

# Collecting Hammers

by Leo Stambaugh



I am putting up some photos of the different styles of Drilling hammers that were used here in CO by the miners around 1900 or so. Two styles most common were the "dago" or "Italian" curved body , and the straight "Nevada" style.

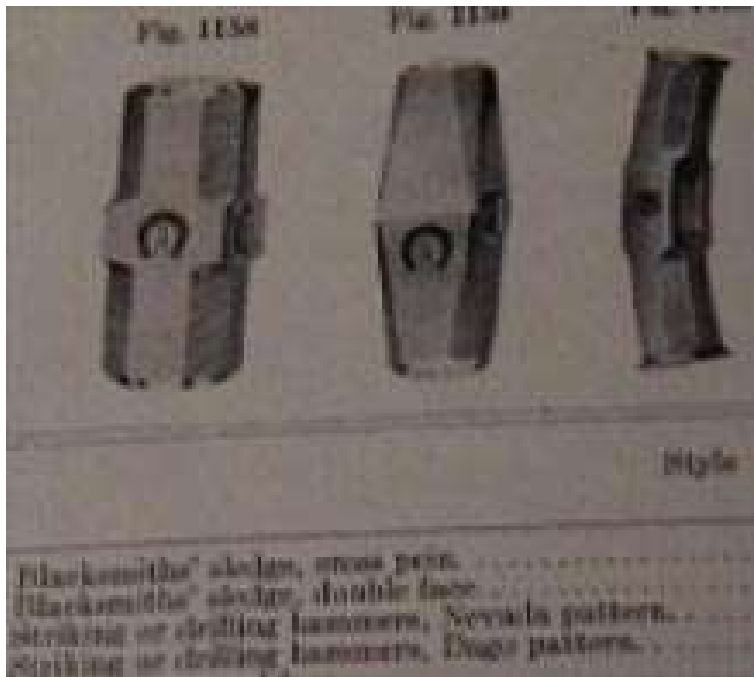
Georgetown, Silver Plume, Nevadaville, and most of the other camps with a large Italian population seemed to have a larger number of the dago pattern, miners said they gave more of a pendulum style of swing arc which was easier for long periods of drilling, especially when drilling upwards. They were also handy for setting rail spikes because the head was offset a ways making it easier to strike the spike close to the rail. I have seen them in catalogs in sizes from 3 to 8 pounds. Nevada patterns were a mid-range style of sledge that I have found in 3 to 6 pound sizes but were available up to the 16 pound size. Too big for drilling but great rock crushers. There are a lot of Nevada style hammers around but few are marked as such, I have only found 9 marked ones in all. The Oregon pattern is a shorter version

of the Nevada Style, I have only seen 4 marked ones, and only one marked California which was a bit thinner than the Nevada version. I have one long California style that is marked "C.W.Pollard, Georgetown, COL." It was made by Fayette R. Plumb, hammers makers that made all the styles mentioned. Atha, Quikwerk, Yankee, and a few other hammers makers made them also. I am sending four attachments so you can delete if not interested, I know it gets a bit involved for what are basically just wack hammers.

The photo above shows a 3 1/2 pound "Oregon" hammer on the left and a Drill competition "Nevada" 8 pound hammer on the right. It belonged to a miner in BlackHawk,CO who competed regularly in contests. It has a short 28 inch handle for better control and accuracy. It is in almost perfect condition because of the great care he took to keep it ready for contests. both of these are Fayette R. Plumb brand. Another name I see a lot on all styles of hammer is Verona Tool works from Pittsburgh, I believe. Does anyone know much about that company or maybe have a catalog from them?

This is the shorter style with "Oregon" stamped in it. They came in at least the four pound single jack size and a 6 pound version which is this size here. I have also seen ads for a "Colorado" pattern but haven't seen a real example. There is also only one example that I have seen which is stamped "Dago" but hopefully there are other marked examples that may turn up.





Left, is a catalog showing some of the Dago styles along with a couple Nevada styles on the bottom of the photo.



Shown right is another catalog with the two styles using "Italian" instead of "Dago". It wasn't really derogatory towards Italians unless you said it with a bad attitude. One of my friends is a former State Mine Inspector, Roy Rizzardi, and he said if you used the term Dago underground it was usually another Italian anyway. These hammers were made by Quikwerk, which also made the Oregon pattern hammer.



One more and I will shut up. This is an old miniature tool set made in a blacksmith shop here about 1915. It is interesting because he made both the Nevada and Dago style hammer at the same time so they were both used concurrently here in Georgetown. The quarter is for scale, not the price of the set. Ha.