

The Origin of "Perky Boxes" - © Rock Currier (published with permission)

Some of you may remember Willard Perkins of Burbank, California. For years he was a mineral dealer and collector who lived and raised a family in a small house there with a one car garage in which he kept his mineral collection.

To augment his income and support his hobby he made many trips down to Mexico where he bought minerals at many of the mines. His "day" job was working for a company where they made commercial signs, specializing in small metal signs that other companies would attach to motors, refrigerators etc that had lots of little lettering on them. As the number of people collecting thumbnail size specimens grew and that size of specimen gained popularity to the point where the American Federation of Gem and Mineral Societies created a special competitive class of mineral specimens for them.

Willard Perkins, known to his friends as Perky made a deal with one of the suppliers of these boxes to buy large quantities of them cheaply and he would then cut up large chunks of Styrofoam to make the little Styrofoam pads that would fit in the bottoms of these boxes and would sell these boxes to TN collectors. He would look for small TN size specimens in Mexico and other places.

I and Tony Jones would frequently find him waiting for us when we got back from our various trips to Tsumeb, Peru etc. and he would buy a lot of TN size specimens from us that he would trim and mount up in his "Perky" boxes that he sold at gem and mineral shows to collectors. He would make a beautiful little "printed" labels for each of this TN specimens. This was before the day when desk top publishing, computers and printers were common and they were bought in quantity by many collectors.

Over time people started calling them Perky boxes possibly because Perky sold them and also perhaps because they looked neat and perky. He had a private TN collection of them that was sold to Jim Minette after he died. I put Jim on to the collection and because of that he allowed me first look in on those he did not want to add to his collection. I concentrated in getting many of the smithsonite specimens from Tsumeb and the nice adamite specimens from Mapimi. I still enjoy looking at them from time to time.

The Northridge earthquake caused a lot of damage to the larger specimens in his collection, many of which were thrown out onto the cement of his garage floor when the quake shattered his glass display cases and shelves. His TN collection came through intact.

Rock Currier

Crystals not pistols.