



THE OLDEST GOLD NUGGETS FROM THE DIAMOND FUND OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Photo: Michael B. Leybov

This paper contains historical information on the famous 19th century discovery of the Golden Valley in the Zlatoust Mining District in the South Urals, the so-called Miass goldfields in the valley of the river Tashkutarganka. It also reports some facts about events in relation to the findings of the nuggets.

The Diamond Fund of Russian Federation received its name in 1922 for a collection of historical valuables, which was separated from the collection of crown jewellery, kept in the Brilliant Room of the Winter Palace before the Revolution. This treasure, shown to the public for the first time in 1925, is exposed in the Kremlin since 1967.

Also in 1967, the permanent exposition of the Diamond Fund received a unique collection of precious metal nuggets, compiled from Gosfond specimens. The nuggets would usually come to Gosfond from the mine sites. However, they also included nuggets, transferred from the Leningrad Regional Branch of the State Bank in 1936. Deposits of their origin were mostly unknown. Nevertheless and regardless of 'dark' origin of these nuggets, their larger part was exposed in the central showcase of the Diamond Fund as these nuggets were good, interesting, and of memorable shapes.

In the 1990s, the Gokhran experts, while cataloguing the nuggets, paid attention to their origin in assumption that each finding of nuggets of such quality and size might have been recorded in the scientific and popular literature.

The search was successful, and an origin of mysterious 1936 collection from the Leningrad Regional Branch of the State Bank was almost completely deciphered. It was found that the central showcase of the Diamond Fund had a small portion of gold and platinum nuggets from the famous Mineralogical collection of the Mining Institute of the Empress Katherine the Great, which hosted "the world's richest collection of gold and platinum nuggets" (Ozerskiy, 1843).

The collection of such nuggets in one place was a unique phenomenon in the history of collecting. For example, our knowledge is often approximate about unique western giant nuggets, mostly extracted from the media reports. According to these reports, such nuggets could not survive longer than one week as they were all finally sent to the affintage plants. In the best cases, gypsum copies have been produced.

In Russia, beginning of the precious metal nugget collecting was initiated "...since the commencement of gold mining from sands in Russia, following a special decision of the government, which stipulated that all nuggets, exceeding several zolotniks in weight and as especially rare

Photo 1. "Big Triangle" gold nugget
(36 015.6 grammes, 390 x 280 x 100 mm).
On top of page – face side of specimen,
on bottom – back it's side.
Found on 26th October 1842
at the Tsarevo-Aleksandrovskiy placer.
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