THE BRALORNE GOLD DISCOVERY

By Arthur Raymond (Bud) Ryckman,

Gold was first discovered at the confluence of the Bridge and Fraser Rivers by prospectors heading up the Fraser River in 1858 for the Cariboo gold rush. The Bridge River flows into the Fraser River a short distance north of the town of Lillooet. In the Cariboo gold Rush of 1858, Lillooet became mile one of the Cariboo Road. Many of the gold Seekers – "Argonauts," had worked the gravel bars in the lower reaches of the Fraser Valley where the gold dust was so fine it had to be amalgamated with mercury to be won. The miners knew that fine gold dust had traveled a considerable distance from the mother lode so the target was to move upstream to find the primary source. Many of the Argonauts worked up the canyon from Yale to Lillooet and many more followed the Harrison Lillooet route. Either way they arrived at Lillooet and in proceeding upstream they all passed the confluence of the Fraser and Bridge Rivers. Many thousands of gold seekers headed up the Fraser between 1858 and 1860. A few tested the gravel bars at the mouth of the Bridge River. They discovered showings of placer gold in the gravel bars. The gold was coarser than the fine dust found on the sand bars in the lower Fraser River. Some of the miners chose to work the area with rockers and sluices. Some believed that they were near the mother lode. A camp town (mostly tents), named Bridgeport was set up and by May of 1859, 200 miners were working the waters of the Bridge River with some promise of success.

Apparently the name "Bridge River" was given to the stream because the local Indians had built a bridge across the Fraser River where the Bridge and Fraser meet. The Indians' bridge had collapsed but two business partners named Fraser and Davis built a new bridge across the Fraser that they operated as a toll bridge. They charged travelers a toll fee of 25 cents to cross the river.

By 1861 the gravel bars located in the estuary of the Bridge River had been worked out and none of the miners made any attempts to prospect the depths of the Bridge River Valley. No doubt the fact that the native Indians had let it be known that they didn't want any intruders to enter their territory and that they would be ready to kill anyone who tried. The word among the miners was that the big mother lodes that they were seeking were further up the Fraser.

GOLD SAMPLES
These are taken from Taylor's Bralorne Gold Mine. The top specimen is over 80 % gold.

COURTESY CANADIAN MUSEUM OF MAN #56706, #3053 & #45785

That winter the toll bridge was wrecked by ice floes so Bridgetown was soon abandoned and the majority of the gold seekers headed upstream.

Some individual miners stayed and continued to work the bars in the area with limited success. For 38 years, no serious attempts were made to prospect the upper reaches of the Bridge River Valley. All of the excitement and activity had moved upstream to Barkerville and adjacent areas.

THE PIONEER MINE HISTORY

In 1896 a prospector named Harry Atwood who was grubstaked by William Allen, owner of the Pioneer Hotel in Lillooet discovered a rich pay streak on Cadwallader Creek. The ground was staked with several claims and named the Pioneer after the hotel owned by grubstaker William Allan. Fred Kinder partnered with Harry Atwood and they worked the claim together until Atwood sold out to Arthur Noel. Noel and Kinder set up a water powered mill on Cadwallader Creek and continued to work the claim until 1911 when the property was sold to a group consisting of Arthur Noel, Adolphus Williams, Frank Holten and the brothers Peter and Andrew Ferguson. They purchased the claim and equipment for $26,000. Holten and Noel sold their equity and in 1915 Pioneer Gold Mines Limited was incorporated. They constructed a mill and proceeded to work the property. Mining was continued for the next three years and Pioneer Gold Mines Limited managed to produce 4,000 troy ounces of gold.

Many attempts were made to acquire financing to fund the development of a major underground lode mine. An option was granted to a mining company in 1920 for $100,000. The company defaulted payment so a Vancouver group represented by A.E. Bull and A.H. Wallbridge bought out the option. After spending a further $50,000 without success, operations were stopped. A.E. Bull then contacted David M. Sloan, a mining engineer to examine the property and advise regarding the feasibility of the property. If it was decided that the property was worth developing, Sloan was instructed to seek further capital for the development. Sloan was convinced that the property was sound and viable but was unable to locate an investor. Finally, he and his partner J.I. Babe took over the option from Bull and Wallbridge. In 1928, Babe sold out his 50% interest to Colonel Victor Spencer and Pioneer Gold Mines of British Columbia was incorporated.

With David Sloan as General Manager of operations, work proceeded at all levels. The Pioneer Townsite was completed with 2 bunkhouses,

AUSTIN COTTRELL TAYLOR (1889 - 1965)
COURTESY TAYLOR FAMILY

a machine shop, store, and recreation hall with dance floor, poolroom, library, barbershop, theatre, school and 12 private homes. The ultimate success of the Pioneer mine has been credited to Mining Engineer David Sloan. When all the others were prepared to abandon the property Sloan not only stuck with the work, he invested his own money to see it through.

Pioneer continued to operate as a profitable and independent company until 1959 when Bralorne and Pioneer were united and became Bralorne and Pioneer Mines Limited.

THE MINTO MINES HISTORY

Prospector Warren A. Davidson staked the Alpha claims near the junction of Gun Creek and Bridge River in 1931. The Minto Camp had a bunkhouse, cookhouse and a Diesel Powered Electric Generator and employed 40 men. Nearby, the Wayside Mine had it's own Hydro-Electric Power Plant and a bunkhouse with facilities for 60 men. In 1936, 60 men were employed by Minto Mines, milling 33,000 tons of ore with a recovery of 4,300 troy ounces of gold and 13,000 ounces of silver. The mine was closed in 1942 but Minto didn't become a ghost town. The model community that "Big" Bill Davidson had created for a population of 800 became homes for the Japanese who had been interned because of the war. In 1969 the town of Minto disappeared under the man made Carpenter Lake created by B.C. Hydro Dam on the Bridge River.

THE BRALORNE MINE HISTORY

In 1897 prospectors John Williams, Nat Coughlin and William Young working the gravel bars of Cadwallader Creek found sufficient coarse gold to stake 3 claims that they named The Golden King, The Marquis and The Lorne. Subsequently, 49 other claims were staked in the adjacent area. The Lorne turned out to be the richest of the claims. The various holders of these 53 claims worked their own ground in their own way. In 1900, they amalgamated their properties totaling about 1200 acres into one company to be called Bralorne Gold Mines.

The principal owner of the Lorne mine was who was elected to the B.C. Legislature and appointed to minister of mining. Sloan had made his original fortune in the Klondike. Sloan had the property assessed by mining engineers in 1916. As the report was negative, Sloan sold his equity to Arthur Noel who had been partners with Fred Kinder in the Pioneer Mine. Arthur Noel worked the Lorne claim until 1928 when he sold out to the Stobie Furlong Company. Stobie Furlong also bought the adjacent properties. They named their new company Lorne Gold Mines Limited. The Stobie Furlong Company hired Harry Clinton Wilmot to supervise operations that included opening adits and driving tunnels into the main ore body. A sawmill, townsite, machine shop, stamp mill, and crew accommodations were constructed. By 1930, the Stobie Furlong Company was in financial difficulty. Bralco Development, a Vancouver company headed by William W. Boultbee, Austin Cottrell Taylor, George Kidd, and Neil McQueen bought out Stobie Furlong and by combining the two names—Lorne and Bralco—renamed the mining company Bralorne Mines Limited.

The new corporation commenced mining immediately. In March of 1932, Bralorne Mines Limited poured their first ingot with a weight of 393 troy ounces. Bralorne continued to operate for 40 years, producing more than four million troy ounces of gold.

Still operational in 1971, with the price of gold fixed at $35.00 per ounce, costs of operations growing and the fact that the mine had now reached down to 2,000 feet below sea level where rock pressure and heat is extreme, it became uneconomical to continue.

Ed Hall, manager of operations in 1971 stated that there was still some spectacular ore at the bottom level. However, since they were now what he referred to as being one mile in and one mile deep with shafts, drifts and tunnels extending for a total of close to 100 miles, it would cost more to mine the ore than it would be worth.

When the mines finally closed down, the properties were taken over by Marmot Enterprises, a Vancouver company headed by the Whiting family. The property has been marketed as a recreational resort for both summer and winter activities. Today the area is available by road from Lillooet and Lillooet can be reached from the Lower Mainland by way of highway 99, Pemberton and Duffy Lake or Highway 1 to Lytton, then along the banks of the Fraser River to Lillooet.

Born in Toronto in 1889, Austin Cottrell Taylor was educated at St. Andrew's College in Aurora, located north of his birth city, and made his first $1,000,000 playing the stock markets before reaching his 21st birthday. He was an excellent polo player and played in the east, and when he came to BC played up and down the west coast as far south as California in amateur polo matches. He was definitely a man's man, happiest in the outdoors with his dogs and horses, fishing or hunting. He married Kathleen Elliott, a graduate from the University of Manitoba, and the couple had a son and two daughters.

The 28-year-old Major Taylor came to British Columbia in 1917 as the Director of the Aeronautical Department of Britain's Imperial Munitions Board in charge of harvesting the straight, tough and fine-grained Sitka spruce from the Queen Charlotte Islands for the manufacture of training aircraft for the war effort. He was directed to fulfill the IMB's mandate and with Harold R. MacMillan, Chief Forester, to deliver "Airplane Spruce" to the fledgling aircraft industry both at home and in England. An expert organizer, Taylor quickly set up hundreds of camps, scores of tugboats, and thousands of men to cut down the trees. Canadian Pacific Railway Company tugs hauled great rafts of logs across the waters of the Pacific Coast and discharged their cargo at the many mainland mills. The towing of log booms in stormy weather in the open ocean proved to be a nightmarish logistical headache for Major Taylor. The obstacle was solved with a Davis raft that resembled a large sausage stuffed with logs. These rafts delivered logs to mainland mills for processing with the result that hundreds and hundreds of CPR cars rolled eastward monthly loaded with prime airplane lumber bound for the airplane factories in eastern Canada. Dressed lumber was also shipped to England. Great Britain's spruce requirements were 8,500,000 board feet of timber monthly. British Columbia's January 1917 production was 1.36 % of that requirement, 12 % by June, and 80.6 % by November, but with the added fir shipments Canada's contribution reached 97 % of England's total lumber requirements.

Taylor's greatest business venture came in 1931 during the Depression, when he raised the necessary capital to take over a failing gold mine north of Pemberton. He made it into Bralorne Mines Limited, and it became one of Canada's leading gold producers. It also made him a multi-millionaire.

Mr. Taylor, an avid horseman, became interested in thoroughbred racing in 1928. Now wealthy, he purchased a ranch near Kelowna and the large A.C.T. Breeding Stables at Milner, a suburb of Langley, where he raised the finest thoroughbred stock in BC and trained them on his own track. His horse Indian Broom was the only BC horse ever to enter the Kentucky Derby. It ran third in 1936. Another famous Taylor horse was Special Agent, which won many honours at tracks all over the continent. The horse was apparently named after the 1935 movie "Special Agent" about Canada's William Stephenson, the "Man Called Intrepid." Taylor raced horses mainly in Vancouver and at the Santa Anita track in California. He also used some of his fortune to purchase a Tudor revival style manor in Shaughnessy Heights. The home had been built in 1915 for lawyer and whiskey baron Edward Tulk. Taylor later purchased sugar magnate Benjamin T. Rogers's showplace home named Shannon at 57th Avenue and Granville Street. He spent time at Milner during the summer, but his year-round residence was Shannon.

During the Second World War, the federal government made him a $1-a-year man, and he held posts as the vice-president of Wartime Shipbuilding Limited as well as chairman of the British Columbia Security Commission that dealt with enemy alien matters. He was also active in organizing Commonwealth air training schools. He was chosen for these positions because of his past performances, his contacts, and his wealth. According to family folklore, Taylor gifted the federal government one million dollars (possibly two) for the war effort.

As the chairman of the British Columbia Security Commission responsible for security matters during the war, Taylor's committee in 1942 made the difficult

decision to remove the Japanese from the coast and into internment camps both for their safety and for the country's welfare during the war. At the time it was perceived as a very real threat that Japanese aircraft carriers might make it to the BC coast and attack Greater Vancouver. The Canadian military was afraid that local Japanese-Canadian men might side with the invading army or, if they remained loyal to Canada, might be captured by their own countrymen. Taylor has been much maligned by Japanese-Canadians for the treatment they endured during their time in prison camps, but Canada and Japan were at war, and such measures were thought to be necessary to protect Canadians.

During the war years Taylor spent time in New York, where his daughter Patricia attended university. She later, in 1950, married William F. Buckley Jr., a CIA agent and writer. Buckley ran unsuccessfully for Mayor of New York in 1965.

In 1947 Taylor was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his wartime civilian service. He agreed to chair the BC Emergency Flood Committee to fundraise for victims of the 1948 Fraser River flood. A modest and humble man, Taylor never sought publicity for his accomplishments even though he held directorships in a number of corporations. He was offered the lieutenant-governorship of BC several times but each time refused the honour. He was a generous and kind man with a wry sense of humour who shunned publicity.

Taylor suffered from arteriosclerosis and died after a long illness in 1965 in Vancouver at the age of 76. A few years after his death property developer Peter Wall purchased Shannon as well as the A.C.T. Breeding Stables in Milner. In 1972 Wall commissioned legendary architect Arthur Erickson to turn the estate into a condo development with the understanding that he preserve both the large home and the coach house.

THE HEDLEY GOLD MINE AT NICKEL PLATE

By Marilyn L. (Mrs. Gene) Morris née Probert,
(Granddaughter of Myron Knox Rodgers)

Edgar Dewdney, the road builder of the Dewdney Trail, had James Riordan and Charles Allison stake claims on Nickel Plate Mountain as early as 1894. Allison was the son of John Fall Allison, the first white settler at Red Earth or Vermillion Forks. This site had originally been named after the red ochre used for face painting or pictographs before being renamed in 1860 Prince's Town, later Princeton, to honor the visit to eastern Canada of Queen Victoria's eldest son, Edward, Prince of Wales — later to become King Edward V11. Dewdney and Allison married sisters making them brothers-in-law. According to legend, greenhorn prospectors had been panning for gold in the Similkameen valley floor and had encountered some locals who, as a cruel prank, told them that the best prospects were on the high mountainous ridges above the 5,000 foot level. Incredibly, the two men found free gold in a rusty red outcrop near the top of a mountain. As a result other seasoned miners quickly staked claims on the mountain. Ironically, the claims staked by Riordan and Allison were allowed to lapse and reverted back to the crown. Robert Rist Hedley, the manager of the Hall Mine at Nelson, was one of the earliest grubstakers with the result that the town that afterwards sprang up was named after him.

John Oswald Coulthard, known as Ozzie, had four claims on the mountain but he allowed them to lapse. According to Doug Cox's book 'Mines of the Eagle Country Nickel Plate & Mascot' this occurred because Richard Lowe Cawston, after whom Cawston was named, and his brother George were moving steers to Rossland on their fall cattle drive. Since Rossland had an assay office, Ozzie gave some of his Hedley ore samples to Dick to have them assayed. When the steers reached the Columbia River they initially refused to swim across so Dick reached into his pocket and threw some of Ozzie's samples at the frightened steers to get them moving into the water. It's very likely that some very rich gold samples still lay on the banks of the Columbia River at the cattle crossing. Apparently Riordan, a rancher at Olalla, gained knowledge of placer gold locations from a Similkameen First Nations brave with the anglicized name of Pinto.

EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES
The eldest son of Queen Victoria I, he went on to become King Edward VII. In this portrait he is wearing his masonic regalia of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England.

GRAND LODGE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON

THE STAMP MILL

Stamp mills used batteries of stamps to crush the ore. Each stamp was made up of a round vertical steel shaft approximately eight feet long with a 200-pound cast steel foot attached to the bottom. These were fitted with a cam shaft and allowed them to fall down under their own weight pulverizing the ore into a fine sand. The combination of the shaft and steel foot weighed 1050-pounds each.

CRUCIBLE WITH POUR SPOUT

This large crucible with the pour-sprout was used in the 1950s at the Mascot Mine in Hedley. Crucibles are heat- resistant containers in which crushed ore is super-heated so that the metals contained within can be extracted.

PENTICTON MUSEUM

The history of the Nickel Plate Mine really began in August of 1898 when Francis H. Woolaston and Constance A. Arundel discovered a rich outcrop of ore on the mountain ridges of what would become Nickel Plate Mountain. They first staked the Horsefly, Nickel Plate, Copperfield, Sunnyside and Bull Dog mineral claims. Late in the fall of that same year the pair took some samples of the surface ore from their Nickel Plate claim to the provincial fair in New Westminster. Myron Knox Rodgers, one of the leading figures in the history of the Nickel Plate, later saw the samples in Victoria. At the time Rodgers was travelling through the province in the interests of Marcus Daly, the copper mining magnate of Butte, Montana. Rogers was so impressed by the samples that he left post haste by steamer, rail, stage, and horseback to reach the discovery claim. His examination proved so satisfactory that in November Rodgers made a non-refundable $1000 deposit on the Nickel Plate, Sunnyside, Bull Dog and Copperfield claims promising a payout of $60,000 if the claims proved to be as rich as the samples.

Rodgers, the son of William Knox Rodgers and Sarah Spahr, was born 6 November 1861 at the family homestead at Charleroi, Pennsylvania. He was the oldest of ten children; however two of the children died young. He earned his own way through Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania, and graduated as a civil engineer. He would come home to the family farm at Charleroi, one hundred miles from the college, sometimes walking most of the way. He was very dedicated to his family and after he graduated he paid for the education of his five brothers and three sisters. He was born with a strong character, conservative, and close mouthed and he possessed an unusual ability in his mining work and finance.

Shortly after he graduated as a civil engineer, he left for the west. He traveled to Helena, Montana, where he secured a position as a rodman on one of James J. Hill's locating engineering parties, who was then building the Great Northern Railway system from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Seattle, Washington. It wasn't long before he was promoted to transitman of the party. From this position he was promoted to Chief Engineer. As the Chief Engineer he had the responsibility of locating a section of the route that involved a tunnel of considerable length, which, when completed, met the other end of steel with remarkable precision.

Hill had been keeping track of him and told him that Meyer Guggenheim of New York had asked him to recommend a man to take care of their northern explorations in Alaska. Hill recommended Rodgers and asked that he return to New York to see Guggenheim. This he did resulting in a four-year contract. These operations included the building of 200-miles of railroad, the exploring of the Bering River coalfields and the building of docking terminals and smelter sites.

After completion of the railroad he went to Butte, Montana, and entered the employ of Marcus Daly and James Ben Ali Haggin, the owners of the great Anaconda Copper Mine. Here his rise was rapid and soon he was drawn to the attention of Daly. He persuaded Daly to purchase two Corliss compound hoisting engines each with 2,500-horse power. The machinery weighed over 400 tons and was in continuous use for the next fourteen years. They were the largest and most economical hoisting engines west of the Mississippi River being capable of hoisting a load of 25 tons of ore at a speed of 3,500 feet per minute.

While residing in Butte, Rodgers married Lucy Forshee Joyner, a Canadian from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 1892. Lucy's parents were of Irish and Scottish descent. A college graduate, she was a shrewd lady with unusual native intelligence. At the time of the marriage, Lucy's parents were living in Butte. Lucy had an eccentric character in that she always attempted to be of humble means and talk poverty when she was amply supplied with money. The couple had two children, a son Edwin Leavitt Rodgers born in 1894 and then, 10 years later, a daughter Margaret Elizabeth [my mother]. Edwin, although well educated, ran the gauntlet of wild living as a rich man's son, and was disinherited by his father.

Myron wrote many letters to his wife and often told her of his long days travelling by train. In one letter to Lucy he spoke about a man who had many ideas and who pondered them aloud to Myron. At the end of the letter he mentioned the man's name in passing. He told his wife to remember the name Thomas Edison for he felt that she would be hearing his name about some of his inventions.

Rodgers became a world traveller for his boss Daly responsible for scouting out potential mines as per a story written by Percy F. Goldenrath in 1905 in 'Mother Earth's Treasure Vaults': "Hardships! You get used to hardships after travelling for three and one-half years, covering over 135,000 miles and sampling in the neighbourhood of 700 mineral claims, from the tropical climes of Guatemala to the inhospitable shores of Alaska. And disappointment; yes, mining men have their full share, for fortune is never fickle, to one who seeks to unlock her treasure chests. One instance in point will suffice before I tell you how I ran across the Nickel Plate. I started out from Butte

in 1895, holding a sort of roving commission on behalf of the late Marcus Daly. I first tackled the then little known Boundary district, examining the many remarkable low-grade ore bodies in the Phoenix and the Deadwood camps.

I had just made a flying (steam or sailing ship) trip to Australia and was in Victoria bound for the Skeena River country. Time hung heavily on my hands while waiting for the northbound steamer. One day I happened to be in William Wilson's store on Government Street in Victoria. He showed me some striking looking samples of ore that he said came from the southern part of the province from a claim owned by two prospectors named Woolaston and Arundel. I met Woolaston and arranged to see the prospect. We went into the Similkameen by a rather circuitous route, down the Okanagan Lake to Penticton, then to Fairview (later Oliver), where we were joined by Arundel, Woolaston's partner, and on to Twenty Mile Creek. I made a stay of about an hour and a half on the claim and sampled the showing. Intuitively it came to me that it had the earmarks of a mine. I sent the samples to a Montana assayer. His returns were encouraging. They looked too good, so later on I went back to the claim myself and resampled the ore. Again I received big results and that determined me to secure the property. I bonded the Nickel Plate, Bulldog, Sunnyside and Copperfield claims for $60,000. Development started and the prospects in time became a mine. That delay at Victoria was responsible for my getting the Nickel Plate. Godenrath continued: "It was the 12th of January, 1899, that a gang of 18 men started development work at the Nickel Plate. All supplies had to be packed in forty miles, and the early work of proving the ore body was prosecuted under the greatest disadvantages. As the work progressed Mr. Rodgers began to gather in other claims, and two month before the bond had expired on the Nickel Plate group, it was taken up and the balance of the money paid."

Early in 1898 Rodgers set out to examine the claims that he bonded 5,000 feet above the valley floor. He first hired local First Nations men to shovel a trail through the snow to the mountaintop and then hired George H. Cahill and a partner by the name of William W. Yates to build a cabin for 20 men before beginning to put in a tunnel on the Sunnyside claim. These men began by stripping off some overburden and driving a wide open cut to an average depth of about 9-feet with dynamite. Cahill was in charge of the first pack train that brought in supplies for the men employed at the new camp first came in from Fairview (present day Oliver) in November 1898. Rodgers remained on the site all that winter and the following summer.

Rodgers neglected to mention that he had discovered an incredible copper mine in Mexico the year before for Daly and Haggen. The mine finder did $12,000 worth of development work but Daly wrongly concluded that his man was throwing good money after bad and sent word down to Mexico to close down the work and to pass on paying any bond. Upon leaving Rodgers remarked "if there was no copper mine, there should be and that be would probably travel the rest of his life without finding another place with such favorable conditions for copper." When the property was started up at a later date by Colonel William Cornel Greene, his corporation known as the Greene Consolidated Copper Company, found that one of Rodgers' crosscuts was within 7-feet and another 12-feet of the bonanza ore body. Incidentally, Rodgers had a 25 per cent interest and had been given two days longer the property would have had different owners. The five-mile long by one-mile wide discovery called the Cananea Properties became the richest copper mine in Mexico and eventually yielded $50,000,000.

GOLD INGOT MOLD
This gold ignot mold was used for pouring gold bricks weighing 12,000 ounces or 125 pounds. It had outside measurements of 15" long by 6 3/4" wide by 5 3/4" deep. The inside measurements were 11" by 4 3/4" by 4 3/4". It took 16 bars poured from this size of mold to make one ton of gold. The Hedley Gold Mine yielded 80 tons of gold during its lifetime—80 x 16 or 1,280 bars. That amount of gold would result in a cube of gold less than 6-feet square.

PENTICTON MUSEUM

MYRON KNOX RODGERS
Rodgers, working on behalf of Marcus Daly and James Ben Ali Haggin of Butte, Montana, brought the Hedley gold mine in production in 1904. Rodgers was perhaps the greatest mine finder in both North and South America.

COURTESY MARILYN L. (MRS. GENÉ) MORRIS NÉE PROBERT

This ore car, made by John Hudson Limited of Leeds, Englands, is exhibited near the entrance to the Hedley Historical Museum.

Many seasoned miners came to check out the new camp and look for any areas that had not yet been recorded. Cahill combed the mountain and discovered 40 acres that had been missed by the other Argonauts. Once strapped for cash, George sold the claim to Duncan Woods for a reported $15. Woods' 40 acres would over time be whittled down to 8 and 6/10 acres and be called the Mascot Fraction—in time to become the richest gold producing claim in British Columbia—but that's the second half of the history of the Hedley mines.

With the property proving very satisfactory in Marcus Daly's eyes, he authorized the funds for the building of stamp mill and reduction plant. Unfortunately Daly died in 1900 and his assets went into his estate.

Rodgers wanted to build a stamp mill and reduction plant as soon as possible along the side of the mountain just to the southeast of the Hedley Camp. His first stumbling block was with the Chuchuwayha First Nations who happened to have a reserve on the property that Rodgers so desperately needed. The mine finder dealt directly with both the Dominion and Provincial Departments of Indian Affairs but progress was extremely slow. Eventually Rodgers swapped 200 acres for 300 acres of suitable grazing land with the First Nations. Although Chief Charlie Squalkim and most of the First Nations braves seemed all right with the exchange, Medicine Man Cosatasket and other braves of the Chuchuwayhas of Sixteen Mile Creek were angry and placed a curse on the palefaces for annexing their ancestral lands.

Later Rodgers went ahead and built a large stamp mill, concentrating plant, cyanide plant, office, assay office, a hydroelectric ore haulage road and all the accessories for a complete mine and milling operation. He also had built an electric ore haulage road and incline tramway. This tramway was the longest of its type in the world. It was nearly two miles long and the difference in elevation between the terminals was 3600-feet. There was also a flume for the hydroelectric plant about three-miles long. The reduction plant was built on the side of a hill above the town of Hedley and about 4,000-feet lower than the mine in elevation.

The logistics of setting up the mine were enormous. The first challenge was to bring supplies from Fairview [near Oliver] on a switchback trail to the site of the original discovery. Later the trail was upgraded to a freight route to the Nickel Plate mine.

A second freight route was also built from Penticton to Hedley Camp

GOMER P. JONES TRENCHING FOR GOLD FLAKES ATOP NICKEL PLATE MOUNAIN, CIRCA 1902-1905
HEDLEY HISTORICAL MUSEUM SOCIETY PHOTO#1702 PHOTOGRAPY BY HARRY D. BARNES

at the base of the mountains. F.A. Heinze of Butte, Montana, came to Trail in 1895 and obtained a contract to process ore from the rich LeRoi Mine in Rossland. The B.C. government soon granted him a charter to build a narrow-gauge railway between his smelter at Trail Landing and the mine at nearby Rossland. The charter also permitted Heinze to build a standard-gauge line from Trail to Penticton

Although the CPR were building branch lines into other mining camps in B.C., Rodger's former boss, James J. Hill, had decided to run one of his branch lines from Spokane and Oroville and purchase the Vancouver, Victoria and Eastern Railway, a subsidiary of the Great Northern Railway. This line reached Penticton in 1907 and Hedley in 1909.

One of the first steps that Rodgers took was to hire Gomer Philip Jones. Born in Australia, GP started mining at the age of 14 and by attending night school earned his chemical engineering degree before he was 21. He later received a mining engineering degree from the Bendigo School of Mines in the State of Victoria, Australia. In 1892 Jones went to New York where he operated a bicycle shop. Rodgers tracked him down there and in 1900, leaving his wife and infant child in New York; GP arrived at the Nickel Plate as the Mine Superintendent.

During the entire development stage of the mine, Rodgers seemed to have confidence that he had located

EXECUTIVE STAFF AT THE HEDLEY GOLD MINE, 21 AUGUST 1908.

Back Row left to right: S. L. Smith, Mine Accountant; J. Gordon, Assistant Accountant; Gomer Phillip Jones, Mine Superintendent; Frank Bragg, Store Keeper and Time Keeper

Front Row left to right: Wesley Percy Rodgers, brother of Myron Knox Rogers, Mine Manager and Surveyor; Myron Knox Rodgers, General Manager; and Harry D. Barnes, Purchasing Agent.

HEDLEY HISTORICAL MUSEUM SOCIETY PRINT#1677 PHOTOGRAPHY BY HARRY D. BARNES 108

a great mine. A most remarkable incident took place at this time. Rodgers went over the property carefully noting the geography and then placed himself on a particular spot and exclaimed, "There should be great body of ore under here." He constructed a tunnel towards this place and struck the richest body of ore—assaying $1000 gold per ton of ore.

Rodgers offered Wollaston and Arundell $60,000 for only four claims with a $1,000 non-refundable deposit when first taken to the site of discovery. A story exists that just prior to the expiration of the bond that Arundell heard nothing about the results of Rodger's inspection of the claims and the prospector was beginning to feel pessimistic. One day he was passing the bank when he was tapped on the shoulder. Turning around, he was surprised to see Rodgers, who said he wanted to complete payment on the deal. Rodgers told Arundell that he wanted a couple of other nearby claims as well and instead of giving him a cheque for $59,000 gave him a cheque for $79,000. A few years later Woolaston and Arundell sold Rodgers the Iron Duke Fraction, Silver Plate, Copper Plate, Woodland and other claims for another reputed $60,000. Between 1900 and 1905 Rodgers acquired adjacent claims from other prospectors that included the Mound, Coppercleft, Climax, the I.X.L. and the Exchange Fraction.

In 1912 the Hedley Gold Mining Company acquired the Windfall, Morning, Bighorn, Czar and Winchester Fraction. The cost of these new claims was reported at $131,000.

According to Harry Barnes, in his publication 'The Nickel Plate 1898-1932' "The staff at the Nickel Plate mine in those early years of development consisted of M.K. [Myron Knox] Rodgers, general manger; Wesley P. Rodgers, a brother of M.K. Rodgers, mine manager and surveyor; Gomer P. Jones, who came to the Nickel Plate in August 1900, mine superintendent; and Frank Bragg, store-keeper and timekeeper. About the time the option was taken up on the four original claims a British Columbia charter was obtained for the Yale Mining Company, which became the holding and operating company. A few years later, when it was decided to build mill at Hedley, it was found that the Yale Mining Company's charter was not broad enough to provide for the building of tramways and power-flumes, or for the expropriation of land for right-of-way. Consequently, a second company, the Daly Reduction Company Limited, was incorporated, and a British Columbia charter obtained for it early in 1903. It became the operating company for both the mine and the mill, the Yale Mining Company existing thereafter only as a holding company."

In 1900 Marcus Daly passed away and the Hedley Gold Mine went into the Daly estate. In 1904-05 Rodgers undertook to drive an audit—called the No. 4 tunnel—with the portal or entrance 5,600-feet above sea level to cut into the gold-rich ore body. The tunnel went into the mountain 1,160-feet.

In the spring of 1909 the Daly estate gave an option on their

ASSAYER'S FURNACE

This assayer's furnace was made by the Morgan Crucible Company of Battersea, England, and used at the Nickel Plate Mine in Hedley. Assayers analyze the composition of the ore samples to determine the quantity, quality, and value of precious metals contained within the sample. Assayer's furnaces such as this are used to heat ore samples to very high temperatures, causing the metals to separate from the encasing rock and other impurities, and so can be extracated and evaluated.

PENTICTON MUSEUM

COUNTER-WEIGHT

PENTICTON MUSEUM

BUCKET

PENTICTON MUSEUM

holdings in Nickel Plate to a New York syndicate headed by the Isaac L. Merrill, president of U.S. Steel. Merrill had taken over the control of the largest business in the United States after the death of founder John Pierpont Morgan. The new owners called their holdings the Hedley Gold Mining Company Limited and Gomer Jones was made General Superintendent while Roscoe Wheeler of Oakland, California, was engaged as Mill Superintendent.

In 1914 M.K. Rodgers, accompanied by Mrs. Rodgers and their children Edwin and Margaret, along with Myron' brother Joseph Henry 'Harry' and a Miss Taylor of New York made a trip from the east to the west coast in a large Pierce Arrow car. According to the papers Rodgers was "virtually a scout for the members of President [Woodrow] Wilson's cabinet. Rodgers visited a number of mining camps in Colorado, Utah, Montana and British Columbia. At the end of the 6,000-mile trip Rodgers wrote a letter to the Honorable Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C. A portion o0f his letter was as follows: "In British Columbia I inspected the property of the Granby Consolidated Mining, Smelting & Power Company Limited of which I am a director. The plant smelts 3,400 tons of copper ore per day yielding less than 1 per cent copper per ton, in blister copper, at a cost of $1.28 per ton, of which cost 85 cents is for coke. This is the cheapest copper smelting done in the world today.

At Hedley I spent three weeks at the property of the Hedley Gold Mining Company (a gold mining company I opened up and equipped about ten years ago, when associated with the late Marcus Daly and am still interested in the property). The property is one of the largest steady gold producers in Canada, and has yielded about $6,000,000 gold in the past ten years, of which 50 per cent has been profit. This property was found after I had travelled for three years hunting a mine over the United States, Mexico, Alaska, Australia and Tasmania; travelling over 135, 000 miles and examining over four hundred mining properties.

This property has paid over 200 per cent in profits and pays yearly 30 per cent dividends on its capital stock.

While the auto trip ended in Seattle, I had to travel 800 miles further up the Alaska Coast to Anyox, Britsh Columbia (where I am writing this letter) near Portland Canal, Alaska; to the new copper plant of the Granby Consolidated Mining, Smelting & Power Company, Ltd. where this company has just completed a new copper smelter with a capacity of 2,0000 tons per day, and

EXECUTIVE STAFF AT THE HEDLEY GOLD COMPANY MINE, 1909.

Back row left to right: H. G. Freeman; William Sampson; Thomas Dickson; I. O. Merrill, son of President; and Harry D. Barnes, Purchasing Agent

Front row left to right: Arthur Clare; Gilbert Mceachern, Electrician; Roscoe Wheeler; Benjamin Wallis Knowles; Gomer Phillip Jones, Mine Manager; S.L. Smith, Accountant; E. H. Williams; and Isaac L. Merrill, President.

HEDLEY HISTORICAL MUSEUM SOCIETY PHOTO#0376

have expended over $4,000,000 on the mine and smelting plant and have on reserves over 10,000,000 tons of commercial copper ore. I took hold of this property fifteen years ago, and have some pleasure now in seeing it developed into one of the largest copper producing mines in the world."

In the fall of 1916 Myron was negotiating the purchase of a building

in Los Angeles with an asking price of $1,000,000. During this same time period Myron had plans drawn up for the construction of a large new home at Puente, California on the 15-acre place that he had purchased. He later built a mansion on an adjacent piece of property.

Many of Rodger's closest friends and business associates were the wealthiest mining men in North America: John Pierpont Morgan; Meyer Guggenheim; Marcus Daly; William A. Clark and Colonel William Boyce Thompson. Daly, the copper king from Butte, Montana, traveled with Rodgers and entertained him extensively.

Other men of influence included President Woodrow Wilson; James W. Girarard, a former Ambassador to Germany, Gifford Pinchot, lumber baron and later Governor of Pennsylvania; Dwight Morrow, an associate of J.P. Morgan and fomer ambassador to Mexico.

Rodgers was well on his way to becoming one of the wealthiest mining men in North America had not Bright's Disease [kidney failure] taken his life. He died on 23 July 1917 at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. The year before he died he told an acquaintance that he had $5,000,000 in cash [never mind the rest of his holdings in mining properties]. He left half of his $5,000,000 cash estate to his wife and the other half to his 10-year old daughter. His son was not included in his will. By a strange twist of fate, the mining partners, bankers and lawyers with whom Rodgers had entrusted his money and assets, absconded with his entire estate and the family were left with nothing.

In 1932 a meeting took place in the office of E.W. Wilson (the former president of the Anglo London & Paris National Bank of San Francisco. Those present were Margaret R. Horton, daughter of MK Rodgers; Nedd Joyner, her cousin; and Mr. Cook, Banker of Salt Lake City, Utah, and a director of the Utah Mining Company. He was an old friend of the Rodgers family. At the meeting Mr. Cook made the following remarks:

In the year 1916 Myron K. Rodgers told him he had about $5,000,000 cash in his possession that he wished to put away for safe keeping.

Myron K. Rodgers had talked to him at length on the subject of creating a trust.

After the above remarks, Mr. Cook was asked if this was all the money that Myron K. Rodgers had at that time. Mr. Cook answered that he did not know although it was generally understood that Mr. Rodgers was one of the wealthiest men of his day.

A MODEL 21 EIMO ROCKER SHOVEL LOADER WITH A CAPACITY FOR 10 CUBIC FEET SITS IN FRONT OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE HEDLEY MUSEUM.

The manual removal of rubble from blasting in underground hard-rock mines had long been recognized as time consuming, back breaking for the labourers, and costly. Many attempts to mdechanize the labourer's movements and work were unsuccessful until a revolutionary design was conceived by Edwin Burt Royle. He and John Spence Findlay developed a machine initially called an 'Overshot Loader' that worked within the confines of low and narrow tunnels. The two men were employees of Daly's Anaconda Copper Mine in Bute, Montana.

These two men devoted spare time prior to 1931 to develop a mechanized shovel that copied the movements of a human 'mucker'—the laborer who revoved the rubble or muck. Their machine had a heavy bucket attached to a rail car by two moveable rocker arms. The car had air-powered wheels to move the machine into the rubble and a second air-motor to raise the loaded bucket and propel it rearward causing the muck to be thrown into a rail car. Compressed air was used extensively in underground mining. A worker at the side of a machine operated the bucket by manipulating two controls. One control operated the air-mor while the other operated the bucket's travel.

Royle and Finlay's employer, Anaconda, had invested money in the invention but had given it up as a profitable venture. Ingersoll Rand was invited to develop the machine but they had no interest investing in research and development during the Great Depression.

About 1931 Joseph Rosenblatt, President of EIMCO Corporation in Salt Lake City, met Finlay and Royle and was intriged with its potential. By 1934 the Rosenblatt family had committed to invest in the development of the machine.

The Eimco Rocker Shovel was a tremendous success and paid a handsome royalty to the inventors on the thousands of machines that were sold (29,000 by 1969). The EIMCO Rocker Shovel Loader provided the means for the for a significant boost in mineworker productivity. Its acceptance was instant and many mining companies purchased ten or more at a time.

United States Investor: 19 February 1910

AN ENVIABLE RECORD

Albert E. Pennell

"There are few people in this country who have not heard of J.B. [James Ben Ali] Haggin, Marcus Daly or W.R. [William Randolph] Hearst. These men have been connected with successful mining interests and have been made very wealthy through the operations of the different mines with which they have been associated.

It is stated by people who know that Mr. [Lloyd] Tevis' net profits in Anaconda were about $4,000,000 and afterwards Messrs. Haggin and Daly sold the property to the Standard Oil people for $35,000,000. W.R. Heart got hold of the Homestake for Haggin and Mr. Daly acquired the Anaconda mine and was associated with Haggin, Hearst and Tevis in the property. The question arises, how these men succeeded in obtaining so many valuable mining properties. It was not their money for other investors have lost vast sums in mining during the time they were operating successfully. Mr. Haggin does not personally visit his great mining properties once in ten years, and some he has never seen. These men acquired the Homestake, Anaconda, Ontario and all their great mines by the personality and experience of men of long practical training associated with them. One of the men, to whom we refer, is Myron K. Rodgers of Seattle, Washington, who has been remarkably successful in his judgement of undeveloped properties in new mining camps.

Mr. Rodgers' History

Mr. Rodgers was with Marcus Daly for 17 years ultimately rising to the position of Chief Engineer of the Anaconda Mining Company. During that time he introduced the first Corliss hoisting engines into Butte and designed two Corliss compound hoisting engines of 2,500 horse power each, which have been in continuous operation for over 14 years. They are the largest and most economical hoisting machines west of the Mississippi River, hoisting a load of 50,000 pounds at a speed of 3,500-feet per minute.

After seven years' experience in the Anaconda mines, Haggin and Daly sent Rodgers out to look up another Anaconda mine, his contract covering North and South America, and an interest in any properties obtained. In three years he traveled over 130,000 miles and 13,000 miles in Mexaco alone, and examined over 400 mining properties from Alaska to Central America, covering nearly every mining camp in the United States and Mexico, and he now has more absolute knowledge than any other living man from personal examination of mining properties, especially copper mines, from Alaska to Mexico.

Investigated Over 400 Mines

Of the 400 properties examined by Mr. Rodgers, he reported favourably upon only five, and each of these properties has since turned out a bananza, proving the wisdom of Mr. Rodgers' judgement and showing his ability as a mining engineer to grasp a mine when it is a prospect with little or no development work, the Cananea copper mines in Sonora, Mexico, constituting one of the five. In 1897, Rodgers had a bond on practrically the whole Cananea copper camp, five miles long and one mile wide for $175,000. After a few month of development work, Mr. Daly gave instructions to close down the property, on account of dullness in copper. This property has since produced $50,000,000 in copper.

Another favourable report was made on mining property owned by the Granby Consolidated Mining, Smelting & Power Company of British Columbia, which is capitalized at $16,000,000.

The Nickel Plate mine, the largest gold mine in Canada, was acquired by Mr. Rodgers in 1898 while associated with Haggin and Daly, when it was a prospect, and only six weeks after its discovery and location when it had only a three-foot open cut. Mr. Rodgers developed the property, organized the Yale Mining Company, which now owns a group of 25 mining claims, and the Daly Reduction Company, owning the mill and cyanide plant, water power, tramway, etc. This property has produced $2,000,000 in gold in the last five years [1905-1910], with net profits of about $1,000,000 or 200 per cent on the capital stock. This property has just been acquired by the Exploration Syndicate, composed of members of the U.S. Steel Corporation.

The other property reported favourably upon was the Para mine near Etzatlan Jalisco, Mexico, which has been a bonanza the last three years. The present capitalization of these five properties is about $90,000,000.

In all his 20 years of active mining operations, Mr. Rodgers has never yet had a lawsuit and has even yet to enter a courtroom

An Exploration Syndicate

When the proper time arrives, Mr. Rodgers will probably form an exploration syndicate to take over properties he controls, and acquire mines at first hand, along the lines so successfully followed by Haggin and Daly.

The foregoing gives a good idea of the value of such a man with the theoretical as well as the practical knowledge of all that pertains to mining. Added to this is the fact that he stands high in the estimation of the financial world in which he is located, and does not ask investors to put money into anything in which he is not willing to invest his own money.

Mr. Rodgers is strong personality, and investors can, with confidence, communicate with him with a view to participating in his Exploration Syndicate. His offices are in the American Bank building, Seattle, Washington.

A plaque at west Hedley with information about 'Hedley—Famous for Gold'. The original sign read: 'Gold in Nickel Plate' From the heart of this mountain, men took $47,000,000 in gold. It started in 1904 when Hedley boomed with the opening of the mill in town and the Nickel Plate Mine on the mountain-top. The nearby Hedley Mascot Mine, on a claim of less than an acre, mined a fortune. Finally, in 1955 the great ore body of gold, silver and copper was exhausted."

THE RUINS OFMYRON KNOW ROGER'S HEDLEY GOLD MINE'S 40-STAMP MILL AND CYANIDE PLANT

Designed and built by Myron Knox Rogers, hydro-electric generators produced the power to a daily milled output of tons ans tons of ore. At the top level of the complex huge crushers broke rough ore into fist-sized chunks. A step below forty 10-stamps broke the and the resultant fine mixture was passed through fine screens. Then it dropped onto vanners, oscillating six-foot-wide belts thaat winnowed out the residue. The gold went into amalgamation pans to be cooked eight hours with mercury and other and other chemicals before being tranferred into settling tanks out of which the tailings were flushed. The poisoned tailing ponds eventually had to be cleaned.

A FLY IN THE OINTMENT

By David Gregory, President Okanagan Historical Society & Jennifer Douglass, Hedley Museum Secretry

Hand-carved stakes such as this claim marker were set up by early prospectors to identify and delineate the boundaries of their mining claims. Once purchased, a mining claim granted the buyer the exclusive rights to explore for an extract minerals from a tract of land.

The Oro Plata claim post (L387S) consisted of 19.5 hectares (40 acres) and was located 1.5 kilometers southwest of the Mascot Fraction. The claim had no reported historic gold production. This claim post appears to have been made from jack pine.

Mining claims in the early days were much

Duncan Woods, a relentless prospector, was a lone wolf who had wandered all through the Old West. Finally, after two decades of dedicated searching he located one of the richest mineral claims in BC, a discovery that eventually yielded a Midas hoard of gold.

In 1898 when Woolaston and Arundel, two inexperienced English prospectors, accidentally made the first astonishing discovery of free gold in red rusty ore near the mile high level at the top of a steep mountain called Nickle Plate, that find electrified the mining world. Within months, hundreds of prospectors and tramp miners were streaming into the remote Similkameen Valley from all parts of the West.

And close on their heels came the mine-makers, American financiers from Spokane and the Inland Empire; English bankers from the great investment houses of London and a handful of Canadian speculators from the distant eastern provinces – all with their eyes fixed on Nickle Plate Mountain – and all envisioning another bonanza like the Noble Five – Silver King, War Eagle, Le Roi, Centre Star or a galaxy of other renowned mines that had been found in southern British Columbia.

But the mining magnates were not alone in their quest. There were others there too focusing on the prize and equally determined to get their share. Among these hundreds of hopefuls camped along the banks of Twenty Mile Creek was the enigmatic Duncan Woods. In his forties and with few resources remaining, his options were limited. His career had been depressing. A Canadian from Ontario, he had followed the elusive rainbow of prospecting since his twenties, first to the gold fields of the American West; to South Dakota, then to Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, but ill luck attended him every step of the way, so finally he turned toward the North Star and crossed the border in southern British Columbia. Once again, bad fortune marched with him, first in the Okanagan district and later in the mineral rich Boundary Country. But when whispers circulated through the mining camps that massive veins carrying spectacular quantities of gold had been found in the Similkameen Valley, once again he succumbed to the old urge and decided to try his hand in the new mining district.

By 1899 he was at Hedley, a ramshackle and booming mining camp tucked into a narrow canyon under the shadows of Nickle Plate Mountain. That fledging log cabin town was crackling with excitement when he arrived. A motley and colorful crowd milled along its busy streets where paupers brushed shoulders with princes of finance, clergymen with Cyprians, old hands with greenhorns, gamblers with drifters – they were all there caught up in the unforgettable drama of the stampede.

Nickle Plate Mountain, the key, had already been heavily staked. The nucleus of the claims around the original discovery, with names like Nickle Plate, Mound, Sunnyside, Copperfield, Morning and Iron Duke were surveyed – and were soon to become the illustrious Nickle Plate Mine. And in all directions from the main lode more than a hundred other claims had been staked. While Woods pondered his waning chances, he examined the claims map and noticed that there was a gap of open ground west of the discovery claims. Studying the mountain he saw that it was located on the western precipitous western cliffs the ground being almost vertical.

After weighing the possibilities, Woods decided to claim the unstaked ground on the off chance that the ore body from the rich Nickle Plate node might eventually trend westward. With his last few dollars he hired a sometimes packer named George H. Cahill to stake the Cliffside. The following day the ground was secured. Woods called the claim the 'Mascot' little realizing that it would ultimately play an historic role in the annals of mining in British Columbia.

By the early 1900s a steady stream of staggeringly rich gold ore was being shipped from the Nickle Plate mine

Duncan Woods standing beside his log cabin with the sod roof at Trout Lake, Summerland, no date.

SUMMERLAND MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

and when a forty stamp mill was built to process the ore in 1904, Hedley became a bona fide mining town. In that same year, however, several events occurred that affected the destiny of the camp for decades. The first was the realization by the Nickle Plate management that their ore body was not only massive, but that it was, as Woods had speculated, leading to the west towards the Mascot claim. The officers of the claims then made an unusual request. They asked the gold commissioner to resurvey all of the claims covering the Nickle Plate lode. It was a significant departure from accepted practice and foreshadowed the David and Goliath like struggle that would take place between the powerful mine management and the solitary prospector.

The government official granted their wishes and after the second survey had been completed Woods' worst suspicions were confirmed. His Mascot claim had, with the stroke of a pen, been reduced from 40 acres to barely 17 acres and the full claim had suddenly become a fraction. The first round had gone to the mighty Nickle Plate but their management compounded the situation by sending word to Woods that they would consider purchasing the Mascot Faction. It was a major error in judgement. They had underestimated the tenacity of Woods. He not only turned their offer down he vowed then and there to never ever sell his fraction to the Nickle Plate Mine owners.

As the years passed, the Nickle Plate Mine continued to make overtures to the obdurate Woods and he continued to turn them down. Every month the bullion bars were shipped out by stagecoach as the gold production increased steadily. By 1914, however, the mine's geologists knew that the main ore bodies led directly into the Mascot Fraction and that the fraction was bonanza ground. On the pretext of getting to ore on their Morning Claim, the powerful company asked permission from the gold commissioner to drive a tunnel through the Mascot Fraction. Corrupt officials granted this unheard of violation of mining law and the infuriated Woods was forced to stand by hopelessly as his gigantic adversary followed the rich vein into the heart of his fraction. The mine management then brazenly processed the rich ore through their mill and surrendered not one ounce of gold from Wood's fraction although somewhere between 5,000 and 10,000 ounces were stolen from the prospector. It was a thinly disguised theft sanctioned by legal authority.

Although virtually penniless, Woods hung on grimly, refusing to surrender his old rights to his precious Mascot claim. As the years passed, the Nickle Plate became one of the most illustrious mines in British Columbia and the golden it yielded inched up toward the one million troy ounce mark. Although its steady production resulted in impressive profits for its shareholders, the mine's shrewd management never lost interest in the Mascot Fraction and continued in their attempts, some legal, some illegal, to wrest the property from the old prospector. Woods, in turn, never wavered from his vow in 1904 and refused to even consider and proposals from the Nickle Plate. It was a classic stalemate between the singular prospector and the influential mining giant.

Eighteen year later, the price of gold was officially increased to $35 per ounce and mining activity across the province shot up dramatically and Nickle Plate Mountain and the Similkameen were among the magnets in the revival. In short order, a number of mining companies approached Woods with a confusing variety of deals for control of his fraction. Finally, in 1933, more than a third of a century after Woods had obtained his claim, he accepted an offer from a legitimate and newly incorporated company called Hedley Mascot Gold Mines Limited.

Woods, nearing 80 years of age, had finally triumphed over his old adversary. Woods, his long battle over, retired wealthy and respected. The Mascot went on to become one of the richest fractions in Canadian mining history and when it eventually ceased operation it had produced ten tons of pure gold in more than two decades of mining.

Nickel Plate Mountain claims were first staked in 1894 but it wasn't until 1899 that the mountain had the first producing lode (vein of metal ore) on the Similkameen. By 1899, the area was covered with claims and the town of Hedley (named for Robert R. Hedley, manager of the smelter at Nelson) began to develop.

Prospector Duncan Woods arrived in Hedley after much of Nickel Plate Mountain had already been claimed but he noticed that a small 40-acre portion had been missed. He claimed the land and named the fraction Mascot. In 1904 the Daly Reduction Company that operated the Nickel Plate Mine discovered that their main ore body angled into the claim that Woods had made and the superintendent, Gomer P. Jones, approached Woods to purchase it. Woods refused to sell then and as long as Jones was involved. However, Woods finally did sell his claim to a group from Vancouver and in 1933 they formed Hedley Mascot Gold.

In 1909 a New York company took over the Nickel Plate Mine, and a branch line of the Great Northern Railway was pushed through to Hedley. Between 1904 and 1930, when production lapsed briefly, 1.3 million tons of ore from Nickel Plate were mined and milled.

The John W. Mercer Exploration Company, later known as the Kelowna Exploration Company, purchased the mine in 1932 and again started gold production at the Nickle Plate Mine. In 1937, a 'mile-high' company town was enhanced on top of Nickel Plate Mountain. It later became a ghost town when the mine closed.

Just after it opened in 1936, the Hedley Mascot Mine ran into difficulties when rumours about its operation caused a severe stock decline. A Government investigation discovered that ore samples from the mine had been "salted" and the public had been given false information. The mine was taken over by the provincial government and one of the officials prosecuted. In 1955, the mine was officially closed.

The Mascot Gold Mine operated from 1936 to 1949. During this time 7.1 tonnes of gold was taken out. Ore from the mine was transported down the mountain to a mill on the valley floor using an aerial tramline. After the mine closed the buildings and tramway fell into dereliction.

From the 1950s through to 1986 the mines on Nickel Plate Mine Mountain were inactive. Then Mascot Gold Mines Ltd. began production from an open pit mine in 1987. Homestake Mining Company of San Francisco took over the ownership in 1992, but by 1996 ore reserves were exhausted and the company started to wind down its operations on Nickel Plate Mountain.

In the 1990s, the British Columbia government was going to burn the site down because it posed a safety risk, but Honourable Bill Barlee, then Minister of Tourism, intervened and, in 1995 allocated about $740,000 to assemble the various portions of the site and start a stabilization program on the wooden structures and decking. In 1998, following a public bidding process, the Upper Similkameen Indian Band (USIB) was given a contract to manage the site. Later, title to the site was transferred to the USIB which created the Snaza'ist Discovery Centre in Hedley to interpret the mine site and serve as a place to conduct tours to the mine, located almost one mile high overlooking Hedley. The USIB's goal is to turn the Hedley Mascot Gold Mine into a major heritage tourism destination along Highway 3 and to create jobs for the USIB and for the wider community.

FOLLOWING PAGES
The tramway for the Hedley Mine (in red) and the tramway for the Mascot Fraction (in red).

The beautifully restored Steam Ship Sicamous once graced the waters of Okanagan Lake taking passengers and cargo to communities all over the valley. Now it rests on the waterfront in Penticton as a Heritage Museum.

PENTICTON'S LAKESHORE MINE

Brass was the most common material for a spittoon—a receptacle made for spitting into, especially by users of chewing and dripping tobacco. Such containers were used on the steamships that plied Okanagan Lake.

COURTESY NARAMATA MUSEUM & ARCHIVES

Discovered by Arthur Day in 1886, the Lakeshore Mine was originally known as the Torpedo claim with sizeable copper and gold deposits.

Soon after its discovery, a syndicate of investors that included Captain Thomas Short, the first steamboat captain on Okanagan Lake, and cattle baron Thomas Ellis, Penticton's largest land owner, purchased the mine. The syndicate spent $4,000 on the development of the mine to dig a 30-foot shaft and a 90-foot tunnel. The Kettle Valley Railway was not built at the time the mine was started and all the equipment had to be brought down Okanagan Lake from Okanagan Landing (Vernon) by the Canadian Pacific Railway freight boat 'York'.

In 1889 the Vancouver and Boundary Diking and Mining Company took over operations and built a wharf, bunkhouse, engine house and installed a steam plant. This company sank another tunnel in the mine reaching over 100-feet below the lake. After all this work the low quality of the ore and the small size of the vein made the mine unable to support the high costs of extraction. It soon closed down.

In 1934 the mine was sold to the Riverside Mining Company. The company found an ounce of gold daily, worth about $15, that during the middle of the Great Depression was not bad pay.

In 1952 the mine changed hands again. W.J. Armstrong, K. Armstrong and J. Trombley dewatered the shaft and cleaned the workings and started operating the mine again. The ore was yielding between $18 and $24 a ton in gold, silver and copper. Because of the low yield, they needed a cheap freight system but the CPR would not grant them a railway spur so they quit operating. The following appeared in the 1952 Report of the Minister of Mines: "This mine is on the east shore of Okanagan Lake, approximately one mile northeast of Penticton city hall. It is an old property, including the Okanagan-granted claim, on which work has been done intermittently for about fifty years. The workings consist of an audit driven eastward about 90-feet from the lake-shore and a shaft 100-feet deep sunk from the adit level. On the 100-foot level, workings extend east and west. In the summer of 1952 W.J. Armstrong, K. Armstrong and J. Trombley unwatered the shaft and cleaned out the workings. Six tons of ore was mined from the lower level and shipped to the Trail smelter."

Like many early mines there was more investment went into this mine than ever came out of it.

This ore car, on display in front of the S.S. Sicamous, came from the Okanagan Lakeshore Mine. It was donated by the Trombley family.