

State Department of Geology and Mineral Industries

702 Woodlark Building
Portland, Oregon

DIXIE MOUNTAIN COPPER CLAIMS

Greenhorn District
Grant County

- Location:** On the east slope of Dixie Mountain at about the 7300 feet elevation and in about the center of section 28, township 11 south, range 34 east. Access is by a short spurr road which takes off from the Dixie Mountain Lookout road at a point near the summit.
- Owners:** The Asa Smith family, Dixie Mountain Cafe, R. F. D. Prairie City.
- General:** Details concerning the number of claims, the claim names and the time when the Smith's started working are not reported for reasons which will be apparent later. The Smiths did however construct about 3/8 of a mile of access road to an early day tunnel and hire several miners throughout the summer. The tunnel was re-opened and found to be about 80 feet in length. This had been extended about the 145 foot mark at the time of the writer's visit.

Request for the examination was made by long distance phone call by Mrs. Smith, Saturday, September 10th. At that time Mrs. Smith explained that Mr. Bob Wallace of the U. S. G. S. has examined the operation the previous week and that Wallace had recommended that the writer should be called in for advisory purposes. There was much urgency for an immediate examination and seemingly some question as to whether the tunnelling was being driven in the proper direction to intersect certain veins shown on surface exposures. Wallace was quoted as having explained that I was an expert on such matters.

Examination of the operation was conducted on the morning of September 15th in the company of Mrs. Smith. New miners recently engaged on a contract basis to replace unsatisfactory predecessors were Messers Westfall and Shultz. These men also accompanied the writer over the ground.

This examination served to disclose that there was quartz with malachite stain and even some chalcopyrite in about three different surface showings. These showings were in the form of ill-defined blobs developed in a series of closely spaced and otherwise tight fractures. Furthermore, the sum-total quantity of copper stained vein quartz seen on the property was such that it would probably not fill more than one wheelbarrow were it all dug out and lumped together in one load.

The full significance of this situation was rendered all the more impressive by the fact that the hillside in which these showings occur consists for the most part of clean, rain-swept bedrock, completely devoid of either soil or talus over large areas.

The bedrock is a dense, hard crystalline metamorphic which shows a prominent banding and bedding, or jointing. The "vein" followed by the tunnel is nothing more than a zone of closely spaced-fractures along which there hasn't been more than incipient shearing action. In fact there are several such zones exposed on the hillside in the immediate vicinity of the one followed by the tunnel. There is no mining problem to be figured out for the obvious reason that there is no evidence of a prospect on the property. Why the old-timers ever dug the original 80 foot section of the tunnel in the first place is in itself a mystery as the few poorly developed tendencies of limonite partings it does show are not reported to yield pocket gold indications of significance on panning.

The writer has seen many miserably weird operations over the years, several as pitiful as this, but never before one so entirely pathetic, and the Smiths were so advised in more diplomatic, but nonetheless emphatic terms.

One of the pathetic aspects of the picture which surmounts the Smiths own unfortunate lack prospect evaluation is that U. S. G. S. Wallace refrained from calling a spade a spade at the time he inspected the workings. The writer doesn't however know the circumstances faced by Wallace during the course of his examination and it therefore may be that he did the best he could in urging the Smiths to get me to make a supplemental examination. In any event it cost the Smiths another week's needless expense.

Another pathetic aspect of the situation is that Smith's endeavor to explore this prospect was hampered to a very considerable degree by the U. S. Forest Service which prohibited them from doing any blasting after nine A. M. even though all blasting was being done underground. This regulation served to prevent the miners from blasting more than one round a day unless they scheduled their work shift to begin at four in the morning or else worked nights entirely. As it was told to me, the reason the Forest Ranger gave for prohibiting the blasting after nine in the morning was that the shots could be heard in Bates and the lumber company might object to the miner's being allowed to blast while they were restrained from doing so. In short, a genuinely real fire danger had caused the Forest Service

to regulate the surface blasting done by the lumber company during the course of road construction, but miners operating underground on a bare hillside, and generally above the timberline anyway, were penalized, too. In addition, I was told that the same ranger had just ordered regrading of the access road to a drainage slope away from the hill rather than into it -- this despite the fact that the road followed a course across the flank of an exceptionally steep and dangerous hillside where a skid off the road would be of obviously serious consequence to both personnel and equipment, and despite the fact that the road had been examined and approved by the State Industrial Accident's inspector.

The general picture is that the Forest, or at least the particular ranger involved, would have issued the regulatory orders regardless of how good the mineral showing might have been, as the owners report having remonstrated over the blasting prohibition because of the underground nature of their work and because of the State Industrial approval of the road.

This report is therefore written for the sake of recording this illustration of the manner in which the Forest "cooperates" with the miner as well as for the sake of recording the salient features of the prospect.

Informants: Mr. and Mrs. Asa Smith, operators
Messers Westfall and Shultz, miners
Mr. Hescock, State Industrial Accident Commission, John Day, Ore.
Date: September 22, 1955
Reported by: N. S. Wagner