



THE LOGAN COUNTY NICKEL MINE

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IN WESTERN Kansas in the boom days of the late 1880's there seems to have been almost no limit to the expectations of many of the settlers. The soil was rich and almost free, and rainfall had been adequate. The farmers had a good crop or two, most new businesses flourished, and much of the populace was willing to believe almost any claim which town promoters or railroad land salesmen might dream up. For example, the proposition that the northwestern part of the state might well become a great fruit raising center was taken seriously. There is little wonder then that reports of valuable mineral prospects were frequent and were given serious consideration. After all, a man of 40 in the late 1880's could well remember the gold rush of 1859-1860 in the Rocky mountains, and he knew that it turned out to be a real bonanza for at least some of the would-be miners. The fact that the geology of western Kansas differs greatly from that

of the Colorado Rockies was not known, or could easily be ignored in his wish to believe in the great potentialities for wealth in his new home.

One such mineral boom was the Logan county nickel "find" of 1888. The cast of characters of this minor but bizarre episode included two wandering prospectors, some gullible local residents (and some who weren't so gullible), a distinguished professor of science from the University of Kansas, and the curator of metallurgy of the Smithsonian Institution.

The first published notice of the discovery of nickel in Logan county appeared on August 23, 1888, in the two newspapers published in Russell Springs. In a wildly enthusiastic story the *Logan County Republican* informed the world that two prospectors, Jerome Coldren and Clinton Phelps, who had been prospecting in Logan county since April, had just found "an immense deposit of nickel." They also had come across iron, silver, and coal but

. . . wanted something more valuable and in more paying quantities. Their search was finally rewarded by finding this almost inexhaustible mine of nickel. It is in what is termed a blanket ledge, cropping out all along the gulch, and is so situated that it can be mined with a pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. . . . As soon as they made the discovery they sent specimens to assaying offices in

Title-page photo: Promoters of western Kansas in the 1880's made some extravagant claims, and in those days people seemed ready to believe some of the promotion. "Discovery" of nickel deposits in Logan county in August, 1888, resulted in a short-lived rush by prospectors to the area. It was a hoax or worse, and the episode was a sore point with local boosters by the end of the year. This photo is a recent view of some of the nickel mine area showing eroded rock outcroppings in the foreground and the Smoky Hill river valley in the background. Photograph by the author.

Denver, Kansas City, Topeka, to the U. S. mint at Philadelphia, and to assayers in other cities. These assays ran from two to twenty-five percent pure nickel. Nickel is worth \$16 per ounce. Thus it will be seen that at the lowest estimate this deposit is worth \$7,680 per ton. . . .

The story in the *Republican* went on to say that there were only one or two producing nickel mines in the United States and that a company soon would be formed to work the mine. Obviously all of this information came from the two ". . . gentlemanly, intelligent appearing men . . . miners of long experience . . . [who] were in this office yesterday. . . ." Although the newspaper story did not provide the location of the prospective nickel strike, it soon became common knowledge that it was about eight miles southwest of Russell Springs in the southwest corner of Sec. 2 and the northeast corner of Sec. 10, T. 14 S., R. 36 W. On August 20, the Monday prior to the appearance of the newspaper story, Coldren and Phelps each had filed a mining notice with the Logan county register of deeds recording their claims.² Coldren named his claim the "Nickle King" while Phelps called his "Eureka No. One." Both claims were located by a stake with a tin can at its foot containing written notice of the claim.

The rush to stake out claims must have begun even before the newspaper story appeared. We have no way of knowing with certainty how many claims were staked out but we do know that by Saturday, August 25, 13 additional claims had been recorded on the books of the register of deeds. The actual location date of all of those claims was Thursday, August 23, except for one. B. F. Cannon, who called his claim the "Nickle Queen," must have received some advance notice as he located his claim on the 22d.³ Each of these claims was 600 by 1,500 feet, thus containing something over 20 acres. Locations were based on existing filed claims or on stakes or mounds of rocks. The early claims were all in either Sec. 2 or Sec. 10 but before long all feasible

locations in those sections were taken up and claims in Secs. 3, 8, and 11 were recorded.

The area in which these claims were located is about three miles south of the Smoky Hill river where ravines cut into the north-facing bluff to expose layers of dark conglomerate rock. In 1888 this was all open range land belonging to the U. S. government and presumably open to mineral claims. The earliest claimants were local homesteaders and residents of Russell Springs or Winona, the towns next nearest to the mine. They included J. E. Cummins and G. E. Egger, local real estate men, and C. A. Black, the county treasurer. Other early claims were recorded by Thomas B. Thorpe, a real estate man in Winona, and George C. Fleming, the Logan county register of deeds.

In 1888 Russell Springs was a small but booming town of a few hundred people. Situated near the center of Logan county, it had won the county seat election just a year earlier and already boasted of a sizable stone courthouse. Two weekly newspapers were published in the town. Other businesses included two hotels, a bank, several stores, and a livery stable. Two physicians and several lawyers provided professional services. The Union church ministered to spiritual needs. The town's major weakness was its lack of a railroad; the nearest line was the Kansas Pacific tracks about 12 miles north.

By August 30, when the next issue of the *Republican* came out, several more claims had been filed and the paper placed its comments on the mining developments under the heading "Nickelville Notes." The only really new development reported was that Coldren and Phelps had found a fine spring of water near their mine, to the benefit of the would-be miners and other visitors. Even so, interest in the mine was reported to continue at "fever heat" and hundreds of people were said to have visited the area. The *Republican* noted that other nickel deposits had been reported in the county but deferred comment until particulars could be learned. Not all of the items were serious: W. A. Lyon was said to estimate the value of the nickel ore in his claim as "about a billion and a half" and some of the claim holders who had staked land a mile or more from the original claims were assured

1. The story in the *Logan County Leader* was much calmer and considerably shorter. It quoted the assay reports as running from seven to 25 percent. The seven may have been a typographical error as other sources quote the two to 25 percent range. The *Republican's* estimate of the value of the ore was greatly exaggerated as the actual price of nickel was about 65 cents a pound.

2. "Miscellaneous Records," office of register of deeds, Logan county, v. 1, p. 98.

3. Names of the early claims show considerable imagination. In addition to names linked with nickle (*sic*), such as King, Queen, Prince, and Band, there were the Western Chief, Hazzard, Willow Gulch, Big Medicine, Little Gem, Phoebe, Young America, Fat Badger, Wild Cat, Black Diamond, and Stag Gulch.

Still Has Faith.

We notice the REPUBLICAN still continues to have faith in the nickel discovery. Perhaps they have something more convincing and encouraging from assays than we have here. Our patience has all been exhausted, and while we want it understood that we are not denying the possibility of rich metals existing in Logan county, we think it high time some substantial evidence and proof be produced and made public.—Copper.

You are right when you say we still have faith in the nickel discovery. In fact, we have never had any reason for not having faith in it, whereas we have had a good many "substantial evidences" to cause us to believe that it is a bona fide discovery and one which will be a great benefit to Logan county. As will be seen from the following item in the same issue of the Clipper its editor is mistaken when he says no "substantial evidence and proof" have been produced:

Jerome Coldren was in town Sunday afternoon and he showed us an assay from the city assayer of Topeka, made from ore sent from the mine in Logan county and his report is 4.28 per cent. nickel and .72 per cent. cobalt. Coldren says he will be able to show the people something reliable between the 10th and 16th inst.

Since getting this assay he has received one from an assayer at Springfield, Mass., which shows 4.8 per cent. nickel. The precipitate showed 1 per cent, making the assay 5.8 per cent. pure nickel.

As we have before remarked, the only doubters in this vicinity are Grove and a few others.

In an article October 11, 1888, the *Logan County Republican*, Russell Springs, said it "Still Has Faith" in the nickel discovery. Less than two months earlier the newspaper had informed the world enthusiastically that two wandering prospectors had found "an immense deposit of nickel." Reports of favorable assays kept people's hopes high in the area, but the bubble was to burst and little was published about the nickel mine after November 1.

they could ". . . congratulate themselves upon possessing fine agricultural plats."

The last item under "Nickelville Notes" was by far the most significant. Prof. F. H. Snow of Kansas University visited the nickel mines on August 29, examined them thoroughly, and selected several specimens of the deposits which he took with him. He was reported to have told the bystanders that there undoubtedly was mineral in the ore but that only an assay at the laboratory in Lawrence could tell the kind and quantity.

DURING the next two weeks activities at the nickel mines picked up pace. By September 12, 31 claims had been filed, some by outsiders from as far away as Denver. Visitors had become so numerous—300 were estimated to have journeyed to the isolated location on Sunday, September 2—that some of the more enterprising locals were setting up businesses to serve them. E. P. Teeters and his wife set up a tent, variously described as a hotel and a restaurant, from which they apparently served meals and refreshments and may have provided a place to bed-down for those who wished to stay over night. A hack line began to offer regular service between the mine site and Russell Springs at 75 cents a round trip. The county surveyor was reported to have surveyed the site of a new town in the area to be called Nickel City.⁴ Coldren and Phelps were reported on September 6 to have said that although mining progress had been slow, their Topeka backer would visit the site shortly and ore production then would begin on an extensive scale.⁵

By this time the major question in the minds of many of the claim holders and interested observers was whether or not assays of the ore would substantiate the original assertion of two to 25 percent nickel and whether the bulk of the ore would run at the upper or lower end of that range. It was obvious that a mine about 15 miles from the nearest railroad siding, and much farther than that from the nearest feasible site for a smelter, would not be a paying proposition unless the ore was considerably richer than the two percent ore which a New

4. Above items from the *Logan County Republican*, September 6, 1888. The Nickel City plat, if actually drawn, was never recorded on Logan county books.

5. *Logan County Leader*, September 6, 1888. The identity of the backer, if he existed, is unknown. No visit by anyone from Topeka was reported in the newspapers.

Jersey mine was said to be working profitably. It also was known that the \$16 per ounce price for nickel quoted in the original story in the *Republican* was about 400 times too high.

Several assay results were reported in the newspapers. Some were rather vague as to who submitted the ore and who did the assaying. One report quoted an assay of 12 percent nickel for some ore sent to Denver.⁶ Later reports tended to fall within the two to 12 percent range. The only documented report of an early analysis is contained in a letter published in both Russell Springs papers on September 20. Fred P. Dewey, curator of metallurgy of the U. S. National Museum, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution, reported in a letter to B. F. Cannon, dated September 13, that the specimens he had been sent contained nickel and cobalt and a small amount of copper but were not adequate for use in determining the percentage of metal in the ore. He seemed quite optimistic about the material he had seen, requested larger samples and additional information, and mentioned that, if the data and samples furnished were satisfactory, he would write up the discovery in a paper to be presented to the American Institute of Mining Engineers.⁷ The *Republican* further reported that on September 19 C. W. Smalley, who did not have a recorded claim, and George C. Fleming, one of the early claim filers, went to Nickel City and obtained the information and specimens for mailing to Dewey on the 20th.

Questions as to the true assay value of the ore do not seem to have depressed local activity or enthusiasm. On September 5 E. I. Burdick sold a one-half interest in his claim, known as the "Phoebe," to Frank Fullerton for \$500.⁸ Shortly thereafter a stock company, the Western Nickel and Cobalt Mining Company, was formed to engage in mining and smelting of minerals and the improvement and sale of real estate. Its place of business was to be Russell

Springs and it was authorized to issue 200,000 shares of stock at \$10 each. The six trustees of the new company were Jerome Coldren, Clinton Phelps, E. P. Teeters, I. F. Teeters, T. F. Wright, and Charles B. Adams. Adams was elected president, E. P. Teeters took the job of secretary, I. F. Teeters that of treasurer, and Jerome Coldren became superintendent. The company's charter was filed with the Kansas secretary of state on September 20. The formation of the company was reported by the *Republican* on that date, with the comment that ". . . we would not be surprised to see Nickel City a booming reality and a large force of men at work there before snow flies."

THE NEXT Monday, September 24, 30 or more parties holding mining claims met at the camp of Coldren and Phelps and organized the "Russell Springs Mining District" composed of sections 1-4, 9-12 in township 14, range 36. The officers elected by the district were George C. Fleming, chairman, G. E. Egger, secretary, and W. A. Lyon, recorder. All three were among those who filed the earliest claims. Other business consisted of the appointment of a committee to draft regulations for the district within the next five days.⁹

Early in October Coldren and Teeters visited Russell Springs and confirmed that the actual removal of ore would begin about October 10. On October 4 the *Republican* stated that the mine would employ 20 or 30 men in addition to those who would haul the ore to the railroad for shipment to both Kansas City and Denver. Even more sensational was the word that on September 27 Henry Van Loon had been paid \$1,000 for his claim, the "Big Medicine," by the Western Nickel and Cobalt Mining Company. His claim, it was pointed out, lay between Coldren's "Nickel King" and Phelps's "Eureka No. One."¹⁰ Another item in the same issue mentioned that B. F. Cannon had sold a half interest in his claim, the "Nickel Queen," for \$500.¹¹

During September and the early part of Oc-

9. *Logan County Republican*, September 27, 1888. Presumably these regulations were to govern such matters as claim disputes, routes, and roads for transporting ore, etc. No further information on the mining district has been located.

10. Recorded in "Misc. Records," v. 1, office of the register of deeds, Logan county.

11. Public records do not entirely substantiate this story but show that on October 10 James M. McCormack agreed to deliver a span of mules in good condition to Cannon in December for the half interest in the "Nickel Queen."—"Misc. Records," v. 1, office of the register of deeds, Logan county.

6. *Logan County Republican*, September 13, 1888.

7. The September 15, 1888, issue of the *Engineering and Mining Journal*, New York, contained a letter signed by Dewey concerning the initial sample of nickel ore from Russell Springs which had been submitted to him for examination. He described it as consisting of ". . . very smooth quartzose pebbles, from bean size down, cemented by a more or less manganeseiferous limonite. It contains nickel and cobalt and a small amount of copper, but whether these metals are present in sufficient amount to constitute an ore, has not been determined. . . ." He went on to say that he would lay the matter before the next meeting of the American Institute of Mining Engineers in more detail. No further correspondence or report on the matter by Dewey in the *Engineering and Mining Journal* has been discovered.

8. A copy of the bill of sale is recorded in v. 1, "Miscellaneous Records," office of the register of deeds, Logan county.

tober the nickel fever spilled over into other parts of the county. Several claims were filed on land in T. 12, R. 34, mostly on Sec. 28. This was about eight miles northeast of Russell Springs. A few others were filed northwest of town and one was filed 16 miles to the southwest. Apparently any dark-looking rock was considered possible nickel ore by the enthusiasts.

On October 11 the Russell Springs and Winona papers reported favorable assays received by Coldren.¹² The city assayer of Topeka was said to have found 4.28 percent nickel and .72 percent cobalt in the sample he analyzed while a report from Springfield, Mass., showed 5.8 percent nickel.¹³ An item not reported by the newspapers was that on October 11 two of the trustees of the Western Nickel and Cobalt Mining Company deeded their claims to the company, in each case for a consideration of \$10,000. One of these was Clinton Z. Phelps, one of the two original discoverers of the nickel strike; the other was Joseph J. Wright who did not record his claim, the "Cow Boy," until September 12.¹⁴

It seems most unlikely that the company was in a position to pay these sums in cash; possibly much of the payment was made in shares of stock.¹⁵ The company's only source of cash would have been receipts from the sale of stock to the public, and it is hard to believe that enough was sold in its first three weeks of existence to pay Wright and Phelps, as well as Van Loon, in cash.

Phelps is not mentioned in the newspapers after late September. Jerome Coldren, though, continued to carry on, with the help of E. P. Teeters. On October 18 the company was reported to be building a 14 by 38-foot stone structure at the nickel mine to be used as a

12. Coverage of the nickel mine story by newspapers in the nearby towns varied with their distance from the scene and the extent of rivalry with Russell Springs. The papers in Winona and Augustine published reports of the main developments. The *Augustine Herald* generally added comments that equally rich lodes undoubtedly could be found within a few miles of Augustine. The editor of the Monument *Obelisk* visited the scene and announced that Monument undoubtedly was the logical point from which to start a trip to the mines. The papers in Oakley, which had recently lost the county seat election to Russell Springs, mentioned the original discovery but carried no further news of the nickel mine. Further afield, papers in Scott City, Dighton, and even in eastern Kansas picked up the original story but adopted a "wait and see" attitude.

13. *Logan County Republican*, October 11, 1888.

14. "Deed Records," v. 3, office of the register of deeds, Logan county.

15. No records of the company have been found. A facsimile of the only share of stock known to exist, Certificate No. 103 for 22 shares issued to Jerome Coldren, is in the Butterfield Trail Museum in Russell Springs.

boarding house for the miners. A week later Coldren and Teeters reported that the building was nearly completed and also announced that the company would open an office in Russell Springs. They also stated that, although only a few carloads of ore would be taken out before winter, operations at the mine would begin in earnest in the spring.¹⁶ Not reported in the papers was the transfer of a warranty deed for the "Nickle King" mine from Jerome Coldren to the company for a consideration of \$10,000 on October 23.¹⁷

Also not mentioned in the local papers was the report which Professor Snow prepared concerning the specimens he took from the mine site shortly after the discovery of nickel was announced. His paper on the Logan county nickel mines was read on November 2 at the 21st meeting of the Kansas Academy of Science held in Leavenworth.¹⁸ The subject of his paper was mentioned in the *Leavenworth Times* in the issues of November 2 and November 3 but it did not publish a summary of the content of his report. The volume of reports containing the text of Snow's paper was not issued by the academy until some time in 1889. Even so, it seems strange that the existence of his report was not picked up by the Logan county newspapers, when one of them mentioned the fact that he had been back at the mine site only the previous week.¹⁹

PROFESSOR Snow's report was devastating to the hopes of the nickel mine enthusiasts. He stated that the specimens which he had personally selected at the two claims considered to have the most valuable ore, when analyzed by Prof. E. H. S. Bailey, showed a metallic content of one third of one percent of cobalt and one tenth of one percent of nickel. Furthermore, the so-called ore was ". . . the characteristic conglomerate or pudding-stone which overlies the eroded surface of the Niobrara limestone and shales . . .," although of a darker color than usual. It was not crystalline rock that had been subjected to metamorphic action and

16. *Logan County Republican*, October 25, 1888.

17. "Deed Records," office of the register of deeds, Logan county, v. 3.

18. See F. H. Snow, *Logan County Nickel Mines, Transactions of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Annual Meetings of the Kansas Academy of Science* (Topeka, Kansas Publishing House, 1889), v. 11, pp. 39-42.

19. *Winona Clipper*, October 25, 1888.

without that action there is little or no chance of finding metallic ores of consequence. Further exploration of Logan county revealed no crystalline rocks and no veins containing metallic ores. The traces of metal found by chemical analysis probably came from meteor dust which sifted to the bottom of the ocean which covered the area in Tertiary times.

Whether or not the content of Snow's report became common knowledge, little was published about the nickel mine after November 1. About the middle of the month a report was issued by F. P. Dewey of the Smithsonian concerning specimens of ore from another location in Logan county which had been submitted to him for assay by Amos Bull. He reported that ". . . of the specimens sent No. 1 is of same character as material sent by Mr. Cannon and contains some nickel; Nos. 2 and 3 contain a large amount of iron with but little, if any, nickel."²⁰ Unfortunately we have no record of what Dewey found in the second

20. *Logan County Republican*, November 15, 1888.

selection of ore from the Coldren and Phelps mine.

December 6 marks the last news of the nickel mine in the Russell Springs papers. On that date Coldren and Teeters said that the company would wait until spring before taking out any ore.²¹ So far as is known no further action took place at the mine site. The company and the mining district seem to have withered away and left no records. The partially completed building probably served as a source of stone for the construction of ranch buildings at a much later date.

A BREEZY and entertaining epilogue to the whole nickel mine story is provided in a letter written nearly 18 years after the events took place by John F. Coulter, a former resident of the Russell Springs community who had moved to Michigan.²² Coulter wrote that in the summer of 1888 he

21. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1888.

22. *Russell Springs Leader*, March 3, 1906.

For a brief time in 1888 residents of Logan county were caught up in a nickel mine fever that sustained a short-lived boom for some local businessmen. In this recent photo taken near the center of the nickel mine area, ruins of an unidentified stone structure might be all that remains of the boarding house for miners that the mining company is said to have built in anticipation of operations they planned for the spring of 1889. The stone shell of the "Nickel Mine" school is just barely visible at the upper right. Photograph by the author.



... noticed a goodly number of teams hitched to buggies passing south of my place and over the hills in the "breaks of the Smoky," and also quite a number from Winona, which crossed the river at my place; and I could not imagine why so many people could have business over that way. . . . One day I chanced to see someone who . . . told me the news, so a short time after that I happened over where the great find was supposed to be, and that country was staked all over, almost as far as you could see. The Russell Springsites had been out and "staked;" Winona had been there and "staked;" and up and down the road had been over and "staked." The writer hereof didn't "stake"—too many had been there and got right on the "ground floor."

Well, they met—the knowing ones—and some that knew more later on, and organized a company, and chose Worthy Lyon to keep the records. Now someone may ask, what were they going to record? Well, I shall never tell you, but let that remain a mystery. Yes, they went further, I think they put up a part of a stone house, for stone out there was very cheap. That I presume was to be the headquarters of the company while they watched the hole out there that some shrewd fellow had put a few pockets-full of the precious metal in, just to see what would come of it. Did anyone make anything out of it? Why yes, the liveryman did a good business for a little time. The register of deeds that recorded all those lots made a nice thing out of it.

Print Teeters, who was right "up to snuff," put up a tent and started an eating house, for he knew full well those fellows would be gaunt and hungry after climbing up there and staking off their claims and swapping yarns for a while.

Well, in the course of time it leaked out that they all had been fooled, and none more so than the one that tried to fool the rest.

AND SO WE come to the question, "Was it all a hoax?" And, since the scheme appears to have been too elaborate for just a practical joke, how did the hoaxers expect their plan to pay off and did they, in fact, make anything out of it?

The newspapers of the area are silent on the subject except for a comment in the *Leader* on February 7, 1889. In reply to the Topeka *Democrat's* questions, "What has quieted the boom in Logan County over the supposed find of nickle? Was the claim salted?"²³ the *Leader* stated that: "The Democrat shouldn't ask such leading questions. We can inform it right here, however, that if there is any salting to be done the people out here will do it." By spring when the mining company was supposed to "begin operations in earnest," the nickel mine seems to have been forgotten. Even earlier a blurb recounting the glories of Logan county did not mention nickel but did suggest that deposits of

coal had been found in the county which might have commercial possibilities.²⁴

Considering the evidence we have, one can only conclude that the Logan county nickel discovery was a hoax, or something even more nefarious. Coulter, a presumably unbiased eyewitness, was certainly of that opinion. Jibes from outsiders and the sudden dropping of the nickel mine story in the local newspapers also point in that direction. One suspects that the subject was a sore point with local boosters toward the end of 1888.

We can only conclude that Phelps and Coldren were the originators of the scheme but undoubtedly some of the local residents were let in on the secret. Joseph J. Wright may have been one, as he was the only person, other than Coldren and Phelps, whom we know deeded his claim to the company for \$10,000. Henry Van Loon also may have been in on it, as his claim was the first one bought by the company although he only received \$1,000. Possibly he suspected the truth and was paid off to keep quiet. B. F. Cannon, who may have been the first person other than Coldren and Phelps to learn of the nickel discovery and who sent the original specimens to Dewey, also may have been one of the conspirators.

It seems likely that the hoaxer's scheme was to salt a likely looking site with some real nickel ore, announce some spurious assay results and provide some of the salted ore to interested parties to submit to distant, reliable assayers, hurriedly form a company, sell stock in it while the nickel fever was at its height, grab the proceeds by selling their original claims to the company, and get out of town before the truth got out. Probably what upset this plan was that they did not know that F. H. Snow was only a few miles away collecting insects. Unfortunately for them Snow not only was a widely known and experienced scientist of uncorruptible character but also was a man of great energy and wide-ranging interests. Before they could get their scheme really started, he appeared at the site, selected ore samples from the locations pointed out as the best sources, and took them off to the university for analysis. There in addition to the chemical analysis by Professor Bailey they also probably were examined by Erasmus Haworth, a highly respected geologist.

23. Topeka *Democrat*, February 5, 1889.

24. *Logan County Leader*, January 31, 1889.

This development must have dismayed the schemers but did not stop them from pushing ahead. They continued to issue optimistic reports, formed their company, and set up a mining district. Probably about the time that people began to suspect their claims, they received a windfall in the form of the letter from Dewey of the Smithsonian, who undoubtedly had been furnished some of the spurious ore and who appears to have been completely unfamiliar with the area.²⁵ So they sold some stock, presumably for cash, and hoped that they could keep their bubble inflated long enough to make their efforts worth while.

Undoubtedly they also hoped that Professor Snow would not get around to working on his samples for some time. If so, this was a vain hope as he had his report written and presented to the public within two months. Despite the lack of written evidence, it seems impossible that word of his strongly worded negative report didn't reach Logan county by mid-November. Meanwhile, Phelps and Coldren had sold their claims to the company and it appears Phelps had departed. Coldren hung on considerably longer but probably gave up by Christmas.

Although we don't know how much cash the company actually took in, we can calculate that

25. As Dewey did not follow up his earlier promise to publish a report, it seems likely that when he received the second ore sample, he realized he had been duped and dropped the whole matter.

for Phelps, Coldren, Wright, and Van Loon all to have received cash for their claims, the company would have had to sell 3,100 shares of stock at \$10 each. Since this seems almost impossible we wonder who got what little cash the company had. Maybe Coulter's remark that the one who tried to "fool" the rest, himself got "fooled," indicates that Phelps or the others got most of the loot and that Coldren was left "holding the bag."

Coulter seemed to feel that the only people who really made anything out of the nickel fiasco were the livery man who provided transportation to the site, E. T. Teeters who sold meals to the claimants and visitors, and whoever provided all the stakes which were used to mark the claims. Maybe he was right. On the other hand, the only people who lost any considerable sum were those who paid cash for a share in someone's claim and the optimists, if any, who bought a number of shares in the company.

In any case, the nickel episode enlivened the Russell Springs scene for a few months and provided a subject for conversation for many years. It also provided the name for the Nickle Mine rural school, Logan County District No. 7, which for many years served that area, and whose derelict stone school house can still be spotted on a distant hill to the southwest as one approaches Russell Springs from the north.