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'Corundum Hill', Like Pot Of Gold

(Editor's Note: This article, by John Parris, appeared in a recent issue of the Asheville Citizen in his column, Roaming the Mountains.)

Some folks chase rainbows all their lives and never discover the fabled pot of gold.

Others save their breath and stumble onto a fortune.

Then there are those born with infinite patience who wait for the rainbow to come to them.

Such a man was Hirman Crisp, a mountain farmer who had gumption enough to recognize the truth that gold is many things.

In the summer of 1868, while plowing and hoeing his fields here on Cullasaja Creek in the Macon County hills, he turned up a lot of queer looking stones.

They were enough to make a man spit out a few persimmon-like words when his plow-point or hoe-blade struck one.

But, be that as it may, Crisp took time enough to examine them and recognize in their rain-

bow coloring that they were uncommon, perhaps valuable.

So he gathered up a few specimens and carried them with him the next time he went into Franklin where he showed them to some folks.

They didn't create much interest. Folks said they were right pretty and let it go at that.

Eventually, however, a specimen reached Asheville where it aroused the interest of General Thomas L. Clingman, a former U. S. Senator.

Clingman knew the rock for it was and immediately took the stagecoach for Macon to investigate Crisp's find.

At Franklin, Clingman hired a horse and rode the seven miles out to the Crisp farm where the farmer guided him about his property.

Clingman found that the mineral occurred in the olivine rocks. He dug pits at the base of this hill and also on Ellijay, where he washed out considerable gravel, seeking to locate gems without success.

Naturally, Crisp was anxious to learn the name of the rocks he had discovered in his fields. Clingman told him the true name of the mineral was corundum.

Corundum, Clingman explained, was remarkable for its hardness and that in its finer varieties formed a valuable gem-stone.

Crisp further learned that the transparent varieties were known as ruby and sapphire, while the impure massive forms were known as emery. Also that corundum gems included Oriental topaz, Oriental emerald, and Oriental amethyst, the term Oriental being used to distinguish corundum gems from other, softer stones having the same name.

In the meantime, Dr. C. D. Smith, a well known authority on minerals, and A. D. Ledford purchased the property from Crisp.

Mining operations were started in 1870 by Colonel C. W. Jenks, of Anderson, S. C., and Corundum Hill was born.

There was no market for corundum and operations came to a halt after two years.

Then in 1876, Dr. H. S. Lucas, of Chester, S. C., who a few years earlier had discovered an emery mine in his native state, heard of the corundum property here and figured he was in for some stiff competition in the abrasive business.

So Lucas came to Franklin and set out to purchase the property, the negotiations being handled by Kope Elias, a local attorney.

When he had obtained the property, Lucas resumed mining operations as the Hampden Emery and Corundum Company.

He mined Corundum Hill for 24 years, selling it in 1900 to the International Abrasive Company, which worked it about a year and then discontinued operations.

In 1917, when the United States became involved in World War I, it developed that the only supply



This on-the-scene photograph shows the 1956 Ford that wrecked the night of June 28 on US 23-441 south, injuring four young people. Driven by Lawton Jess Taylor, 21, of Clayton, Ga., who was slightly injured, the automobile went out of control in a curve near Jake Addington's, jumped a creek and

smashed head-on into the bank. Victoria Ann Vinson, 15, and Billie Berte Shope, 17, both of Dillard, Ga., Route 1, are still hospitalized with injuries they received in the accident. The fourth passenger, Thomas Fountain, Jr., was not hospitalized. The driver was charged with speeding and reckless driving.

of corundum available was here at Corundum Hill or in Turkey, and Turkey was an enemy country.

The deposits here, therefore, became of great value to the United States.

It wasn't long until the mines were operating full blast to supply the country's war needs.

For two years, Corundum Hill was the nation's only source of supply for corundum, a stone used to manufacture bearings in electrical apparatus, watch jewels, and abrasives.

Large quantities of corundum were shipped out of Macon during those two years, being hauled by ox-wagon to Dillsboro, some 25 miles distance, and put on train cars there.

(Note: By World War 1, use of ox-wagons here had virtually disappeared. The two principal exports of the county, corundum and mica, were trucked to Dillsboro, Editor.)

During its years of operation, Corundum Hill produced more than 10,000 tons of corundum which sold at an average of \$200 a ton.

A crystal of the stone found when Jenks was operating the mines weighed 356 pounds — the

largest specimen ever known.

Through the years, crystals of gem quality have turned up, ranging in value from a few dollars to as much as \$5,000.

(Note: A near-perfect crystal, reportedly valued at some \$30,000, was found at Corundum Hill by Bard Angel. The crystal is now on display at the Smithsonian Institute. For reporting the find, Dr. Lucas is said to have offered Mr. Angel \$1,500 or a free trip to the West. He took the trip.—Editor.)

Most of the corundum taken from Corundum Hill was in coarse pebble and sand form.

It was conveyed from the mine to the mill in troughs filled with running water, sort of like wood flumes used in timber operations here in the mountains years ago.

Nobody ever did know for sure how much Crisp got for his property where he made his rainbow find.

But he never was one after that to argue that a body couldn't find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

What he discovered wasn't yellow but it was gold none the less.

In fact, those rocks he turned up must have reminded him of the rainbow.

For carborundum is a mineral of the rainbow.

This Week With Macon County Agents

By MRS. MABEL SWANN
(Assistant Agent)

"During the past three weeks, we have been eating uncooked strawberry jam being kept in the refrigerator and food freezer". Thus writes Mary Estelle Doyle, who worked as administrator in the Farm and Home Administration office in this district not long ago. She is now home economist for General Electric Appliances in Raleigh.

According to the latest research by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, and peaches can be conserved in this manner.

As always, use the finest color and flavor, fully ripe and sound fruit, sorted and washed. Remove stems and caps from all berries and peels and pits from peaches.

Recipe for uncooked jam:
3 cups crushed fruit
5 cups sugar
1 package powdered pectin

1 cup water
Add sugar to crushed fruit. Mix well. Let stand for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Dissolve powdered pectin in water. Bring to boil and boil one minute. Add pectin solution to fruit and sugar mixture stirring constantly for two minutes. Put into containers. Allow to stand 24-48 hours until jelled. Seal with hot paraffin and cover contents. Store in refrigerator for a few months and in the food freezer for a year.

By the way, have you ever tried using Saran Wrap instead of paraffin on hot jam or jelly. I've tried it and it's so much easier and works very well. After you have poured the jam or jelly into the hot sterile glasses, cover with squares of saran film. Be sure the edges of the glasses have been wiped clean. Pull the saran film down all around the edges as tightly as possible.

It is important to seal the glasses while the glasses and preserves are still hot, for then there will be just enough heat to shrink the film and make it air-tight if you have pulled it tightly enough. Sometimes I use an elastic band if the top of the container is not smooth.

Simple though it is, it surely saves time and extra work.

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