

# Mining in the 'Good Old Days' Recounted through Use of State Mining Journals

What types and varieties of mines existed in Idaho territory at the turn of the century?

Thanks to a publication from Duffie Miller, Elk City, we have in our possession a department of the Interior report labeled, "Gold, Silver, Copper, Lead, and Zinc in the Western States and Territories in 1909." It is entitled, "Mine Production."

1908  
The county's deep mines turned out 7,268.54 fine ounces of gold in 1908, valued at \$159,254, while turning out 2,598 ounces of silver, valued at \$5,071 and 233 pounds of copper valued at \$31.

In contrast, placer mines turned out 2,064.64 fine ounces of gold valued at \$2,680, and 339 fine ounces of silver valued at \$180. Total value of these minerals in 1908 was \$198,216.

1909  
In 1909, deep mines increased their gold production, with 8,546.51 fine ounces of gold, valued at \$176,672, with 7,155 ounces of silver, valued at \$3,721, the latter being a decrease. No copper was mined.

Placers in 1909 mined 3,802.62 ounces of gold, valued at \$28,540, and 266 ounces of silver, valued at \$138.

Total mineral production in 1909 was at \$209,671.

The mining publication goes on to explain conditions existing in Idaho County mines at the time, and we quote from it:

"There were 9 mills in operation in Idaho County in 1909, all of which used amalgamation, two used concentration, and the cyanide process. As these mills were worked only for short periods, only 25,765 tons of ore were treated. There were 57 producing properties, including 40 placers. These mines produced gold valued at \$294,212 and 7,421 ounces of silver, valued at \$3,859, an increase of \$12,276 in gold.

The county ranked third as a gold producer, nearly 16 percent of the gold product being derived from placers and the remainder from siliceous ore. "Big Creek District-Bullion was shipped from the Moscow Mine, ore being run through a single-stamp mill.

"Dixie District-The Diamond Consolidated Mines Company made mill tests with an old 4-stamp mill. Placer gold was taken from the Bentley and Eakin Mines.

"Elk City District from 9 placers, and 3 deep mines, the district produced \$178,036 in gold and 7,069 ounces of silver. Placer producers were the Golden Rule, Gold Hill, Erickson, and Bed Rock Mines. At the intersection of a American River and Elk Creek two new Hammond dredges were built, but not operated because of cold weather prevented work. The first was for the Elk City Dredging Company, on the American River, and the second for the Jennings Dredging Company, on Little Elk Creek. The Buster mine was the largest producer of the county. A 10-stamp mill and 40-ton cyanide plant were operated until November, when work ceased. Bullion was shipped for eleven months, and concentrate and precipitate were sent to Tacoma. The American Eagle group was only productive in a small way through leases. The South Fork mine, 8 miles from Elk City, was an important producer the last half of the year. A large amount of work was done on many properties in the district.

"Florence District-A small amount of placer gold was taken out of the Buttercup and Tipple placers.

"Marshall Lake District-The Good Enough mine, which produced bullion in 1907, remained idle, and the Mount Marshall Mining Company, which erected a 6-stamp Merritt mill in 1907 and did much development, has produced nothing.

"Newsums district-Three deep mines and five placers produced gold valued at \$6,272 and 41 ounces of silver. The Newsome and Leggett Creek placers were operated, but produced little. The old Montana placers consist of 750 acres of gravel, which is said to average 10 cents per cubic yard. Preparations for operations on a large scale were in progress. Four hydraulic giants are on the ground. The Iron Crown produced bullion from a 6-ton amalgamation mill.

"Orogrande district-Development and mill construction only were done in this district in 1909. Progress was made at the Twin Buttes mine, which equipped with a 50-ton Chilian mill. A cyanide plant and tramway were added in 1909.

"Robbins district-The Cracker Jack, in the Buffalo Hump country, 75 miles from Stites, was acquired by the Mines Company (Limited), of Spokane, and a small production was made in testing ore. The old 10-stamp mill was operated part of the year, before being dismantled and replaced by a new 20-stamp mill. The Jumbo mine was idle.

"Simpson District-Gold valued at \$3,152 and 15 ounces of silver came from Lucile, from the Cave, Great Nugget, and Dandy mines on Salmon River.

"Salmon River district-From this district, which adjoins the Simpson district on the north, and from points near Salmon River, \$2,585 in gold and 10 ounces of silver were mined from the Monarch, Malone, Horseshoe Bend and Burgund placers.

"Thunder Mountain district-There was a production of \$2,439 in placer gold, just from Thunder Mountain District in 1909. The Venable Bonding and Leasing Company treated a small amount of ore.

"Warren District-The production of Warren district was \$8,728 in gold and 116 ounces of silver. The Gott, Golden Eye, Tiggan, and Shissler Creek mines were producing placers. The Golden Rule mine greatly decreased its output. The White Monument, Little Giant, Skulark, and Wain mines were quartz producers."

1910  
From the same federal publication from 1910, we find that the output of gold and silver in Idaho County declined by \$144,244 from the previous year.

"The publication explains: 'The output of gold and silver in Idaho County was unusually low in 1910, with decreases from both placer and deep mines. The Buster Mine, the largest producer in 1908 and 1909, was idle in 1910. There were 20 producing deep mines, from which 6,351 tons of ore were treated, with an average value of \$7.30 per ton. There was a decrease in ore output in 19,414 tons in 1910. All the ore was siliceous, and was treated in 16 gold and silver mills, the value per ton being entirely that of bullion.'

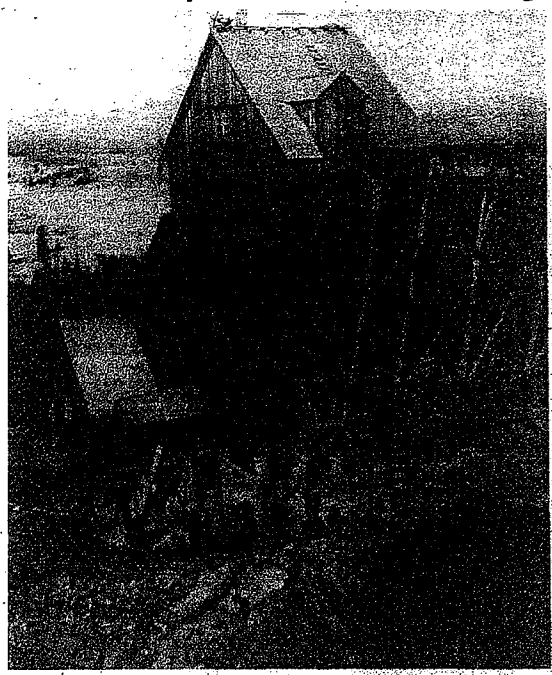
"Big Creek District-From the Moscow mine, near Edwardsburg, bullion was shipped.

"Camp Howard district-Four placers supplied \$708 in gold and 4 ounces of silver in 1910.

"Clearwater district-From near Koskia and Clearwater a placer product valued at \$550 was gained.

"Dixie district-Three placers produced \$468 in gold and 2 ounces of silver.

"Elk City District-From 9 deep mines and 9 placers, \$37,533 in gold and 1,435 ounces of silver were produced. This is a larger number of deep mines than



THE OLD HUSTER MILL, near Elk City. This mine even had a baseball team which played the Elk City team.—Photo Courtesy Foster Morgan.

that of 1909, but the largest producer, the Buster, was idle, causing a large decrease in the output of gold. Placers produced \$3,005 in gold and 33 ounces of silver. The South Fork mine, the largest producer in 1910, was operated most of the year by the Elk City Mines Corporation.

Bullion was shipped from a 5-stamp mill, and concentrate was made, but not marketed. Some bullion was also shipped from the American Eagle mine and from the Grangeville property, which was equipped with a 5-stamp mill. The Penn-Dixie Gold Mining Co. built a 4-stamp mill and made various tests throughout the year. The two dredges of the district were operated but little. Some notes on the Elk City district were published in the Mining world of January 9, 1910.

"Florence district-There was a placer production of \$417 in gold and 7 ounces of silver in 1910.

"Marshall Lake District-The Shamrock placer made a small production.

"Newsums district-Four placers and 3 deep mines produced \$3,219 in gold and 31 ounces of silver, of which \$1,953 in gold and 11 ounces of silver came from placers. The Iron Crown, the NIP, and the Virginia were producing quartz mines, and the Newsome, the Leggett Creek, and the Hill Top were the largest placer operators.

"Orogrande district-The Idaho-Champion, Iola, and Twin Butte, deep mines produced \$727 in gold and 21 ounces of silver. Work was largely development.

"Robbins district-At the Cracker Jack mine construction of a 20-stamp mill was completed and a shot run was made in the fall. A few tons of concentrate were made, but not sold. The Jumbo mine, idle for two years, was leased in July and a slight production was made from the 60-ton mill.

"Salmon River district-From placers along Salmon River gold valued at \$766 and 6 ounces of silver was saved.

"Simpson district-Gold valued at \$1,548 and 6 ounces of silver were taken from 7 small placer operations.

"Twin Mile district-The Tipple placer, 7 miles from Newsome, was a producer in 1910.

"Thunder Mountain district-This region was unproductive except for slight surface work.

"Warren district-Two deep

mines and 9 placers produced \$8,159 in gold and 120 ounces of silver. The Gott and Golden Rule mines supplied placer gold valued at \$6,990 with 67-ounces of silver, and the White Monument mine produced bullion in a 3-stamp mill."

1912  
Miller also was kind enough to lend us state publications involving mining. The Fourteenth Annual Report of the Mining Industry in Idaho, for 1912, shows that Idaho County mined 2,706 fine ounces of gold, valued at \$55,809, and 1,162 ounces of silver, valued at \$697 for a total in the county of \$56,496.

The report says of the Big Creek district, "Between Brofile Gap and the North Fork of Smith Creek in a course almost due north and south, there exists one of the most pronounced and richly mineralized ore zones that has ever been discovered."

The report mentions the Gold King, Lauffer and Davies and the Moore groups.

It also discusses the Independence mine, saying, "The Independence being on a large group of claims of that name, carries a bold outcropping on the steep mountainsides on which it occurs for fully a mile in length. It has been penetrated with a cross cut tunnel fully 215 feet long, and an apparent hanging wall of andesite porphyry with a wide clay gouge may prove on further cross-cutting to a more recent dike."

"Samples gave from \$4 to \$5 per ton in gold and silver.

"South of the Independence group about two miles in the Gold King Mines, of which the report says gold exists from \$5 to \$20 per ton.

In the Lauffer and Davis Mine, adjacent to the Independence Base vein the Moscow mine is mentioned.

"The Marshall Lake district is also mentioned, with the most active operation being the Mount Marshall Mines Company, Limited. "The Marshall Lake District with its many splendid prospects of high grade gold ore, still remains an attractive field for leasing operations and modest investments in mining development," the report says.

The report says, "The Elk City District, on the South Fork of the Clearwater River, enjoyed considerable activity in 1912, in the way of mining development and

that is said to have given excellent results and promises to prove of great value to this and adjacent districts in the economic solution of their metallurgical problems.

"Three miles east of Elk City of Kirk's Fork, the Mascot Mine was operated with a small force of men and made some millruns in 3/4 feet of hanging metal. The Little Butte Mine, south of Elk City, also operated a one stamp mill, and the Last Chance mine made several runs with a 2 stamp mill on its property north of town.

"In the Dixie District, on the Salmon River Slope, the Majestic Gold and Silver Mining Company and the Penn-Dixie were both operated during the year in a development way.

An interesting mining revival occurred in the Buffalo Hump District during the year. The Jumbo Mine operated 10 of its stamps and employed a force of 30 men under a new ownership, and the management at the close of the year anticipated on being able to supply an increased milling capacity, as the property is equipped with a 30 stamp mill conveniently situated to the mine. The Hump District has some powerful fissure veins that can be traced for long distances and give evidence of several large ore shoots with good values, but the extraction of the values has not been very satisfactory so far and it is to be hoped that the new process now being tried out at Elk City will prove effective in extracting the values of this district."

1914  
The report for 1914 was brief, showing Idaho County producing 2,346 ounces of gold, valued at \$46,567, and 1,012 ounces of silver, valued at \$625.93, with 40,000 pounds of copper produced for a price of \$5,400.

"Outside of Coeur d'Alene, the other mining districts of the state experienced an extremely dull year in the matter of development and ore production," the report simply says.

However, it talks about "Mineral Lumber," explaining, "...One of the most interesting results of the past year in our mineral industry was the development of a process to utilize some extensive resources of short fibre asbestos, situated on state land at a point about 12 miles north of Kamiah near the line between Idaho and Clearwater counties. At this place an ingenious German has invented a simple method of pulping, washing and forming this high heat resisting mineral into commercial lumber shapes and a \$20,000 plant is being installed for the purpose of treating this mineral and the production of a really fire-proof building material, among which one of the specialties is a shingle for roofing purposes that can almost compete with the common red cedar shingle in price. These products are flexible and almost as easily handled and worked with carpenter's tools as organic lumber forms and the enterprise promises to be the nucleus of a big industry, for the superiority of a really fire-proof and unburnable mineral lumber at anything like ordinary lumber prices can readily be appreciated."

In the Big Creek District, "Several expert examinations were made of the big low grade gold ore deposits of the Big Creek District in Idaho County which resulted in some favorable average values being obtained," the report says, speculating that, we shall ultimately develop a big center of gold mining and production in this Big Creek district that may largely discount the present total annual gold yield of the state."

"The Bengal Group, southeast of Elk City, was also being worked, employing a few men on development, and some test runs of its ores were made by a new process at the Lent Elk City Reduction Works

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Also, "Considerable activity was manifested in the gold placer resources from a dredging standpoint in the vicinity of Warrens and Resort, on the road to Big Creek; these placers are also rich in monazite, and at Warrens the old Rescue vein was successfully developed at a new deep level, where a shoot of high grade gold ore encountered and is being drifted upon. This development has greatly stimulated interest in the numerous ore veins in the Warrens district and will doubtless mean further exploration and development of these interesting deposits. Some activity was also manifested on the adjacent Marshall Lake district, which has a reputation for phenomenally rich specimen gold ore as well as some very high average values."

1916  
For 1916, Idaho County produced 4,841 fine ounces of gold, valued at \$96,820 and 2,200 ounces of silver, valued at \$1,444, for a total value of \$98,264.

In this issue, the writer, Robert N. Bell, state mine inspector, says, "The Marshall Lake district, in Idaho County, which I have annually advertised as a likely source of gold mining profits for the past ten years, has demonstrated the virtues of this prediction during the past season as a result of the intelligent activities of Mr. L.C. Holt, an experienced Alaska operator. Mr. Holt took an option on one of the promising veins of that district about a year ago, demonstrating a great persistency of the deposit with 500 feet of adit tunnel drifting work; built a wagon road connection to the property; built a sawmill to cut his own lumber and a quartz mill of twenty-five tons daily capacity, which in a month's operation subsequent to starting the mill, produced enough gold bullion to pay for the mine and the entire cost of equipment and maintained an ore reserve in the mine estimated at a quarter of a million dollars in value.

"This remarkable deposit of early gold ore is well known as the Fox and Brigg Mine. I am reliably informed that its ore gives an average value of \$50 per ton in free gold on plates with an additional recovery of twenty to thirty dollars per ton on the tables, affording a concentrate that will run several hundred dollars per ton in gold."

Talking about the Janson Mine, Bell says, "At Crowds Creek, about twenty miles east of Edwardsburg, the Janson Mine developed a shoot of free gold ore in a fissure vein in granite, traceable at the surface in a succession of shallow openings for fully a mile. This shoot has been drilled to 150 feet and was from two to four feet wide at the time of my visit during the summer. The face displayed nearly five feet of heavy sulphide bearing quartz. It was said to average \$100 per ton in gold, and has produced and still displayed in the face, some magnificent native gold specimen ore, individual pieces of which had recently been taken out equal to anything ever found in Idaho. The property is equipped with a light one stamp mill which was being further added to with a small arrastra for grinding the concentrate, and the property gives promise of a decidedly profitable gold vein with further development and larger milling equipment."

About Big Creek lodes, Bell says, "Quite a little interest was manifested during the year in the big low grade ore belt that crosses the upper drainage tributaries and extends over to Profile Creek. Some substantial development was carried on

through a new deep tunnel on the Gold King group that demonstrated the continuation of values to a considerable further depth than formerly. What appears to be one of the most important discoveries yet made on this belt was reported, late in the fall, from Logan Creek, on the Shannessy-Nashkin group, lying between the Moscow and Lauffer-Davis properties, where values of ten to thirty ounces silver and five to ten dollars gold was disclosed in a lode that appears to be persistent for hundreds of feet up the steep canyon side and is described as three to ten feet wide of the value given."

"The importance of this discovery is the fact that it is the lowest point of exposure of this big mineral belt, closer to the canyon bottom than any other important development, and affords a strong indication, to say the least, that the values in this big lode zone is now disclosed at the Moscow-Lauffer-Davis, Gold King and Independence mines, may be depended on to go down 1,000 feet from the high positions on the mountain slopes. The principal development exists on defined low grade gold ore zones one hundred to two hundred feet wide, carrying \$20 to \$4 per ton.

"This discovery is likely to stimulate continued interest in this immense zone of mineralization, and ultimately result in its more extensive operation with the encouraging prospects of very big silver-gold milling and mining operations."

1925  
"Stewart Campbell was inspector of mines in 1925 and in his forward says, 'We are not going to sit calmly and quietly by and watch crooked brokers, dynamiters, high pressure salesmen, fake promoters, and financial sandbaggers, catch and rob the public, with Idaho mines as a bait. The renascence and revival interest in mining in Idaho have attracted fraudulent promoters, and this office has already been forced to battle with some of the outstanding mining crooks and fake promoters of the United States. Every sign points to a great increase in activity in Idaho in 1925, and this signifies that the public will be more easily induced to buy stock and interests in mines than in many previous years.'

1925  
In 1925 Idaho County produced 1,033.60 ounces of gold, for a value of \$21,394.51, with silver at \$30.61 ounces for a value of \$435.53, with a total for the county of \$21,830.04.

This 269-page document goes into developments by county and also activity of various mines. The summary says, "The discovery of gold on Slate Creek, which is a tributary of Salmon River which it joins near Freedom, was the principal event in Idaho County during 1925. This discovery attracted considerable attention, many people rushed into the district to investigate; many claims were located; and one company, which immediately started development, was organized."

"The Unity Gold Mines Co., at Warren continues to be the largest active gold mining enterprise in the county. The company maintained the largest payroll, continued mine development and produced a small amount of bullion during the year.

"The Holt Mining Co., in the Marshall Lake District, was idle throughout most of the year, and operated its mill only a few days. This district witnessed much new development work and increased investigations over the previous year."

"The Elk City district did (Continued on following page)