

THE BRALORNE GOLD DISCOVERY

By the late Arthur (Bud) R. Ryckman,
businessman

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

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



AUSTIN COTTRELL TAYLOR (1889 - 1965)

COURTESY TAYLOR FAMILY

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.

BRALORNE, MINTO & PIONEER GOLD MINES

My first visit to the mines was in the summer of 1942, when, along with a friend, Frank Neyedli, we went to work underground in the Bralorne Mine. I don't recall how we managed to hear about the job opportunity – the Sloan family lived in our neighbourhood so we probably heard about it from one of the family members. Many of the mineworkers had left and joined the armed forces to fight in World War. Shipyards and other plants in the Vancouver area producing materials and equipment for the war kept all available workers employed. The result was that there was a shortage of workers and jobs were available at the Bralorne mine for anyone willing to do the work – if they had some way

of getting to the mine sight. We qualified because Frank happened to have a car – a 1928 model A Ford – with 2 spare tires and enough gasoline ration coupons to drive all the way from Vancouver to Lillooet. It was possible to travel to Lillooet by public transportation but since there was no road or railroad between West Vancouver and Squamish, the only way was to take the Union Steamship from Vancouver to Squamish, then the Pacific Great Eastern Railway to Lillooet. This would get us to Lillooet but not to Bralorne. As there was no transportation available from Lillooet to Bralorne we decided to go in the model A.

When Frank and I left for Bralorne, we departed Vancouver early in the morning, drove hard for two days by way of Chilliwack, Hope and Lytton to get to Lillooet. When we arrived at Lillooet, we were directed to load our car on to a P.G.E. Flatcar and we would be hauled to Shalath – a small whistle stop on the North Shore of Seton Lake where we would be unloaded from the train and be on our own. From Shalath, we had to drive over Mission Mountain to the Bridge River Valley, follow the Bridge River to Minto and then to Bralorne. The trip over Mission Mountain was the steepest, roughest road with the greatest amount of switchbacks that either of us had ever encountered. The gravel road was hard on tires so we were pleased to have 2 spare tires on board. We learned later that all of the gold bullion produced in the Pioneer and Bralorne and Minto Mines was shipped by truck over this torturous route and then transferred to the P.G.E. for delivery to Vancouver. The Mission Mountain Road and the P.G.E. were the only way to get in or out of the area for anyone working or visiting the communities of Bralorne, Minto and Pioneer. All of the tons of cable, steel, mining machinery and equipment, building materials, food, clothing and household goods had been brought into the area by this route. In the winter months, heavy snowfalls occurred on a regular basis and the railroad was often closed due to slides. The communities were then completely isolated, but the residents managed to cope very well despite the severity of the weather and the lack of transportation facilities.

When we finally arrived we learned that there were three separate mining operations located in the area. Minto Mines were the latest to start operations preceded by Bralorne and the original mine, the Pioneer. We were pleasantly surprised to see that there were 5 townsites with a combined total of seven bunkhouses, 147 homes, an apartment block, a hospital, barber shop, poolroom, library, theatre, swimming pool, recreation center, school, sawmill, two automobile service stations, a hydro electric plant and office buildings, plus cook houses & dining rooms for the mine workers. The townsites were: Bralorne number one and Bralorne number two, Bradian, Pioneer and Minto. Minto was the newest and probably best planned. It was built in 1934 under the direction of Big Bill Davidson, founder of the Minto Mine. Big Bill boasted about the fact that “his” town of Minto was the most up to date model community in the country.

After we arrived at the Bralorne Camp #1 we were shown where our bunks were located in the bunkhouse, the cookhouse and dining room and where we were to report to work. We were told that our job was mucking, that we should report to the lift at 7:30 in the morning. Work actually started at 8:00 but it would take the best part of half an hour to reach the 2800-foot level and then walk to the area where we would be working. The job of mucking was essentially shoveling the ore that the miners had blasted out. The routine that they followed was: the miners marked the area to be excavated, the diamond drillers bored the holes, the powder monkey set the charges and the blast was ignited to break the rock free. The muckers loaded the ore by hand and shovel into ore carriers – small rail cars mounted on tracks. It was tough, dirty and dangerous work, but at the time we thought it was great. Our pay was \$95.00 per month plus room and board with no deductions. We had no expenses so the \$95.00 was ours to keep.

My uncle, William Neily worked for many years as a machinist at Bralorne. He was very well informed in the history and development of all three of the mines located in The Bridge River Valley. On many occasions

I had the pleasure of listening to his stories regarding the history of the three mines, the communities and the residents who lived and worked there. Another friend and business associate was Frank W. Lees. Frank was in the process of writing a book on the history of mining in British Columbia when he passed away. He had a wealth of knowledge about the industry. Frank and I were on the board of directors of several B.C. junior mining companies so we had mutual interests and I took every advantage to listen to his historical renditions.

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. 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, a machine shop, store, 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 its 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. Boulton, 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.