

Gene's Rock Stories



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Part 1: Morrisonite Jasper Story 3: Four-legged roommates

The Morrisonite area is so remote that if a person is going to spend any length of time in the area, they must live there also. The first collectors hiked up from the river with Jim Morrison's guidance and would stay down by the river. Jim Morrison eventually had a road built up to get to the area where the Christine Marie claim is now. He hired a man from Caldwell, Idaho to help him make the road with a small machine. Jim Morrison would use this area for collecting rocks, goose hunting, and collecting Native American artifacts.



This picture is looking north from the Jake's Place Mine towards the Owyhee River which lies about one mile away and 1,000ft down. Gene Mueller photo.

It should be noted that the WSA (Wilderness Study Area) document refers to this road as a 'way'. Ways are permitted in WSA's and roads are not. The difference between the two is defined in a report to Congress called RS2477. A 'way' simply goes over the ground and a road is constructed in the ground. This deliberate falsehood has allowed the Blue Canyon WSA to be recommended as suitable for Wilderness designation. After Jim Morrison's passing and the sale of his ranch, collectors came to the deposits from the top driving to the Canyon rim and hiking and climbing down to the deposits. Marty Rust, the new owner of the ranch, would not let anyone use the road. There is still some evidence of the camping area near the road before it drops off the lava plateau onto Sheep's Heads ridge.

The Owyhee River Canyon is being pulled apart. The canyon is 2,000 feet deep, and the sides of the canyon are falling into the river. Deep rockslides are everywhere. Rocks falling from the top pile up on each other creating a vast labyrinth of hollow spaces and ideal habitats for rats, mice, and snakes. If a miner is going to live here, he is going to live with these animals. The rats are everywhere and have no problem making their home in the miner's cabin that is built into a rock wall. There are three such cabins in the Morrisonite area. All the cabins have resident rats. If these rats were exterminated from the cabin, their relatives would be there to move in within two days. This would not necessarily be much of a concern if it were not for the fact that the rats are up all night and sleep during the day, while the miners work hard all day and prefer to sleep 2 / 2 at night.

Desert Woodrats are commonly referred to as "Pack Rats" because they collect various objects and bits of materials to use in the construction of their nests. They

are especially fond of small, bright, shiny objects which they can confiscate. It is a popular superstition that the Woodrat is a fair businessman who, after appropriating an object, will leave a replacement of equal value. The rat may see something more attractive than what she currently possesses, put down the object, and trade it for the more desirable one.

As I learned from living in two of the cabins while mining Morrisonite, the rats in the area were not fair, considerate, nor quiet.



I did manage to get a picture of one of the pack rats. He looks kind of cute, even though he is nothing but irritating. Gene Mueller photo.

To be continued...