



Photograph by the author <http://westernprogeny.com/Photos.html>

## **Raining Gold**

On September 13, 2010 the *Rapid City Journal* reported that two prospectors Digger Chuck Ward and Byron Janis, found a 2 ¼ inch by 1 ½ inch by 1 inch gold nugget, the largest nugget found in the Black Hills in the past 120 years.

Digger Chuck and Byron Janis, who are known as the “Ice Box Mining Company”, sold the specimen for an undisclosed amount that was more than the \$5,000 worth of gold in it. Its value as a specimen is much greater than the gold content.

Ward was quoted as saying, "You either work for money, or you work for gold. It's more about the romance of prospecting and going out and finding than having everything around."

That is the attitude of real prospectors; they are in it for the hunt, the search, the quest.

In media, prospectors are usually represented as old men, and there were and are many older men who prospect. However, not many old men could have withstood the rigors of life in the open back when prospectors were roaming the West going from one mineral strike to another. In the 1800's most men who left the east to seek mineral wealth in the West were young men; men who could live off the land, and walk from one strike to another. They were mostly young optimists who could survive on a dream. There were no cynics among them, they weren't grumpy old men. They were positive, upbeat, optimists happy to be doing what they were doing. Today, Desert Rats share that positive, hopeful mindset.

Desert Rats also love those adventure stories about lost treasure, and yes... they're all true. Some people don't believe them because the treasure hasn't been found yet, or at least no one has come forward (because of taxes) and said they have found it, but treasure is being found every day. Lost, stolen, buried, sunken... treasure of one kind or another is being found every day. There are salvage companies pulling gold coins from the ocean floor every day, there are people with metal detectors digging up treasure every day, and there are prospectors who make

a living prospecting for gold, the ultimate treasure. Fortunately most people do not believe in lost treasures or lost mines.

For anyone who doubts that there is hidden treasure in the West they can research Forrest Finn at this site <http://www.oldsantafetradingco.com/the-thrill-resource-page> and learn about the million dollar treasure chest he has hidden somewhere north of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Gold is not as easy to find today as it was in 1900 when Howard Harlan was prospecting ten miles south of Prescott, Arizona. Harlan found a vein outcropping that looked good so he drilled a hole and put some dynamite in it. He lit the fuse, then ran a few yards and crouched behind a Pine tree. After the blast went off, pieces of rock came raining down through the branches of the tree. Howard picked one up and saw that it was about fifty-percent gold. By the end of the day he had picked up \$45,000 worth of gold.

Another easy find was made by John Thomas Moss (1839-1880) who in 1863 near Oatman, Arizona discovered what would become the Moss Mine on the east side of the Colorado River. It was a surface strike, gold bearing rocks covered the ground, and he picked up over \$200,000 worth of gold ore.

“It was a lone tree burning on the desert. A heraldic tree that the passing storm had left afire. The solitary pilgrim drawn up before it had traveled far to be here and he knelt in the hot sand and held his numbed hands out while all about in that circle attended companies of lesser auxiliaries routed forth into the inordinate day, small owls that crouched silently and stood from foot to foot and tarantulas and solpugas and vinegarroons

and the vicious mygale spiders and beaded lizards with mouths black as a chowdog's, deadly to man, and the little desert basilisks that jet blood from their eyes and the small sandvipers like seemly gods, silent and the same, in Jeda, in Babylon. A constellation of ignited eyes that edged the ring of light all bound in a precarious truce before this torch whose brightness had set back the stars in their sockets.”

— Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West*