize and judges and we will keep you updated.
- ◆ Gary Henry was contacted by Allen C. before the meeting. He had made some window decals of our club logo. They are \$5.00. Clarence made a motion for Gary to contact Allen and see if we could get a better deal if we got them in bulk. This was seconded and the club voted yes. Gary will let us know next meeting.
- ◆ With Gary E. Hall not doing well we need some one to help keep us up on what is going on with the government and mining. This is very important to us. If there is someone out there that already watches this and would be willing to let one of the board members or as many members of the club know, so that we can all contact who needs to be, it would be great. Please let us know. Gary Henry said he would watch but he really has a lot on his plate right now.
- ◆ The meeting was adjourned.

## Raffle Winners for January to follow:

ITEM	DONATOR	WINNER
Lotion Gift Set	Robinsons	Jon & Pennie VanDort
Shirt Horses	Robinsons	Clarence & Jill Taber
Miner on Amethyst	Robinsons	Joe
Top O' Deep	Gary Henry	Braxton Walborn
Top O' Deep	Club	Bob Liston
Silver Round	Club	Calin
Knife	Jill Taber	Calin
Calendar	Larry Domingo	Jill & Clarence Taber
Shirt (OLD Prospectors)	2 Bits	Ken Hensmen
Magnet w/horse	?	Gary W.

*Understanding grains, grams and dwt (penny weight) and Troy Oz.*

### WEIGHT CONVERSIONS

#### USING TROY OZ

GRAMS	OZT	GRAINS	DWT
31.1	1.00	480	20

#### USING IMPERIAL OZ

GRAMS	OZ	GRAINS	DWT
28.3	1.00	437.04	18.21

#### CALCULATIONS

TO CONVERT	TO	MULTIPLY BY
GRAMS	GRAINS	15.4324
GRAINS	GRAMS	.0648
GRAMS	OZ (AVDP)	.0353
GRAMS	OZT	.03215

#### **IN OTHER WORDS**

There are 31.1 grams in an ounce, or 480 grains, or 20 dwt  
Which means that there are 15.4324 grains in 1 gram

#### **HOW THIS HELPS YOU**

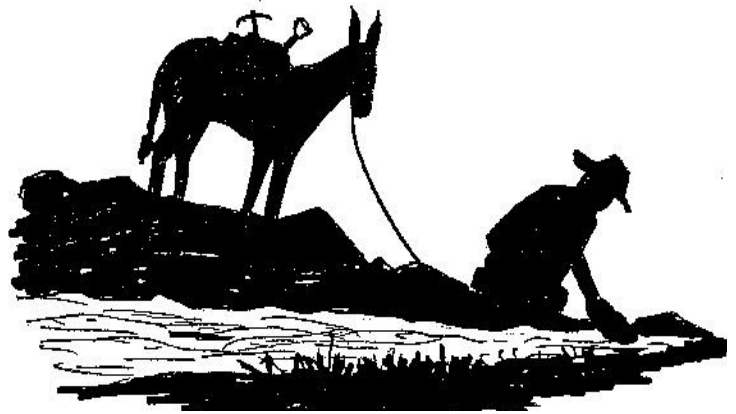
When you see a nugget on Ebay, that weighs 6.4 grains, and the bid is at \$13.25, you WANT to be able to figure out how much per oz., you would be paying, its simple.

Take the price of the gold \$13.25 and divide it by the weight (in grains) = \$2.07 per grain

Now multiply \$2.07 x 480 (grains in an ounce) = \$993.75 (per OZT)

## What is an Argonaut

In Greek mythology, the **Argonauts** (Ancient Greek: Ἀργοναῦται) were a band of heroes who, in the years before the Trojan War, accompanied Jason to Colchis (modern day Georgia) in his quest to find the Golden Fleece. Their name comes from their ship, the *Argo*, which was named after its builder, Argus. "Argonauts", therefore, literally means "Argo sailors". They were sometimes called Minyans, after a prehistoric tribe of the area.



## The Story of Argonaut

After the death of King Cretheus, the Aeolian Pelias usurped the Iolcan throne from his half-brother Aeson and became king of Iolcus in Thessaly (near the modern city of Volos). Because of this unlawful act, an oracle warned him that a descendant of Aeolus would seek revenge. Pelias put to death every prominent descendant of Aeolus he could, but spared Aeson because of the pleas of their mother Tyro. Instead, Pelias kept Aeson prisoner and forced him to renounce his inheritance. Aeson married Alcimede, who bore him a son named Diomedes. Pelias intended to kill the baby at once, but Alcimede summoned her kinswomen to weep over him as if he were stillborn. She faked a burial and smuggled the baby to Mount Pelion. He was raised by the centaur Chiron, who changed the boy's name to Jason.

When Jason was 20 years old, an oracle ordered him to dress as a Magnesian and head to the Iolcan court. While traveling Jason lost his sandal crossing the muddy Anavros river while helping an old woman (Hera in disguise) ford. The goddess was angry with King Pelias for killing his stepmother Sidero after she had sought refuge in Hera's temple.

Another oracle warned Pelias to be on his guard against a man with one shoe. Pelias was presiding over a sacrifice to Poseidon with several neighboring kings in attendance. Among the crowd stood a tall youth in leopard skin with only one sandal. Pelias recognized that Jason was his cousin. He could not kill him because prominent kings of the Aeolian family were present. Instead, he asked Jason: "What would you do if an oracle announced that one of your fellow-citizens were destined to kill you?". Jason replied that he would send him to go and fetch the Golden Fleece, not knowing that Hera had put those words in his mouth.

Jason learned later that Pelias was being haunted by the ghost of Phrixus. Phrixus had fled from Orchomenus riding on a divine ram to avoid being sacrificed and took refuge in Colchis where he was later denied proper burial. According to an oracle, Iolcus would never prosper unless his ghost was taken back in a ship, together with the golden ram's fleece. This fleece now hung from a tree in the grove of the Colchian Ares, guarded night and day by a dragon that never slept. Pelias swore before Zeus that he would give up the throne at Jason's return while expecting that Jason's attempt to steal the Golden Fleece would be a fatal enterprise. However, Hera acted in Jason's favour during the perilous journey.

Jason was accompanied by some of the principal heroes of ancient Greece. The number of Argonauts varies, but usually totals between 40 and 55; traditional versions of the story place their number at 50.

**Some have hypothesized that the legend of the Golden Fleece was based on a practice of the Black Sea tribes; they would place a lamb's fleece at the bottom of a stream to entrap gold dust being washed down from upstream. This practice was still in use in recent times, particularly in the Svaneti region of Georgia.**

## "CODE OF ETHICS"

*Any violation reflects on all of us!*

1. Know and obey the laws, rules and regulations pertaining to mining.
2. Respect private property and mining claims of others. *Get Permission First!*
3. Conduct your mining activity in a manner that will cause minimal disturbance to others.
4. Plan your operation prior to proceeding to ensure minimal environmental impact and erosion.
5. Restore the area to its original or better condition when finished with your operation.
6. NEVER disrupt or damage wildlife breeding sites, even if it's legal to do so.
7. Remove all trash and debris found in and around all streams, rivers, and campsites.
8. Keep your equipment maintained and in peak operating condition.
9. Use extreme caution when using petroleum products around waterways.
10. MINE SAFELY! No amount of gold is worth your life or the life of others.

## REGULAR CLUB MEETING

***Feb. 14  
Saturday  
1:00 P.M.***

**Columbia Falls  
Community Center  
On  
Nucleus Ave.  
Columbia Falls, MT**

**NWMTGoldprospectors.com**

If you know of a club member who is ill or needs help,  
Prayer or encouragement, call our "Sunshine Lady",  
Evelyn Grant at 406-892-3298

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Vice-President	Herb Robinson
Secretary	Vicki Walborn
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