

THE ATLIN GOLD RUSH OF 1898



THE TENT AND CABIN TOWN CALLED DISCOVERY AT NUGGET POINT ON PINE CREEK FIVE MILES FROM ATLIN IN 1899.

Paddle-wheels are being used to fill the sluices to get water to the piles of pay dirt that have accumulated along the creek's edge over the winter months. It would appear that water from other sources have been diverted to run the sluices on the tops of the hillsides.

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Fritz Miller, a German immigrant, and Kenneth McLaren, a Nova Scotian, had little difficulty locating Pine Creek where they quickly found the fortune they were seeking. Fritz's older brother George had come on a pack trip from Juneau, Alaska, and while a companion was cooking dinner he'd taken his gold pan and tested the gravels and found gold. Acting on George's tip, Fritz and Kenneth not only found gold on Pine Creek—they also discovered the remains of long abandoned flumes and old sluice boxes. The mystery still remains as to who panned Pine Creek before the rush of 1898. It's been speculated that the earlier working had been carried out by Russian prospectors. On July 27, 1898, Fritz presented himself before Captain D'Arcy Strickland of the Northwest Mounted Police at Taglish Lake to claim Discovery for McLaren and himself. The Pine Creek find resulting in the nearby town of Discovery with the town of Atlin coming into existence five miles away on Atlin Lake. The town was serviced with supplies by steam powered boats. The White Pass and Yukon Railroad, built to service the Yukon Gold Rush, also provided service to Atlin.

Placer gold was typically found by sinking shafts down to the bedrock but it was also found dispersed in the

gravel. Finding old stream beds where the gold was close to the surface was often a successful mining strategy. Most of the gold in the Atlin area was recovered by hydraulic mining that used huge amounts of water to wash away the overburden to get down to the placer gold on the bedrock.

An excerpt from 'Atlin The History of BC's Last Gold Rush': Perhaps the Guggenheim's huge success in gold mining resulted from knowing when to quit, yet from 1910 on, and for a number of years, the North Columbia Gold Mining Company worked the Guggenheim property with good overall results, the best year being 1913, when profits exceeded all other seasons. It was obvious that hydraulic mining was the best method for Pine Creek, and Ruffner's company used from 6 to 15 monitors at various times. In 1914 the companies were reorganized into Columbia Mines. They remained the largest interest in the creek, employing as many as 50 men, and consistently produced good values. In 1918 Ruffner's company, the Atlin Gold Mines, acquired the Guggenheim properties, and the remainder of the group was sold to Frank Henry Mobley and Louis Schulz, who named their company Discovery Mining and Power.

THE GOLDEN LOAF

A portion of an article from the 'Atlin Claim' dated July 15, 1899: "From the Eighty-three ounces, 5 pennyweights, 15 grains is the weight of the big piece of gold taken out of Spruce Creek at 126 below by W. West and B. Haffernnen, owners of the claim, at 11:30 o'clock on Saturday morning [July 12, 1899]. The big lump had been named "The West", and to give an idea of what it looks like, just take a loaf of bread, cut it in two and there you have its counterpart in size, though not in value. There is considerable quartz in its makeup.

The lump attended divine service in the Bank of Commerce building the day following its liberation from the now famed claim on Spruce, and no doubt familiarized itself with its future abode, for it passed down the long counter and then passed back again keeping this up for hours...

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HARRIE C. BARLEY FONDS

