MINERALS OF THE MACY MINE AND OTHER SELECTED MINES NEAR HILLSBORO, NEW MEXICO

Ramon S. DeMark

Hillsboro and the Las Animas mining district in Sierra County, New Mexico, evoke images of a sleepy town with a history of gold mining. Before the turn of the twentieth century, however, prospectors also turned an eye to the southern part of the district along Ready Pay Gulch and Percha Creek. It was called the "lead-carbonate belt" in early reports. Prospectors located deposits of vanadium, manganese, and secondary lead minerals and filed numerous claims in the area.

Sierra County residents were so proud of the mines and minerals of Hillsboro and surrounding mining districts that they sent 12 tons of ore specimens to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago! The minerals were used to cover a miner's cabin that was constructed in the Mines and Mining Building. Specimens from the Percha, Big Chief, and other mines in the area were used in the exhibit.

In recent years, mineral collectors have focused on a mine generally known as the Macy mine on the south side of Percha Creek near the spot where Ready Pay Gulch enters the Percha. Although known as the Macy mine, a search of Sierra County mining claim records reveals that the mine was first located on June 14, 1892, by George E. Robin, Steve J. Macy, and Ed Strickland and was named the Percha mine. This mine was never named the Macy mine but should probably best be called Macy's mine in recognition of long-standing usage and the fact that Steven Macy was one of the original claim owners. This misnomer most likely resulted from Fayette Jones' reference to the area in 1904 as follows: "It is said that this is the largest body of vanadium ore known in the world. The property is known as the S. J. Macy lode." Minerals identified from this mine include vanadinite, endlichite, wulfenite, descloizite, galena, cerussite, fluorite, and heulandite.

In May 1981, lustrous, small-black crystals were found by the author on the dumps of what, at that time, was an unknown mine on the north bank of Percha Creek across from Macy's mine. In September 1981, Paul Hlava confirmed by microprobe analysis that these crystals were kentrolite, the lead manganese silicate that forms a series with melanotekite, the lead iron silicate. A search of the Sierra County claim records determined that this mine was originally located as the Big Chief mine and was filed on October 25, 1892. Vanadinite, which is present in association with kentrolite and wulfenite, has been reported but not confirmed.

Melanotekite from New Mexico was first described by C. H. Warren in 1898. The material was provided by W. M. Foote of Philadelphia and J. H. Porter of Denver. They obtained the material from George E. Robin (one of the first claim owners of the Percha (Macy's) mine and several other mines in the area). The material was described as coming from the Rex and Smuggler mines at Hillsboro. George Robin was claim owner of the Rex mine along with Steven Macy and two others. The mine was located on March 10, 1892. The Smuggler mine was not under claim by Robin or Macy and was outside the "lead-carbonate belt." The precise location of the Rex mine remains unclear, and melanotekite has not been recovered from the Hillsboro area for over 100 yrs.

The Petroglyph mine (west of Ready Pay Gulch and just south of New Mexico 152) was located as the Miners Dream mine in May 1916 and relocated as the Petroglyph mine on September 3, 1962. Specimens of wulfenite, vanadinite, descloizite, willemite, and hemimorphite have been recovered from this mine. Heulandite and possibly mordenite have been found at a small mine just south of Ready Pay Gulch about 0.5 mi south of New Mexico 152. It has been called the Rex mine, but this identification remains uncertain. Cryptomelane has been identified by microprobe analysis from the Trojan mine on the east side of Ready Pay Gulch about 0.5 mi north of Macy's mine.

A search of Sierra County claim records (from 1884 up to the present, in the area of the Percha Creek box, north up Ready Pay Gulch to the intersection with New Mexico 152) reveals intense claim activity starting in 1892 (Percha, Big Chief, Whaleback, Flora Temple, Animas, Sarnia, and others). Many of these claims were filed again in the early 1900s by William F. Hall under such names as the Endlichite, Melanotickite [sic], Pyromorphite, and...
Wulfenite. Much later, the original Percha (Macy's mine) claim was filed again as the Barking Frog by Dick Jones and others in 1980\textsuperscript{13} and as the Bobbi Dee in 1983.\textsuperscript{14} The latest attempt at filing on this site by Mike Sanders and Tom Massis in 1996 resulted in a rejection by the Bureau of Land Management with the stated reason that the mineral rights were not federal leasable nor subject to claim.\textsuperscript{15}

Around 1897, William F. Hall of Hillsboro shipped 1,250 lb of vanadium minerals to the A. E. Foote Mineral Company of Philadelphia. These specimens were distributed as rare mineral specimens to various public and private collectors throughout Europe and America.\textsuperscript{16} Where are these specimens today? George Robin, in his letter of February 24, 1893, states that "we are now collecting and will have within 30 days from 1,800 to 2,000 lb of choice mineral specimens to fill the eight show cases" (at the 1893 Columbian Exposition).\textsuperscript{17} No trace of these specimens exists today. Let us hope our generation of mineral collectors will better document the provenance of our treasured mineral specimens and preserve them for future generations to enjoy.

Endnotes
7. Sierra County Courthouse, claim records, book E, p. 103.
11. Sierra County Courthouse, claim records, book 29, p. 27.