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## **SAND SPIKES - MINERAL ODDITY**

*Near Mt. Signal, Imperial Co., California, USA*

One of the not so great "Mysteries of the Universe" is the origin of the "Sand Spikes" of Imperial County. WHAT they are is not in question; they are simple concretions: grains of sand weakly cemented by Calcite. WHY they formed as they did, is a serious puzzle. Most were simple spheres, each with a single, tapering "tail." When first found, it was noted with some confusion, that over 95% them had the "tails" pointing - West. The first ones were found weathering out on surface, but digging soon proved that there were more, and most of those were aligned towards the West, in beds from 3 to 8 feet below surface.

Fortunately, the original finder, H.W. Peirce of Laguna Beach, California, showed considerable sagacity in carefully collecting hundreds of them and subsequently trading/donating them to individuals and institutions all over the planet. Good thing too, since someone took a bulldozer to the locality rendering it essentially non-existent. The spikes seen here are typical of the deposit, but they are conjoined along the spherical portion: an uncommon occurrence. This is of more than passing interest because the original layering of the wind-blown sand can be seen along the sides of the spheres and when comparing the two spheres it becomes apparent that the smaller of the two formed from sand deposited higher and therefore later than the first - a possible clue to the formation process. *Overall measurements: 4 x 6 x 2.25 inches (10.2 x 15.2 x 5.7 cm)*