

The Rest of the Story: The Remarkable Nevada Revenue-Stamped Lease and Its Extraordinary Backstories

The exhibit is online at: <https://civilwarrevenuedocuments.blogspot.com/>

This exhibit showcases the information-rich nature of revenue-stamped documents, beginning with an 1870 Comstock Lode water lease that is:

- in itself philatelically extraordinary; from its caption:

**Sole recorded example Nevada's Lease stamp tax,
illustrating the unintended discrepancy between the U.S. and Nevada stamp tax rates,
fortunately magnified by five-fold errors in figuring the tax!**

Sole recorded 25¢ roulette 18 multiple on document.

- with a (literally) amazing, multilayered backstory.

New Dimension in Philatelic Exhibiting

The kicker is that said backstory can be told, not merely in words, but via an array of documents; as such it adds a new dimension to philatelic exhibiting.

Moreover, each storytelling element is philatelically and/or historically significant in its own right, some highly so. From selected captions:

- The **Woodworth Sluice . . . was the largest tailings sluice in Nevada (and the world). Sole recorded Silver City handstamp cancel.**
- **Nevada \$10 recorded on just seven documents**
- The **bizarre, amazing [Yes, this is the amazing part] use of Minnesota Sioux Half Breed scrip to secure Nevada land patents** is well covered in the annals of Minnesota, but almost entirely **unmentioned in the vast literature on the early history of Nevada**, until the appearance of articles and monographs by the exhibitor.

Three first-generation Sioux Half Breed scrip deeds recorded

- **Nevada \$20 recorded on just six documents, \$10 on seven, \$5 on twelve; only one other bears all three.**
- **Signatures of [Comstock titans] Mackay and Fair have been recorded together on only two documents, here with Hobart as a bonus!**

Treatment. All these documents survived in what I call the “Hobart Find,” which reached appreciative philatelic hands only in the last few years, evidently from the private papers of Comstock timber and mining magnate W. S. Hobart.

They record how Hobart conceived and implemented a project to process mill tailings from Gold Canyon, adjacent to the mountainous Comstock Lode, at a specialized facility 3.5 miles distant, powered by the Carson River.

The story could be more straightforwardly framed as “Hobart’s Project” or some such title. In fact, the timeline on which the documents were executed is as follows:

June 1867	Sioux scrip deeds to Ophir Co.
Oct 1869	Hobart buys Ophir/Woodworth Mill
Jan 1870	Woodworth Flume plat
Mar 10, 1870	Water lease
Mar 31, 1870	Woodworth Sluice receipt
Sep 1870	Woodworth Mill mortgage and agreement

The water lease came only after everything else was pretty well in place. I prefer starting with it though; a strong reason for this is that the lease is so philatelically significant, in terms of the taxes paid and the stamps affixed. It’s a good starting point. Following it, the documents are arranged to answer a sequence of questions:

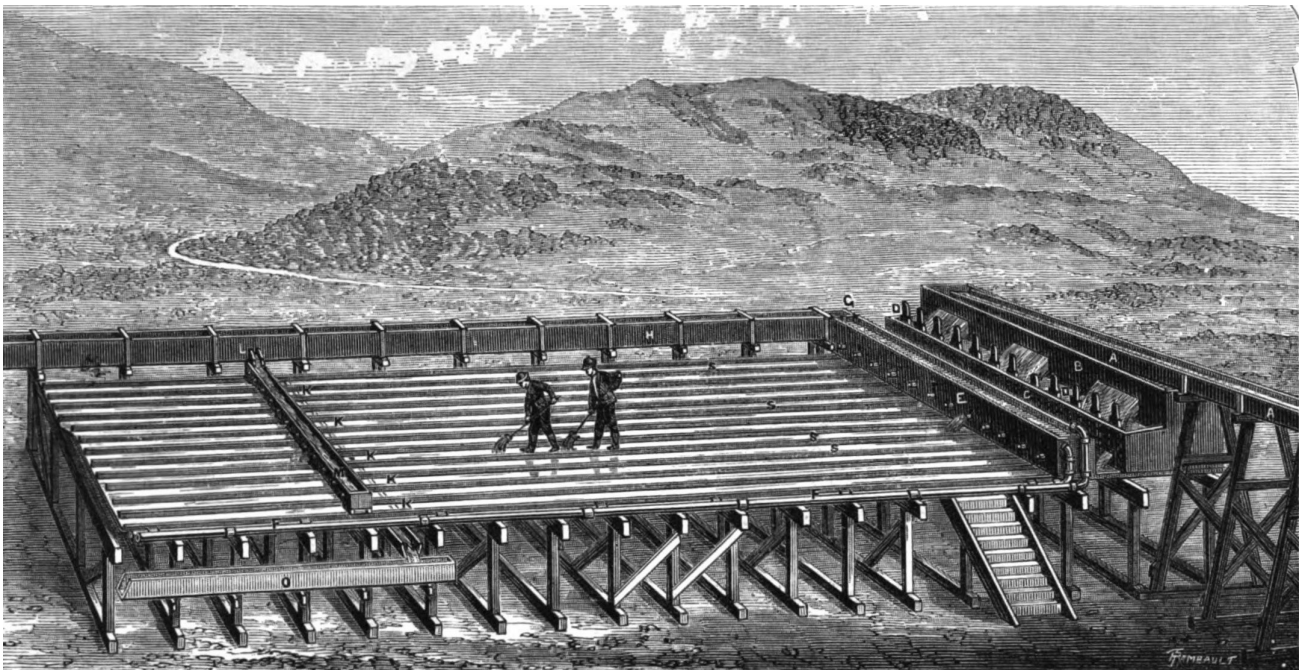
2. Why a water lease? And what, on a mountain devoid of watercourses, was the source of the water?
(Answer: water gushing from the deep mines was used to carry mine tailings via the 3.5 mile Woodworth Flume to the Woodworth Mill on the Carson River.)
3. Where/how were the tailings processed (I)?
(Answer: concentrated at Woodworth Sluice)
4. Where/how were the tailings processed (II)?
(Answer: silver and gold extracted at Ophir/Woodworth Mill)
5. How was the Ophir Mill land patented?
(Answer: amazingly, via Minnesota Sioux Half Breed scrip!)
- 6.1 How was the Woodworth Mill financed (I)?
(Answer: mortgage from Comstock titans John Mackay and James Fair)
- 6.2 How was the Woodworth Mill financed (II)?
(Answer: mortgage agreement signed by Mackay, Fair and Hobart!)

To reprise, this lease can stand alone as a Nevada fiscal history rarity; it does so in my monograph *Stamp Taxes in Nevada*, and related multiframe exhibit. However, as explained here, its backstory has an even greater significance, in that:

- It can be told via additional stamped documents.
- It involves other high-level rarities, notably the eye-opening Sioux Half Breed scrip deeds; the Woodworth Mill mortgage with Nevada \$20, \$10 and \$5; and the agreement signed by Nevada titans Mackay, Fair and Hobart.
- And finally, it comprises a logically satisfying, essentially seamless whole. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the documents pertain to an ambitious, successful project. Even so, the likelihood that other similarly cohesive and significant illustrated “stories” can be told seems small. This one is not only groundbreaking, it will likely remain one of the pre-eminent examples of its genre.

Reference

Mahler, Michael. **2020**. Opportunism Unleashed: Use of Minnesota Sioux Half Breed Scrip to Acquire Nevada Timber and Mill Lands, 1864–1873. *The American Stamp Collector & Dealer*, October, pp. 62–71; November-December, pp. 65–71.



Upper Section of Woodworth Sluice (Egleston, 1887)

Terminus of 3.5-mile Woodworth Flume at far right, from which tailings flow onto the blanket-covered sluices, along with water.

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Purpose. This exhibit describes a **philatelically extraordinary 1870 water lease** made at **Virginia City**, commercial center of Nevada's fabled **Comstock Lode**, and explains its **multi-layered backstory**, not merely in words, but **via an array of documents**, each philatelically and/or historically significant in its own right.

Together they describe the ambitious project of **lumber and mining magnate Walter Hobart**, supported by **Comstock titans John Mackay and William Fair**, to **transport mill tailings from Gold Canyon**, near the Comstock, via a **3.5-mile flume** to the **Carson River** for **specialized processing**.

Red type: Read me!

Exhibit Plan

1. **Leasing the Water**
2. **Why Lease Water?! (To carry mill tailings via Woodworth Flume)**
3. **Where/How Were the Tailings Processed? (I)** (Gold and silver concentrated in Woodworth Sluice)
4. **Where/How Were the Tailings Processed? (II)** (Gold and silver extracted in "New Ophir" or Woodworth Mill)
5. **How Was the "New Ophir Mill" Patented? (Via Minnesota Sioux Half-Breed Scrip!!)**
- 6.1 **Financing the "New Ophir Mill" (I)** (Mortgage to Comstock titans John Mackay and James Fair)
- 6.2 **Financing the "New Ophir Mill" (II): (Mortgage agreement signed by Mackay, Fair and Hobart!)**