

The Spanish (Spaniard) Mountain Mica Mine

by Bruce Roberts

While researching information on the mining history of our local area, both gold and other minerals, I came upon references to a mica mine on Spaniard Mountain in southeast Towns County. Excerpts from those references include the following:

"This mine is located nine miles by road south of Hiawassee. It is three miles west of the Hiawassee-Cleveland Road and one mile south of the Owl Creek Road in Glassy Mine Gap... The mine is now in the Chattahoochee National Forest area.

The mine was first opened and worked for a short time by Alfred Taylor about 1900. Since that time, no work has been done at the mine, which is now caved and covered with vegetation. The workings consist of two open pits, one directly in the gap and one about 50 feet below the gap on the north side of the ridge. All of the mica removed came from the pit on the northern side of the ridge where the opening is about 25 feet long, 12 feet wide and 8 feet deep. The pit in the gap is much smaller. The small opening in the gap exposes a quartz vein which is about three feet thick. It contains very little mica. In the dump from the other opening, massive, white quartz fragments up to 12 by 18 inches containing mica books are exposed. Small fragments of potash feldspar, partly kaolinized and containing small lenses of quartz, also are in the dump. The mica found in the dump is clear, flat, splits well, and is colorless. Small amounts of "ribbon" and "A" mica are present. It is reported that nearly 1000 pounds of sheet mica were taken from this mine and sold at Gainesville, Ga. The sheet sizes are reported to range from 2 by 2 to 10 by 10 inches; however, only scrap and a small amount of sheet which would sheet out to 1 by 2 inches were found in the dumps when visited in October, 1942."

Alfred Taylor was the brother of Harve Taylor, a great-grandfather of Jerry Taylor, our TCHS VP and county historian. Harve also lived on Spaniard Mtn., and coincidentally Jerry and I had located and visited his old home site several years ago.



Nearby cluster of Ghost Pipes (*Monotropa uniflora*)

My first attempt to find the old mine was in May 2023. I couldn't find Glassy Mine Gap on any maps, either current or old, but figured that Glassy Mine Gap was obviously named for the mica found there. Examining LIDAR views and the roads showing on old maps, I made an educated guess as to a likely location. Unfortunately, after climbing up there, I didn't find any sign of a mine. I did come across a lot of Lady's Slippers, as well as a Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) that measured 5 feet in diameter, rivaling the State Champion of this species in girth. Unfortunately, the tree that I found didn't have a crown as large as the State champion, but it's still a BIG tree!



Huge Chestnut Oak (Quercus montana)

Re-examining the maps, I chose another possible location further up the mountain, and trekked up there again after leaf-fall in late 2023. I started finding small prospect pits as I gained elevation, and had a good feeling that I was at the right location this time. I soon reached the gap and found the mine as described in the report, as well as numerous smaller prospect pits nearby. As described, the pits/shaft were caved in, and there were no underground works to get me too excited. But it was still fun to find and document another piece of our local mining heritage.



Main Pit (caved in) - Spaniard Mica Mine



Mining Pits - Spaniard Mica Mine