

Copper in Taylor County and Elsewhere



Copper Walter Kuse Dug Out While Repairing North Foundation of Barn



Copper in Quartz – Found on Allman Avenue by Loretta Kuse

Descriptions of Copper

Hardness – 2.5 - 3
Streak – Red
Luster - Metallic
Specific Gravity – 8.9
Chemical Formula - Cu

Formation of Copper

A copper and gold deposit in Taylor County near Perkinstown is known as the Bend Deposit. Its formation dates to ancient times.

“Copper-gold mineralization occurs in felsic volcanic rocks formed 1.8 billion years ago.” (Aquila Resources Inc. Retrieved January 12, 2014 from <http://www.aquilaresources.com/bend-copper-gold-deposit.html>)

Uses of Copper by Early People

Copper is a mineral that has been used by people for centuries. "Like gold and silver, copper occurs in pure form and can easily be extracted from rocks. Because of this, people were able to use copper for such things as tools and jewelry as far back as 15,000 years ago." (Ricciuti, p. 49)

Copper was used by Native Americans in early Taylor County. Interviews done with residents state that bracelets made of copper were found in graves, as well as copper and brass trinkets. (Duerr, Research Paper – c. 1968) (Pawlowitz, Interview – 2011)

According to Bert Gerhart, an Indian told him of a good source of the metal.

One time an Indian appeared at the Gearhart boarding house in Westboro tired, hungry and thirsty. He had walked all the way from Wausau. Young Bert Gearhart supplied him with food and drink. When the Indian had finished his meal he told of sleeping in a cave on the way of solid copper. He wanted Bert to return with him to the place but the invitation was declined. To this date no large quantity of copper had been discovered in the area traversed. (Swan, p. 11)

"Early peoples mined copper from the nuggets in the glacial sediment and from the source rocks in the Lake Superior basin, using it to fashion tools and implements as well as for trade." (Dott and Attig, p. 33)

"Native Americans mined the copper and traded implements made from it down the Mississippi Valley." (Dott and Attig, p. 47)

European Settlers and Copper

Pieces of copper have occasionally been found by residents in various places.

Jake and John Baker had a homestead east of Westboro. These two brothers came from Holland in 1910 and bought their material for their house from the Westboro Lumber Company Store.

While in the process of building their driveway, they found a huge piece of copper. Thinking this was gold they carried it to town to show it off, but it was copper weighing about 30 or 40 pounds. (Hill, p. 49)

Large pieces of nearly pure copper, some weighing hundreds of pounds, have been found in many parts of glaciated Wisconsin. Their source was in late Precambrian rocks that underlie some of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and other parts of the Lake Superior basin. When the Quaternary ice sheets flowed through that basin into Wisconsin, they brought copper fragments along with many other rock materials. The surfaces of the large, soft copper masses were scratched and abraded by the abundant harder rocks that were also carried within the ice. (Dott and Attig, 30, 33)

Early settlers were able to have metal workers make tools or other items they needed. An 1883 advertisement in the newspaper stated the following.

O. H. Mallory is prepared to do all kinds of tin, sheet iron and copper work on short notice. (Taylor County Star and News, December 1, 1883)

Later, August Roeber advertised his ability to work with metals.

TIN SHOP. AUG ROEBER, PROP.

All kinds of Tin, Copper and Sheet iron work done to order. Outside orders promptly attended to. Shop in Smith Furniture Building. (Taylor County Star and News. October 8, 1898)

We wonder if these blacksmiths made items specifically from tin, copper and iron or if they created alloys. Copper combined with zinc becomes brass and copper combined with tin becomes bronze.

Sources of Copper and Copper Mining

People began to prospect for minerals. Mining companies were formed.

COPPER MINING

Interest in the mining of copper in the Jump river area came early in its history. When Barney Broeder came to the area in 1890, there were prospectors attempting to mine copper on his farm. It has been related that they had a shaft that was one hundred feet deep. The prospectors were apparently unfriendly fellows, so they are unnamed to history. They lived in a shack in a place called Mealey Camp. In the year 1904, a railroad crew found a piece of float copper weighing two-hundred pounds near camp B. In July of 1907, a group of prospective investors and other interested persons visited the Jump River scene to study the prospects for a copper mine. It has also been stated that there was a shaft sunk somewhere near the Boeckler sawmill. Cores were drilled by Boeckler and associates and a building was erected near the dam on Leavitt Creek known as the "Copper Mine Building."

The copy of stock in the Jump River Copper and Mining Company was transferred to Charles Wolf in 1910. He was the father of Gordon Wolf, retired druggist from Thorp. (Nagel, p. 26)

Currently a mining company is drilling core samples near Perkinstown in what is known as the Bend Deposit. (Ralph, Internet Source 2013) This area has been known to have copper since the late 1800's.

Oscar Danielson brought his well drilling machine and apparatus out from Perkinstown last Thursday, having dug several wells in that village for T, F. M. & F. D. Shaw & Co. the past month. He found several things

of interest away down in the bowels of the earth there, among which is an exceptionally rich specimen of copper quartz. Also at a depth of seventy-five feet he discovered a part of a hemlock tree in a fair state of preservation. This latter find is of no value except perhaps as a curiosity but the discovery of copper may lead to the opening up of valuable mines of that mineral, and adds to the belief that mining will some day be carried on extensively in our county. (Taylor County Star and News, February 15, 1896)

More ore was found in the Perkinstown area in 1907.

IRON ORE AT PERKINSTOWN

Investigators from the East are There. Copper Also Found.

The hills at Perkinstown are being explored these days by iron ore prospectors and there are indications that Perkinstown may yet be a busy mining town. About two months ago a well was dug on Nic Gilcher's farm about a mile north of Perkinstown and iron ore was found. A cousin who was visiting Mr. and Mrs. Gilcher took a sample of the ore back to her home near Pittsburg, and the sample was examined by the Pittsburg Bessemer Co. and found to be nearly pure iron ore. They sent three men here from the East to investigate and they are now at work in the vicinity of Perkinstown.

A block of copper was also found here recently and when tested at Madison was said to be worth \$25.00.

Compasses used in surveying near Perkinstown are said to have varied as much as 30 degrees, which is an indication of iron ore. (Taylor County Star-News, May 31, 1907)

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan

The largest deposits of copper were eventually found in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. At one time this copper-rich area was part of Wisconsin.

Peninsula Once Part of Wisconsin.

In the early days all of which is now the upper peninsula of Michigan – a region of some 18,000 square miles – was part of Wisconsin. To appease the Michiganans when what is now Lucas county, Ohio, was annexed to the Buckeye state, the administration at Washington offered to throw in what is now the upper peninsula, detaching the region from the territory of Wisconsin, which was too young and too busily occupied with buying peltry and watching hostile Indians to care for the loss of a trifle like 18,000 square miles of land. Michigan refused the proffer, but the district was thrust upon the commonwealth when the state was evolved from a territory. The area so gained was regarded as of little value by the

people. It was inhabited by the Chippewa Indians, with a few scattered fur traders, and it was not until the discovery of **copper** and iron that the popular estimates of the peninsula was changed and it began to be realized that in timber and minerals the region was in fact the richest in the state. (Taylor County Star-News. November 13, 1908)

The Present and the Future

The bright copper dome of the Taylor County Court House shines in the evening sun reminding current residents of the beauty and value of the ore for our area. The dome was restored to its original beauty in 1985 by Steeplejack, Jim Keuer. He removed three coats of paint that had accumulated over the years and the bright copper was shining again in the evening sun. (Star News, August 14, 1985)



**Copper Dome of Taylor County Court House in Medford, Wisconsin
Canada Geese Flying Over Mill Pond
Photo by Loretta Kuse**

How will efforts to mine in the Bend Deposit affect our community now and in the future? To what places will the ore be transported? How will the mining affect the environment now and in the future? Who will have great economic gain and who will lose?

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