

1964

## Mines and Miners of the Swauk

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MINES AND MINERS OF THE SWAUK



A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
Josee Ann Jordan  
August 1964

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is presented as an investigation into the history of the gold field lying in the mountains of northern Kittitas county and known as the Swauk.

The project was undertaken with the following objectives in mind:

1. To enlarge the recorded knowledge of the Kittitas County history of which there is presently very little.

2. To determine to what extent the Swauk camp has influenced economic and social life in Kittitas county.

3. To establish the extent of wealth taken from the Swauk about which subject there are many local opinions but no factual conclusions.

4. To discover the general personality of life-time prospectors.

I feel that a history of any sort needs no justification. It is history for the sake of being history. Like a mountain it is surmounted because it is there. I also feel, however, that this study has particular value because there has been to date, no recorded history of this early and continuing segment of the county's life and there is a great deal of local curiosity and opinion about the Swauk mines.

To ignore this area of Kittitas county life, as is generally done in favor of our agricultural and urban history, would mean a one-sided picture of the county and the loss of flavor which makes this county so rich.

W. P. Morrell, an expert on mining history, says:

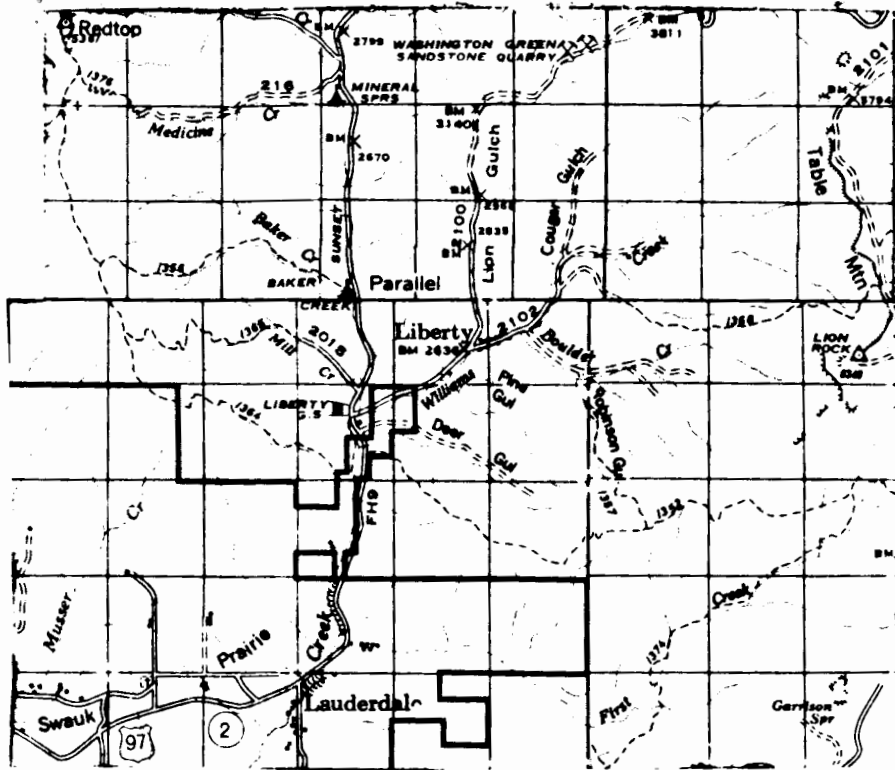
In the gold rushes tens of thousands of men took part and tho many faltered or fell by the wayside, the best of them evolved a new type of self-reliant character, a new free, careless social life. With all its faults it had a fine savour of the spirit of adventure, which is the salt of history. (40:415)

In investigating the life of the miner, therefore, I feel that this study is contributing not only to local history but also to the panorama of developing American character and civilization.

Although gold has been mined in nearly all areas of the county, including the whole of the Yakima River, the Menastash, the Cle Elum-Roslyn region, Salmon-la-sac and the Teanaway, this study is limited to that area commonly known as the Swauk as defined on the map on the following page. Other areas were only briefly mined and with little success. The Swauk camp held the concentration of work in all periods of mining history.

This study is also limited to the present boundaries of the Kittitas County and to the traditional limits of the Swauk camp. It, therefore, excludes the very colorful and interesting history of the Blewett (Culver) and Peshastin mines which were, before the county division, included in Kittitas County. It is hoped that work will be done in this area in the future.





The study is also limited in scope by the limitation of material available. Upper county newspapers, at the time of research, were completely unavailable. Very few years of the Ellensburg Register have been saved. There were no newspapers published prior to 1882. Several diaries and personal papers known to exist were unavailable. Most (in fact, all but one) old miners who lived in the Swauk during boom times are dead.

Records of the early newspapers are often contradictory and unreliable and in some articles it is easy to detect the desire of the writer to attract capital to the Swauk. It is impossible, therefore, to determine the frequency or amount of exaggeration. It has been the practice of the author to accept at face value all numbers and monetary values published in these newspapers unless there are pronounced reasons to question them.

Because of the limitation of human memory, I have also usually accepted the validity of the newspaper accounts over that of contemporary verbal accounts.

The emphasis of newspaper editors and of the general public also limit this study. After 1900 the newspapers were gradually losing interest in the mining. It had worn itself out with the public. During the depression there were so many other things to write about the papers largely ignored the Swauk. Even Clarence Jordin's strike in 1957 evoked an amused tolerance by the Wenatchee papers and total silence

from Ellensburg. I believe it is safe to say that there was as much activity in the Swauk during the '30's as there was in the '90's, but there are no written accounts to substantiate this view.

This study has been divided into three major units. The first concerns itself with the nature of gold in general so that one may understand the uniqueness of the Swauk gold. Swauk gold is examined in this unit along with investigation into local methods of extracting the metal.

The second unit of the study is as complete a history as material will allow of mining history in the Swauk. This, of course, delves into all aspects of a mining camp including social, economic, educational and cultural matters. It will begin with the first gold discoveries and conclude with 1963. A separate chapter on the Chinese miners has been included at the end of the history section.

The final section includes brief biographies of several Swauk miners. There have been few attempts toward the investigation of the life of the miner before he arrived in the Swauk or after he left.

As far as the author can determine, there have been only two studies made into this area previous to 1963. Both studies were made only incidentally in projects of larger and summarizing scope. The first was the History of Klickitat, Yakima and Kittitas Counties, published in 1904. It makes very brief allusions to the mines, and, of course, has

no information beyond 1904. The second similar work is History of Yakima County by W. D. Lyman, published in 1919. It too treats the mines very briefly and has no current material.

Major sources of data have been newspaper accounts and personal interviews. The treatment of newspaper accounts has been discussed above. Personal interviews have been valuable in adding color and substance to the study. They have been used as fact in all cases except those contradicting written accounts.

Washington state geological bulletins have added valuable information concerning the nature of the Swauk gold deposits and ownership of property.

## CHAPTER I

### GOLD....NATURE OF

Since the beginning of human history, man has amassed a total of some 50,000 tons of gold. (45:50) The U. S. Mint reported in 1903 that the total gold production of the world since 1492 amounted to \$9,811,000,000. (14:Aug. 1, 1903) Gold occurs in minute quantities in almost all rocks and sea water has been variously reported to contain from 0.2 to 65 milligrams of gold per metric ton. It occurs in recoverable quantities in most ores of silver, copper, bismuth, and antimony and in many ores of lead and zinc.

Gold occurs in deposits of various origins, but most commonly in quartz veins and is usually closely associated with granitic or volcanic rock of acidic or intermediate composition. (22:109) Pyrite is the most commonly associated metallic mineral and quartz is the most common gangue mineral, but carbonates, flourspar and tourmaline, barite, and other non-metallic minerals are not uncommon as gangue. The high specific gravity and resistance to weathering of gold account for the fact that it is commonly found associated with magnetite, ilmenite, chromite, monazite, rutile, zircon, garnet and other heavy minerals. (22:109)

Gold deposits are of three main types:

1. Veins or other lode ore bodies of hydrothermal origin...Most commonly in quartz veins closely associated with granitic or volcanic rocks of acidic to intermediate composition.

2. Placer deposits made from lode deposits or from sparsely disseminated gold in rock too lightly mineralized to be called ore. Other types of placer deposits include river gravels in active streams, river gravels in abandoned and often buried channels, eolian deposits, ocean beaches at sea level, bench placers in bars and terraces high above present channels, ancient beaches now raised and inland.

3. Consolidated placer deposits...gold bearing conglomerates or sandstones originated in pre-Pleistocene times which have been converted to conglomerates. These deposits are usually overlain by other sedimentary or volcanic flows.  
(22:12)

Gold may be found in various forms. Large chunks or nuggets are not uncommon throughout the world. The largest of all known nuggets was found in Australia and named the "Welcome Stranger". It weighed over 142 pounds. (43:62)  
Flour gold may be so fine as to require 300,000 or more colors (particles) per ounce. Well developed crystals are extremely rare. Wire gold can be found in intricately shaped designs in seams, dikes, or lenses of various sizes.

Gold has little use other than for monetary and decorative purposes. Lesser amounts are used for dental work and

in the electrical and chemical industries. Small quantities are used in medicine and photography. (22:109)

The value of gold has generally increased for more than 2,000 years. In the U.S. the price was a little over \$20 per fine troy ounce until 1934 when President F. D. Roosevelt set the U.S. Mint price at \$35 per ounce where it now remains.

Gold, which has been smelted or retorted can be sold only to the U.S. Mint. However, gold in its natural state, native gold and unretorted amalgam, may be legally sold on the domestic market. In the past few years gold has been quoted at from \$35 to more than \$90 per ounce on the free market in various countries. (22:109)

## CHAPTER II

### NATURE OF SWAUK GOLD DEPOSITS

Although gold appears in many forms throughout the world, it would seem that Swauk gold has been found in all of these varieties. Good sized nuggets have been discovered and much flour gold is consistantly panned out, but the most distinctive and beautiful is the fine wire gold scattered all over the area. John F. Haberlin, writing in the North-west Mineral News of February, 1954, stated:

There are only a few places in the world which have produced such material in such small quantity that very few people have had the pleasure of seeing a good specimen. (Sic) This material comes in many shapes, such as fir-like sprigs, filigree, woven cloth and patterns of snow flakes. (19:February, 1954)

Haberlin further quotes some "old timers" in saying that rich mines have been discovered in the region and immediately were closed and carefully concealed because the crystalline gold is too beautiful to melt up and should be preserved for a museum exhibit.

Excellent examples of these formations can be seen in the collection of Clarence Jordin of Liberty and in the hands of Ted and Albert Marcear residing in Chelan. These men have two large chunks weighing about seven pounds each composed of fine gold wire massed together. These came from Clarence



Jordin's Ace of Diamonds mine on Flag Mountain. Jordin has other specimens encrusting fish fossils and interlacing pieces of white calcite. Other specimens of this type were displayed at the Chicago World's Fair in 1896 along with larger nuggets from the Swauk.

Where did the Swauk gold come from? How was it deposited in such curious ways? This has been the most fascinating question of the entire study because there are so many widely varying theories.

The Cascade Mountains in which the Swauk area lies were formed of sedimentary deposits laid by Paleozoic seas. These deposits have been changed to quartzites, slates, schists, and limestone. The beds were then folded into massive mountains and a tremendously large mass of granitic rock was forced to the surface from deep within the earth.

After a period of long erosion, the mountains were then reduced to lowlands when the waters of the Pacific again covered considerable areas depositing another thick layer of massive sediments.

Again there occurred an upheaval of granitic rock which developed into the second Cascade Range.

During the Tertiary period more erosion took place and then came the final elevation of the region when the present Cascades took form with the volcanic vents of Mt. Baker and Glacier Peak appearing. (9:31)

The early miners of the area consistently talked of and looked for the Mother Lode; that huge body of gold sup-

posed to be hidden somewhere from which all of the placer gold was washed into the streams. Nuggets which seemed to be little worn were taken to mean that they could have traveled very little and so were near the lode. In 1891 when Torkel Tweet hit a big pocket, the Ellensburg Capital had reported that "Many are convinced that Mother Lode has at last been found." (14:June 4, 1891) In September of 1891, the "grand dad" of all lodes was reported to be found on the Williams and Boulder Creeks. (11:Sept. 17, 1891) In 1893 B. C. Pilcher working on the Black claim said that "from the appearance of the nuggets the claim is not far from the main Mother Lode." (16:June 17, 1893) In October of 1895 the Capital reported lyrically that "It is the opinion of quite a number of experts that Elias Whitaker and Charles Delig have the fountain head of all the gold on Williams Creek." (14:Oct. 17, 1895) Similarly, in 1893 the Register stated, "The report that Tweet and others have at last discovered the Mother Lode in the Swauk, has created conditions of considerable interest in mining circles. The discovery is made at Selma Point, and it is said that the assay runs as high as \$29,000 to the ton. This deposit has been sought for 20 years." (16:Mar 4, 1893) Men eagerly hurried to the camp, but the following week the Register was forced to retract its statement with these words and no elaboration: "The report generally circulated through the papers last week to the effect that the Mother Lode of the Swauk mines had been discovered....is a huge, cruel joke, with-

out foundation or one word of truth. The richest strike is yet to be found. (16:March 11, 1893)

As time went on, and the placer gold was cleaned out of the streams of the Swauk, the search for the Mother Lode increased. The prospectors began "Hard rock mining knowing that in the California fields, as elsewhere, gold had often been found in big pockets in close conjunction with quartz. For the most part this hard rock mining was a disappointing venture. The miners were to discover that though there was a great deal of quartz in the area it was widely dispersed and hard to work. A geologist writing for the History of the Yakima Valley, published in 1919, wrote:

The gold-quartz veins of the Swauk are in part narrow fissure veins of quartz with some calcite and talcose material, the wall rock being the sandstone or shale of the Swauk formation of Eocene Age, or in some cases a diabase or basalt dike may form one wall. The quartz stringers running off from the vein are common and at one locality thin bands of quartz follow the bedding planes of the sandstone. A peculiar type of vein material is locally termed "bird's eye" in which the angular fragments of black shale are inclosed in a matrix of quartz and calcite. The quartz shows radical crystallization outward from the separated fragments and open spaces remain into which the small crystals of quartz project. The walls of such veins are sometimes sharply defined, but in other cases many small veins of quartz traverse the shattered wall rock in every direction, so as to render it difficult to draw the limits of the vein itself. The "bird's eye" quartz has its gold content very irregularly distributed. (33:65)

The amount of work done in this search for quartz pockets seems fantastic to the modern observer....100 foot shafts dug by pick and shovel through solid basalt, 600 and 700 foot tunnels through similar material carved by similar means, by

twisting and turning along the elusive veins. Enough small pockets were found to keep the appetite whetted until the work finally petered out with the advent of World War I.

After the war, the search was diverted into placer gold again when a dredge chewed up the Swauk Creek stream bed for several months. Then, because the work was so hard and so unrewarding, the activities gradually dwindled down to those who just wouldn't give up.

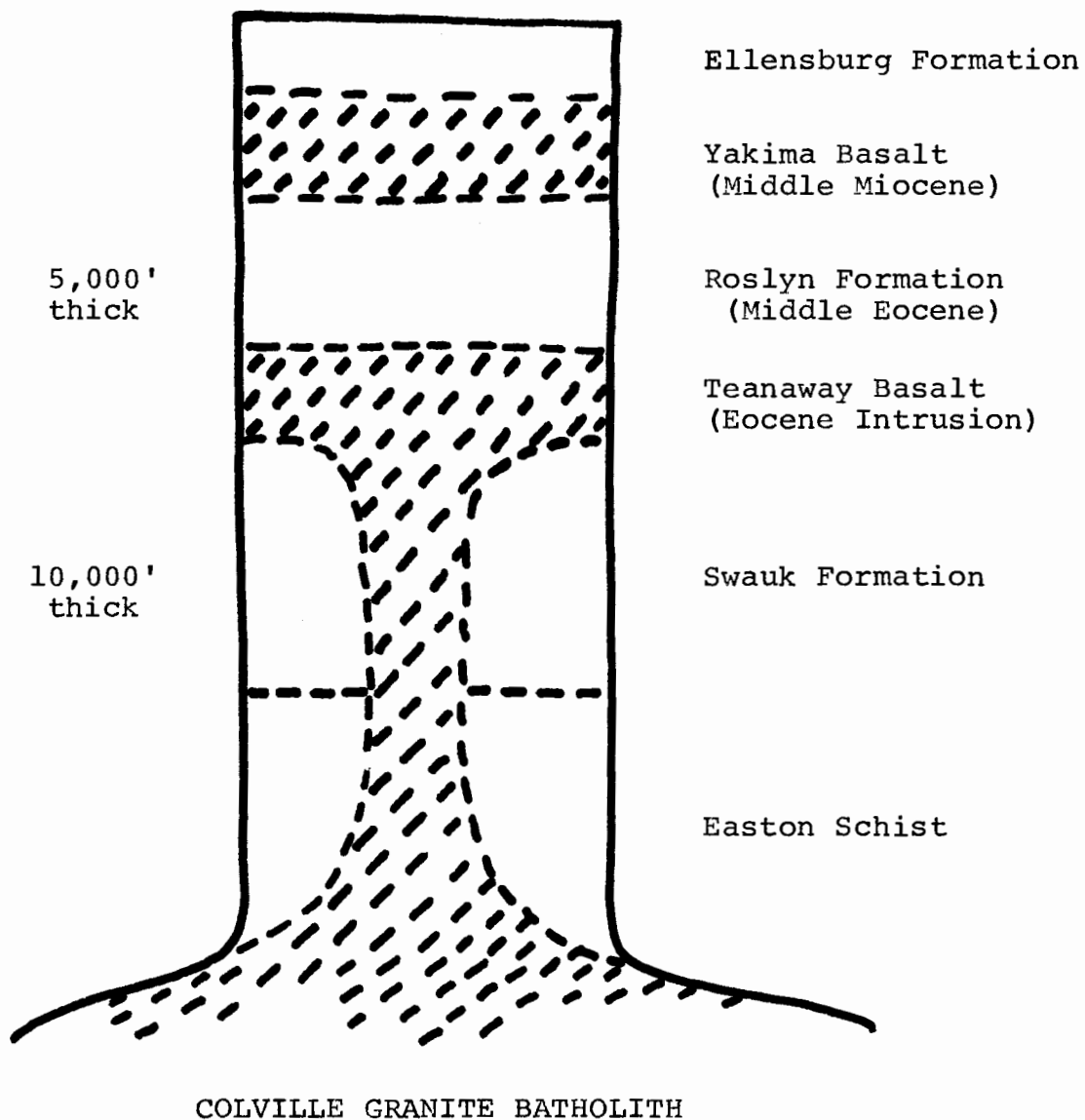
The Great Depression of 1929 brought an influx of impoverished men who knew little or nothing about mining and so added little to the knowledge of the area. It is now the old timers who remain in the Swauk who have developed new and perhaps scientifically based ideas as to the nature of the gold deposits. Clarence Jordin and Jack Kirch who have both been around the camp for more than 30 years explain the gold deposits this way. "This camp is different than any other," says Jack Kirch. "You can find gold in calcite, shale and ochre." He says that seam and pocket-type ochre (a volcanic ash) runs in between shears. A shear is a crack that separates formations where there is a small fault. He believes that nature deposits minerals in these shears and that gold is produced where the basalt fumes and gases can't escape...that the gases go into the shales and crystalizes forming a pocket. Where the gas can escape, there are only traces of gold to be found. According to this theory there is no Mother Lode... only isolated veins and small pockets where conditions were right to form them.

Clarence Jordin (in the Swauk since 1916) calls it a "freak district". He says you can find gold in anything. The gold is deposited in little lenses opened by shocks where it has been reprecipitated into wire. The metal, he says, is not in the dikes, but along side them. Clarence says that he voiced this opinion in 1919 to a noted geologist and was ridiculed for it, but that he still holds to the theory and it has paid off for him in tidy sums. (Witness his strike of 1957, which was found in ochre, sandstone and diabase dikes, and in fossils.) He maintains that the gold has local origins.

According to Professor Edward Klucking of the C W S C geology department, who has done considerable field work in the Swauk area, the Swauk was fed by a huge granite batholith which is a continuation of the Idaho batholith in the northern part of the state and which contains gold elements. This certain batholith was lifted and then eroded forming the sedimentary deposits of the Swauk formation which runs in a semi-circle from Bellingham to the Kittitas Valley. He says, therefore, that the gold does not originate in this area at all, but has been entirely carried in by these sedimentary deposits. He feels that the later intrusions of igneous rock into the Swauk were not hot enough to form gold. As further proof of the sedimentary nature of the gold, he states that much of the metal found in the area is often deposited with plant remains.

See on the following page a diagram of the Swauk area as presented by Dr. Klucking.

## GEOLOGICAL STRATA OF SWAUK AREA



In contrast to both of the preceding theories, Virgil Hiner, the only man presently taking any real gold out of the Swauk, clings to the old Mother Lode idea, but with a new twist. Pointing to the statement of J. M. Davidson, a mining engineer working for the Swauk Creek Placer Mines in 1926, Hiner indicates that there was an upheaval in the Swauk area caused by earthquakes in 1872 and that prior to that time a series of lakes occupied the Swauk area. (12:78) The marshy open stretches along Boulder Creek would lead one to believe that this could be a possibility. Hiner, therefore, concludes that these upheavals disrupted the flow of placer gold which once drifted down Boulder Creek and thence into Williams and Swauk Creeks. He believes that the Mother Lode which he describes as a "large vein" lies in a basalt dike above Boulder Creek in or near the old lake bed. This disruption, he says, is the reason why his dredging activities have turned up well eroded nuggets in Williams Creek and that the closer he gets to Boulder Creek the more fresh and less spoiled are the nuggets found.

Hiner disagrees rather violently with both the theories of Clarence Jordin and Edward Klucking saying that there is much more in the Swauk than wire gold and that the sharply edged nuggets found by him proved that they had their origins close at hand instead of traveling the distances Klucking believes they did.

Whatever the nature of these deposits, they have been particularly hard to get at and Old Bull Nelson, one of the

earliest of Swauk prospectors, was probably right when he said once a long time ago, "O Jesus, there's alot of gold up in that Swauk but, O Jesus, there's alot of gravel mixed up with it."



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS OF MINING IN THE SWAUK

#### Placer Methods

The earliest method of mining the Swauk gold was, of course, the gold pan. Although many people tried it, few got the knack of sloshing water and gravel about in the pan. The pan itself was made of iron, tin, or copper. It had a flat bottom from ten to fourteen inches in diameter and sloping sides from four to six inches high. Earth or gravel was shaken in water with a rotary motion. If worked properly the heavy gold sinks to the bottom of the pan.

Panning was slow, back breaking work so it is natural that miners sought for better methods. From the Chinese they learned how to use the rocker. The rocker was similar to a child's cradle. It was made of a wooden box or even a hollow log. Ordinarily it was about forty inches long, twenty inches wide and four inches high with one end left open and filled by a sieve of sheet iron or even raw-hide perforated with one-half inch holes. Laterally across the bottom were nailed three or four riffles (slats) one or two inches thick. All of this rested upon a pair of wooden rockers. A handle was fastened to the sides enabling the miner to dump gravel into

the box, run water into it, and then vigorously rock it back and forth. Again the principle of gravity applied. Gold would settle behind the riffles.

The rocker was improved in California by making an iron top for the box and coating some of the riffles with mercury which has an affinity for gold. The mercury would then be squeezed through the buckskin and retorted. (40:98)

The long-tom, also originating in California, was more efficient than the rocker. It was an inclined wooden trough ten to thirty feet long, fifteen to eighteen inches wide at the upper end and double that at the lower end. At the lower end was a perforated sheet of iron let into the bottom of the trough with a shallow box underneath. The box was four to five feet long and lined with riffles. (40:99) Earth and gravel were put into the upper trough. Water was dumped on top of it which washed the mass down the trough. Fine materials slipped into the lower box where gold was caught in the riffles. It is obvious that unless the miner had a careful eye large pieces of ore or gold could be lost altogether through this method.

The sluice box was an improvement on the long-tom. Its job was to elongate the tom to make the water's work more effective. Several long troughs would dove-tail into each other reaching from the source of the water to the area of digging. They emptied into a long-tom. In this way the water could be transported for long distances.

Morrell feels that the efficiency of the long-tom and the sluice lay not in the high proportion of gold saved, but in the economy of labor in washing the gold bearing ground.

(40:100) It was estimated by Bancroft that the long-tom was four times less expensive to operate as the rocker and the sluice three times cheaper than the tom. (40:100)

Hydraulic mining was a way of working a great deal of dirt quickly. It necessitated the digging of ditches or flumes to carry water to the area of operation. The ditches would empty into the penslock, a wooden tank with a large pipe outlet. The pipe diminished in size as it approached the mine terminating in a small moveable nozzle. The water would eject from the nozzle with great force and could undermine whole creek banks or hillsides. The muddy water with gravel and fine gold could be directed into sluice boxes set below the operation. From the top of a high bank the gold tended to settle down ahead of the water and keep settling until it hit bedrock. At bedrock it would be washed into the sluices.

Rule number one of hydraulic mining is to select a place where it is possible to get to bedrock with plenty of fall below. (42:28) There were many places in the Swauk where this type of operation was possible. Hydraulic mining played havoc with the landscape by ruining gulches and by destroying whole hillsides. To acquire enough water for hydraulic work dams were built on the creeks with reservoirs

behind them. Shooter dams were most commonly used. There were several in the gulches. These backed up the water until it was high. The gates were then opened and the water poured down the creek. The gates would then be closed until the water built up again.

#### Hardrock Methods

Hardrock (quartz) mining presented different problems. To begin with the pick and shovel were the only way to get at the veins running through hard basalt. Even using the pick properly took talent.

The Swauk miners were not novices. They had come from other gold fields, particularly from California and knew the ways of mining. The use of dynamite came immediately into play and was used with such caution that there are no records of any accidents involving it.

Work on an outcropping was, of course, the easiest way to get at the quartz but these did not occur often. Tunnels and shafts created mazes all through the hills.

Unless the miner was digging into solid rock, a tunnel necessitated timbering. This was a very time-consuming process and is the reason why saw mills were constructed on two different occasions. John Bloomquist (uncle of the Jordin brothers) had the first saw-mill which he built on Williams Creek and later transferred to Swauk Creek. It operated for many years. (26) The only other saw-mill, which was of very short dura-

tion, was built by Dave Livingston. (26) Miners usually could not afford to purchase lumber and so cut their own.

Tunnels generally followed the course of a quartz vein and would wind back and forth in a crazy tedious pattern indicating unbelievable time and labor expended on them. Debris and ore were carried out of the mine by homemade carts. (26) Most miners ran tracks into the tunnel to facilitate this. The tracks were made of boards or old pipe or frequently discarded railroad track. The track would run out to a hillside over which the tailings could be dumped. Tailing piles remain today. Many, almost covered with undergrowth, still indicate the presence of old mines.

Shaft mining was much more difficult and dangerous. A system of pulleys and winches had to be rigged up to raise and lower the miners and the rock. One man could not work such an operation alone. There was the constant threat of bad air in the shafts and in many tunnels. The story on page 49 reveals what happened when proper caution was not exercised. Wise miners like Charles Bigney dug air shafts even though it consumed time and money. (14:Dec. 26, 1895) Sometimes the shafts would branch out in several directions at several levels in search of the elusive quartz veins. Often the miner built a small cabin over his shaft or at the head of his tunnel to protect it and himself from the elements. Many times he lived right with his work.

After the ore was extracted from the mine, the sourdough had the problem of separating the gold from other rock. To accomplish this the California miners learned from the Mexicans how to use an arrastra. Practically every hardrock miner in the Swauk constructed one of these. Often times two or more miners with adjoining claims would build an arrastra together and take turns using it.

The arrastra was like the large mills primitive people have used for eons in grinding grain. It consisted of a large circular surface of hard packed earth filled in with small pieces of rock. Ore would be placed on top of this. A huge flat rock would be dragged around and around on top crushing the ore with its weight. These mill stones weighed from 500 to 1000 pounds (26) and were propelled by man power, an animal, or, best of all, by water power. In this case a hook fitted into the mill stone was attached to a chain and pulled around by a water wheel. With the use of an arrastra a man could dig out ore and grind it up continuously. It is said that by feeling his ear lobe with one hand and the pulverized ore with the other the miner could determine when he had the powder at the right consistency.

Another, more efficient but more expensive, method of crushing the ore was the stamp mill. The stamps were timbers shod with cast iron. A large overshot water wheel placed on a shaft with large pins in the shaft raised and lowered the stamps. The stamps were about fourteen feet

long and eight inches square. They moved up and down in a box lined with copper plates galvanized with mercury. An opening on one side of the box was covered with a fine screen through which the fine gold could wash over into a table covered with copper (46:232) or an amalgamator; a moving box about six feet square and six inches deep containing mercury. (40:103) With a small mill George Virden was reported to be able to crush about 500 pounds of ore daily. (16:June 11, 1892)

It is difficult to determine just how many stamp mills were actually in operation in the Swauk. There were many rumors in the papers of miners who intended to build mills but little said about completed outfits. George Virden, John Reilley, W. J. Morrison, T. P. Carson, and Dr. Graves in the 1890's probably had rigs. Jack Jordan reconstructed the old one on the Wall Street Mine during the 1930's. (25) Morrison evidently ran his mill with a gasoline engine which was an innovation. The Jordan mill was run by steam from a huge boiler as was Dr. Graves' mill which had a fifteen horse-power engine.

Mining is a very creative occupation and new inventions were constantly being tried out. For example, the Cascade Mining Co. under T. P. Carson installed a fancy elevator in 1900 to hoist and dump boulders but it was unsuccessful. (14:March 24, 1900)

Some kind of gold concentrator was taken to the Swauk by a Tacoma company which was supposed to be able to save

90 per cent of the fine gold being lost by usual methods. (14:June 29, 1893) Nothing more was heard of it. Evidently the same type concentrator was tried out in Tommy Meagher's dump several years later by a Professor Fox. (14: June 12, 1897)

When a miner had pulverized his ore, he still had to separate the fine gold from the rock dust. Mercury, which has an affinity for gold, was poured into the fine powder. It would cling to gold but ignore anything else. Elusive mercury would then be gathered up and retorted. There are many methods of retorting. Kate M. Bailey, writing for the Wenatchee World, tells of two very primitive means that were used. She says that a miner would hollow out a potato, put the amalgam in the hollow, then place a heated shovel over the potato, turn it upside down and apply more heat to the shovel. The heat might be applied by holding the shovel over an alcohol or kerosene lamp, by opening a stove door and holding the shovel over the glowing coals or putting it in the oven, over a camp fire, or even a candle flame. Then after a few minutes the vaporized gas would have condensed in the potato and the gold could be removed by crushing. (48: October 9, 1951)

A second method was to run the crushed ore into a slum pond. This was dried out over a fire, then placed in high, huge vats through which a solution of cyanide of potassium was leached, dripping into a vat, the process taking about



two weeks. The gold which was dissolved by the cyanide, was then precipitated by adding zinc shavings to the solution and the zinc burned off in a crucible. The gold was then poured out into a bar. (48:October 9, 1951)

According to Amos Jordin both of the above methods were too dangerous because of the toxic quicksilver fumes. Almost all miners, he says, had a retort pot; an iron pot of various sizes which had a lid and a pipe running out of the top or side into a pan of water. The pot with the amalgam inside was heated on the stove or over a fire. The mercury evaporated and escaped through the pipe into the pan of cold water where it precipitated and could be reused. When the pot was opened, the gold was found in a lump on the bottom. It would then be possible to remelt it to form bars if so desired. (26)

As newer and more efficient methods of mining came into play, dredging caught on in the Swauk. This was not tried at all, however, until boom days were over in the area. There are detailed accounts of this work in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORY OF SWAUK CAMP

#### First Gold Discoveries

It is said that the first gold in the Washington territory was discovered in 1853 by Captain George B. McClellan who was exploring for a railroad route through the Cascades. A U. S. soldier found a rich quartz vein at Blewett in 1854 and a small rush sped to the Colville region in 1855, but the first notable production stems from 1859 on the Similkameen River in Okanogan County. (23:109) This strike lasted only three months when the miners flocked to a new field on the Frazer River. A few months later the surge was reversed and drifted southward. (23:28-30)

Swauk gold was first discovered in 1867 when a prospecting party consisting of two Goodwin brothers, Newton and Benton, and Edward Towner were following an Indian trail leading through the Swauk to the Peshastin district. While camping for their mid-day meal near Swauk Creek, Benton Goodwin busied himself panning on a bar in the stream. He came up with what Towner pronounced as fine gold, but the others were dubious and after jocularly naming the place Discovery Bar, they passed on to the north. (24:240)

In the fall of 1873 the Goodwin brothers again passed through the Swauk in company with W. H. Beck, George Mycock (who later changed his name to Starr), and a young Kentuckian named D. Y. Borden. The men were dispirited after many days of unsuccessful prospecting. Borden suggested they prospect Swauk Creek and Benton Goodwin soon found a small nugget. One old timer graphically tells the somewhat fascinating story this way:

Eight men were prospecting up the Stuart Range and down Engels Creek. On the trip they all got lousy, so they decided to make camp to boil their clothes before they got back to civilization. Benton Goodwin, who was deaf and dumb, went down to the creek for some buckets of water. He turned over a rock and found a \$2 nugget. He put the nugget in his mouth and carried the buckets of water in both hands. He struggled up the bank mumbling and squawking in excitement. The men thought a bear was chasing him and got out their rifles. He pushed them back, put down the water, and opened his mouth. (27)

Leaving their supper, the rest of the men set to work and within an hour had over \$5 of coarse dust and a nugget worth \$100. They decided to keep the find a secret and so worked for several days but their provisions ran out and they were forced to send out to the closest ranch for supplies. From there the news spread quickly and soon precipitated a rush. Before the rush, however, the party had secured somewhere between \$500 and \$600. One day, it is said, they dug out \$150 with a butcher knife.

Several hundred men spread out in the area so the Swauk Creek Mining District was organized with D. Y. Borden as the recorder. The men agreed that the claims should be 200 feet long and from rimrock to rimrock.

Winter was coming on and most prospectors found nothing. The little that was found seemed to be close to the bar the Goodwins claimed. As a result most of the men left leaving less than fifty there during the winter. (24:241)

Discovery Bar, however, was successful and the Goodwin brothers formed a company consisting of the original party plus Al Churchill, David Munn, James and Samuel Bates, J. P. Beck, G. W. Goodwin (uncle) and Walter A. Bull. They called it the Discovery Co. and set up sluices there in the spring of 1874 averaging an ounce a day per man. The next year it played out and was abandoned in 1876 (24:241)

#### 1853-1914

Gold had been discovered at present day Blewett and Peshastin, just over the mountains from the Swauk, in 1854. Several hundred men flocked to this region and, consequently, in 1879 a rough wagon road was built from Cle Elum over the Wenatchee divide to Blewett. This turned Blewett into a rip-roaring town of several thousand and was a boon to the Swauk camp also. (19)

News items relating to the area were very scarce until 1883 when the Kittitas Standard, in an attempt to promote the area, published a series of letters from the Swauk miners. They called it a "sadly neglected camp". It is evident from these letters that many prominent Ellensburg men were active in developing the area. Dexter Shoudy had already begun hydraulic work. (21:14)

No further news was heard until 1889 when the opening of the Okanogan mines caused a rush to that area. The city of Ellensburg boomed in furnishing miner's supplies while they lamented their lack of horses and mules to furnish the prospectors. (14:April 25, 1889)

In 1890 an assay office was set up in Ellensburg, indicating that the amount of business justified such an establishment. "Ore Sampling and Reduction Works" the venture was named, and advertised that it would carry on assaying and smelting. Whether it enjoyed a flourishing business or not is unknown.

After 1891 both the Ellensburg Capital and the Register received steady correspondence during the summer months from miners who signed themselves Chas Sommerton (1891, 1900, and 1902), Aaron McGinty (1892), Angelkin (1893), Miner, Gold Dust (1894), Oro Fino (1894), Ocassion Ally, Ah Whim (1895), and C. O. Respondent (1897). These men (or was Angelkin a woman?) were not objective by-standers. They were vitally concerned with the welfare of the camp and used their letters to excite readers to a lively, monetary interest in the work. It was capital they were after. Some of the writers were not above venting a personal spleen into their letters and editors printed it all. For instance Aaron McGinty on June 25, 1892, wrote;

Some one with more time than brains had the audacity to put a large quantity of old nails, tacks, pieces of wire and other rubbish in G. W. Seaton's arrastra, all

of which was discovered while cleaning up. Such people are not wanted in our camp. Probably it was this same party that broke Pat Hurley's window while he was away.

We think the sheep men should keep their sheep back in the mountains this year. Our horses need all the grass along the creek bottoms. If we have cross dogs and they bite the sheep (should they come down here) don't kick, Mr. Shepherd. (16:June 25, 1892)

That same year someone wrote, "There has been strong talk of holding a necktie party here. For the past month one of the residents of this camp has been slandering, back biting, defaming and lying about every man, woman and child in the camp. If there is any more such talk from him, his name will be published. (14:October 13, 1892)

In another instance of literary chastisement the Capital published this article by the Swauk correspondent in 1892:

It seems that a resident of the camp, with business interests and a devoted wife and family, has been acting in rather an unbecoming manner with a woman bearing another man's name. A few days ago they left the camp and it was soon learned they were enjoying each other's company here. (Ellensburg) The injured wife learned of her husband's perfidy and as he had left her without any money, the kind-hearted miners quickly made her a purse sufficient to enable her to reach friends and she left the place with her little ones.

It is reported that since arriving here the woman has been bestowing her smiles on a single man in town and the Swauk man has been thinking of returning to the camp.

The miners say they have no use for this kind and they intend to make an example of him if he returns. (14:August 25, 1892)

1891. In June of 1891 the Capital was lamenting, "It is strange after so many years that so few are in camp and

so little interest taken." (14:June 4, 1891) In the same issue the editor reported that Torkel Tweet had come down from the mines bringing the result of three days work; fifty ounces of gold worth \$960. Three weeks later it was reported that the woods were full of prospectors (14:June 25, 1891) and by the end of July the Capital announced a steady stream of people were passing through Ellensburg for the Swauk and Peshastin. The Seattle Telegraph had printed a story of the rush saying that in Ellensburg provisions were cheap and the ponies were plentiful at a reasonable price. As a consequence two trains a day were leaving Seattle for Ellensburg full of miners. (14:July 30, 1891) Everyone was hopeful that the rush would pull Ellensburg out of its hard times. State Senator E. T. Wilson even visited the mines and proclaimed that they would surely make a second Denver of Ellensburg. (14:August 20, 1891)

Many of the old timers began to sell or bond<sup>1</sup> their properties to Seattle parties and stake out new claims. John Black received \$7,000 cash for his placer claim and \$500 for half share of his Saint Patrick mine. W. A. Ford bonded his Little Joker mine for six months and took \$500 for his Oro Fino mine. George Virden sold his property for a reported

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<sup>1</sup>Bonding was actually a form of renting property for a specified length of time, usually a summer season. Terms could include either an out-right payment of rent or a percentage of the gold production.

\$20,000 to San Francisco parties. A Spokane company purchased the Green Tree group of placers. J. A. Shoudy, a prominent Ellensburg pioneer, bought Nez Jensen's place on Swauk Creek near where William's Creek empties into it and began to lay it out for a town and also set up a store. (14: September 24, 1891)

1892. The spring of 1892 found more men in the camp than "for the past five years." (14:April 14, 1892) Three hydraulic mines were running but a month of spring rain, snow and hail prevented most others from working their land. The biggest complaint in camp was the poor conditions of the roads and the miners suggested that every man in camp would donate three or four days labor if the county would do the same. But the roads remained in bad shape most of the summer until the Culver Mining Company of Blewett began to repair them in order to take heavy machinery over Blewett Pass. To stress the necessity for road improvement the men circulated a solemn story about a certain Mr. Fineph who lost a horse while trying to reach the Swauk from Cle Elum. The animal, they said, went into the mud so deep that he had smothered to death and then sunk out of sight. (14:April 14, 1892)

During the spring the men also decided to build a public hall with donations of labor. It was to be thirty feet by sixty feet and was constructed on the corner of Main and Swauk Avenues. The building would be opened with an oration



and celebration on the 4th of July. (14:April 21, 1892) That same spring Scott Darling opened a store selling "miner's supplies, fish bait, gum boots, and bug juice." (14:April 14, 1892) But in August, some "darling store bills" were presented to the boys, most of which they claimed were fraudulent. As a consequence the store changed hands. (14:Sept. 1, 1892) Supplies were very cheap: meats sold for seven cents per pound, butter for twenty cents per pound, and eggs for twenty cents per dozen. (14:August 6, 1892)

A post office was also established in 1892 with Gus Nelson as the first postmaster. (14:May 19, 1892) The name Swauk was suggested but since there was already a post office in the state called Sauk, the post office department objected to this name and it was changed to Liberty. (14:April 17, 1892) An old timer tells the story this way. Postmaster Gus Nelson invited some of the boys into the new building and when they arrived he told them, "You're at liberty here, boys. Set down, lay down or do as you please." When the postal inspector asked for a name different from Swauk, the boys all suggested Liberty. (27)

As a result of the new post office, a new stage line was set up between Ellensburg and Liberty. W. A. Ford ran the stage out of Liberty on Wednesday and Sunday mornings. The stage returned on Monday and Saturday mornings. (14: March 10, 1892)

The papers that season were full of reports of strikes and clean-ups. In one day during July, 128 claims were filed

in the county auditor's office and the Register informed the world that there were about three hundred fifty miners and prospectors in the camp and that the Swauk was a "vast mixed mining area." (14:July 23, 1892) One stamp mill, erected by George Virden, was in operation and two more were to be built during the summer. The paper (not quoting its sources) said that in the twelve years of Swauk placer mining \$200,000 worth of gold had been taken out.

The miners now began to worry about the cost of developing their properties. Thus far they had been unable to interest anyone in investing capital in the area. Consequently, when L. H. Jansen of Anacortes proposed to put in a bedrock flume on Swauk Creek, it was looked upon as "one of the greatest things in the history of this district." (16:August 20, 1892) The flume was to be ten miles long and operated by hydraulic equipment purchased from San Francisco which would cost about \$10,000. A saw-mill was to be built to supply lumber for the flume. The whole venture was to be completed by the first of the year. (14:August 18, 1892) In September the Swauk Bed-Rock Flume Co. was incorporated with Lewis H. Janson, H. W. Schmidt, Steward Rice, and John J. Shoudy (president) as trustees. Jansen was to manage the work. Capital stock consisted of \$500,000 and shares were to sell at \$1 each. Some Tacoma capitalists joined in the venture. Nothing more is heard of the company so it is probable that they never got their business off the ground.

By October the water had become so scarce that the hydraulic works were forced to shut down but as winter settled over the camp, more miners remained with their properties, working in tunnels and shafts than had ever done so before. (14:December 29, 1892)

During the summer of 1892, excitement was high. "A sight for the gods"; 145 ounces of gold amalgam valued at \$2,320 the result of two weeks work by Tweet, Peterson, and York was displayed in an Ellensburg store window (14:June 9, 1892) and the nuggets were sent to the World's Fair. If the newspaper reports during a rush can be trusted, the big producers that summer were Tweet and Johnson with twenty pounds of amalgam (14;June 2, August 18, 1892), Tweet, Peterson, and York with \$2,320 for two weeks labor (14:June 9, 1892), Charles Bigney who averaged about four ounces a day (14: June 30,1892), and the Green Tree Placers which took out \$4,000 for the season. (14:September 1, 1892)

1893. Anticipation was high during the winter and spring of 1893. Heavy snow assured plenty of water, but late spring snows held up the work. A sheep rancher on his way from Ellensburg to Williams Creek to locate a sheep ranch was caught in the flooding Swauk Creek. His team was drowned and his new wagon wrecked. (14:May 18, 1893) The heavy floods carried out bridges and ruined the road in many places. W. A. Ford and his partner made plans to begin a new road over the hill which would avoid the creek and its

bridges and cut the time from Ellensburg to only four hours. (14:May 18, 1893) Ford hired ten men and went to work immediately. Because of the high water, actual mining did not begin until well into June.

With people flocking into the Swauk and the richer Peshastin, the editor of the Register issued this morose warning:

Miners and prospectors are flocking into the country from every direction bound for the gold fields of the famous Swauk and Peshastin districts. It is not rare that many are disappointed when they find that things are different from what they were led to believe from reports. The sooner it is understood that mining is the same the world over, the sooner will people stop coming here expecting to take their chances in finding a rich strike or even good pay dirt. The precious metal exists in the mountains and in paying quantities too, but all that has been found is claimed and prospectors must depend upon their own exertions and mining experience to be successful in the vocation. (16:June 3, 1893)

This pronouncement seems very strange when one considers that Ellensburg, as well as the rest of the country, was in the throes of a financial depression. One would think that this editor would be as interested as the editor of the rival Ellensburg Capital in stimulating business in this county. But the pessimistic man announced just after the work began in June:

There are but five or six claims being developed to a good paying basis. The great drawback of the development of the mines is the lack of capital. There are hundreds of good prospects held by men who have not the means of working them. Nothing else can be done until miners of sufficient means go there and build their own mills. The placer mines are pockety. There is no universal field for operations as California

once boasted of where everybody made lots of money from any kind of ground. The Swauk country offers grand opportunities for men of means but the cases where the poor men have become rich are very rare. (16:June 17, 1893)

Despite the pessimism of the newspaper editor, every cabin and house in the camp was occupied that summer. The people were doubled up and also living in tents, causing several new houses to be rapidly constructed. It was reported that there were five hundred inhabitants of the camp and the number would probably be doubled during the season. "Four years ago," the Register said, "There were no more than fifteen men in all that country." (16:June 17, 1893) The Capital, however, in quoting population figures, said there were one hundred regular miners and seventy-five prospectors on Swauk Creek. On Williams Creek there were fifty miners. (14:June 22, 1893)

Because of this activity, the little town of Liberty roused itself and began building a butcher shop, slaughter house, and its first saloon. A Seattle "Capitalist" was reported to be looking for a hotel site but Frank Lauderdale, who had purchased Shoudy's store, beat him to it and established a boarding house under Mrs. Lauderdale's supervision. (14:June 15, 1893)

News circulated all summer of the great work that was being done. Handsome Charley Bigney was the hero of the camp because he was taking out an average of \$700 per month with two men on his William Creek placer. He, Tommy Meagher,

with a claim adjoining Bigney's, the Buckhorn mine of Kaup, Smith and Ford and the holdings of Tweet and Johnson were the big producers of the season. The Buckhorn, with the help of a company in California was putting in a five stamp mill, while Tommy Meagher's output was \$50-\$60 per day.

(14:June 29, 1893)

In the general rush for any kind of pay dirt that could be found brief hysteria was caused by the supposed discovery of rubies in Swauk Creek, but this was probably the garnet sand which is so often associated with the gold placers. Tin and silver were also reportedly found.

As usual in a mining camp, the work petered out by November. The Capital reported that few gold nuggets were in demand anymore and that several parties from the Swauk had found it difficult to sell what they had brought in.

(14:November 23, 1893) Of course, many men left the camp during the winter months, but some of the hard rock mines continued to operate as they had done the previous winter.

The winter brought on an active social life for the camp despite an outbreak of typhoid which caused one death among the men. The bachelors gave a dance on February 3 with sixty-three adults in attendance and nearly as many children. There was music by a string band composed of Andrew Flodine's guitar and J. B. Morrison's fiddle which continued playing until 5 a.m. The program included such novelties as the Bed Rock Quadrille, the Gold Nugget Waltz,

the Bald Headed Bachelor's Quadrille and the Pork and Beans Quadrille. (14:February 15, 1894) When Flodine finished his new house it too, was dedicated with a social dance. (14: August 23, 1894)

It was announced in November that the Rev. Mr. Orton had accepted a call to Yakima leaving Liberty without church privileges. (14:November 25, 1893) Since church had never been mentioned before, this leaves it open to conjecture how long the camp had had a ministry and what sort of work the minister had performed.

1894. The 1894 season saw the turning over of claims into the hands of larger companies. The Buckhorn mine, owned by Wm. Kaup, Ford and Smith was bonded over to an Idaho man for \$24,000. (14:June 25, 1894)

The same summer Delig and Power sold their placer claims for \$1,800 cash to the Northwest Development Company of Wisconsin. W. A. Ford, who had evidently given up his stage line was made foreman for the company. (14:May 10, 1894) When this company began to pipe in a three inch nozzle for hydraulicing, the Capital reported that this was helping to revive the camp (14:June 14, 1894) which would indicate that the camp was beginning to go down hill already. In spite of the nozzle the company shut down in August.

Reports that summer indicate that the four or five good claims were continuing to produce, but that others were having little success. Charles Bigney periodically reported

that his eight employees were finding huge nuggets, some worth almost \$300 each. Tommy Meagher was working only two men, but was taking out plenty of smaller nuggets. Besides these two miners there were no reports made about the progress or production of the Green Tree placers or Gus Nelson, but they were working six and five men respectively. Johnson and Tweet claimed they were taking out \$100 to the ton of ore.

Two criminal events added excitement to the camp that summer. A dead man was found on the Wenatchee summit and when a jury from Ellensburg was impaneled and traveled to the site, they found a corpse encased in clothing. A hole was found through the back of two shirts, a vest and two coats showing a charge from a gun. The corpse had been there for about eighteen months. It was buried on the mountain. (14:July 12, 1894) Nothing was ever discovered about the identity of the dead man or the circumstances of his death.

In August a feud developed into attempted murder. Two men, Jim Sutherland and Frank Kurstetter had not been on good terms for some time. Kurstetter got drunk one evening and threatened to kill Sutherland. That night he climbed in Sutherland's window, but Sutherland was waiting for him with a gun. They fought over the weapon and Sutherland hit Kurstetter over the head with it several times badly breaking and bending the gun, but evidently doing little



harm to Kurstetter. Ben Brain, living next door, heard the row and rushed in to help but Kurstetter escaped. The following day Brain and Sutherland went to Ellensburg to swear out a complaint, but when the sheriff went hunting for Kurstetter, he had disappeared. (14:August 23, 1894) Kurstetter worked in and out of the camp for several years after the incident, but no further action was ever taken against him.

1895. During 1895 the Bigney and Meagher holdings continued to flourish. That summer the papers reported that Bigney had bought a new iron dump and had taken out \$300 one week, \$200 the next, and a grand haul of \$1,180 during one week in September. (14:September 19, 1895) Bigney was becoming so affluent by this time that he leased out some of his claims and hired several men to work the others. He evidently spent his winters in Yakima and had imported a costly Danish stag hound. (14:December 12, 1895) Typical of the stories about him is the one telling how he brought seventy-six ounces of nuggets into Ellensburg one Wednesday, and returning home, found that his men had taken out another \$308 during the day. By the end of the week they had amassed an additional sixty-six ounces. (14:September 26, 1895)

Tommy Meagher had increased his number of employees to seventeen during the summer and had such good production he was expecting a total of \$1,500 for the season. There were no reports as to whether this was accomplished. In the fall both he and Bigney patented their claims. (14:Nov. 21, 1895)

During the summer of 1895 there began a long series of conflicts over turning the camp into agricultural land. The N. P. Railroad had petitioned the land office in North Yakima to give the railroad the odd sections of land embraced by the Swauk district, claiming that it was agricultural land. The miners entered a protest and evidently won. (14:July 4, 1895) Several times since, the camp has been threatened by agricultural, railroad, national forest or lumbering interests but since it has always continued to produce minerals, it has retained its autonomy. Federal law provides that as long as an area can produce minerals on a commercial basis the area can not be taken for any other purpose.

By 1895 the interest in mining was swinging away from Swauk Creek and onto Williams Creek where both Meagher and Bigney had their claims. As a consequence a building boom developed on Williams Creek. The little community formed there was at first called New Yakima and soon Meaghersville but when most of the people gradually transferred from old Liberty and moved their buildings with them, the post office came also in 1916, and Meaghersville became New Liberty. The last of the old Liberty buildings, The Chick Cafe, burned in 1962 so that there are no remnants left of that town. The present day Liberty was the original Meaghersville. Newspaper reports become confusing after 1895 as it is difficult to tell which of the communities are being spoken of in reference to Liberty.

For several years the price of Swauk gold had stood at \$14 per ounce. This was less than the mint price for pure gold because most Swauk gold is alloyed with silver. Suddenly that summer George Hampton raised the price to \$14.60 and it was said that he was purchasing from \$1,500 to \$3,000 worth of gold each month. (14:August 1, 1895)

That summer Andrew Flodine had been made road supervisor and in the fall put the roads into good repair, but the new Ellensburg and Swauk Stage Company which had taken over Ford's line was said to be running tri-weekly; "They go down one week and try to get back the next." (14:Nov. 21, 1895)

Social life returned to the Swauk in the fall. Preaching was held at the new town hall one Sunday and the correspondent remarked, "The minister must have plenty of nerve to tackle the Benighted Gashoots that inhabit this camp." (11: October 17, 1895) In October a masquerade ball was given by the Young Ladies Light Fantastic Toe Society and the ball was such a success another was held on New Year's Eve. The music for both events was provided by Morrison, Flodine and Johnson's "Celebrated Military Band"...two fiddles, a guitar and a bottle of Mrs. Winslow's soothing syrup. The newspaper correspondent reported that the tune mostly used was:

A boy stood on the Bigney dump,  
A bandage on his head;  
And when the band began to play  
He tumbled over dead.

(14:October 24, 1895)

1896. According to the Director of the Mints, Kittitas was the largest mineral producing county in Washington during 1895. It produced one-third of the total gold in the state. (14:June 11, 1896) Eighteen ninety-six was even a bigger year. Ninety-two dozen mining location notices were sold during the season....more quartz than placer (14:August 6, 1896), and it was said that "every wagon coming to the camp brings working men, prospectors and beer; a sure sign of prosperity." (14:July 9, 1896)

A barber shop and a jewelry store, a hotel and restaurant all opened in the camp. Prices were reasonable; meals - 25¢, liquid refreshment - 5¢ and 10¢, poker chips - 50 ¢ a stack. (14:July 9, 1896)

Nearly all of the gold that season was sent to Helena instead of San Francisco as formerly had been done. The miners claimed that they realized more and got quicker returns - ten days average, from Helena. (14:July 16, 1896)

Bigney and Meagher controlled most of the placer ground in the Swauk by this time and were working from twenty to thirty men between them. (14:May 28, 1896) Thomas Meagher formed a partnership with A. F. York and J. B. Morrison during the spring to work on placer ground up Boulder Creek. Early in June they made a strike which precipitated a rush to that area. Although the three men were offered \$10,000 in cash for the claim they turned it down. (14:June 4, 1896) A townsite on Boulder Creek was surveyed and platted and town lots were sold like "circus lemonade". (14:June 18, 1896)

Among the exciting occurrences of that busy summer was a law-suit created by C. E. H. Bigney to restrain Frank Lawrence from working a certain piece of ground. The Ellensburg judge granted the injunction in the presence of most of the Swauk's population. (14:January 30, 1896)

A series of accidents incapacitated a few men during the season. One miner mangled his left hand, badly breaking three fingers, bruising and tearing his head, neck and his breast when a powder misfired and exploded. (14:June 4, 1896) A. F. York, wrestling with a stump in his diggings was thrown over the bank when the stump came loose and dislocated his shoulder. A third man accidentally shot himself in the chest when the 38 revolver he was carrying inside his breast pocket fell out and was discharged as he stooped to wash his hands. The bullet struck a rib and glanced out.

1897. The Alaska gold rush boomed in 1897 and although a large party left the Valley, the Swauk mines were doing so well that most of the old-timers were not tempted to leave. Ellensburg again thrived as an outfitting center and the price of horses rose to \$25 because of the demand. (24:266)

Law-suits began to pile up early in the year when L. H. Janson tried to appropriate land for a bed-rock flume and met opposition from people who insisted that the land was good for agriculture only. The contest was taken to the land office where the case was decided against Janson. Gus Wilen, who had been associated with Janson also caused trouble when

he went to the land department of the N. P. Railroad at Tacoma and purchased the land on which Gus Nelson had made his strike. Nelson contested this and won. (14:January 2, 1897) Tommy Meagher complicated matters in the camp when he jumped the townsite on Williams Creek located by J. K. Morrill. (14:June 26, 1897) In addition to these events, Kurstetter, causing trouble again, this time in partnership with his old enemy, Ben Brain, Hank Horstman and Charles Johnson, jumped the Green Tree claims saying the owners had not kept up on their assessment work. The claims were awarded to Kurstetter and partners when the Green Tree Mining Co. couldn't prove it had done sufficient work to keep the land. (14:November 20, 1897)

Thomas Meagher had twelve men working for him, but got a slow start that season and in May dropped his work force to six. (14:May 1, 1897) In May his claim with Whittaker and York produced a nugget "as big as a dinner plate" worth \$840. (14:May 8, 1897) Late in October the Capital reported that he took out \$51 in one day but nothing else was heard from him that year.

Charles Bigney also got off to a slow start in 1897 even though he employed nine men in the spring. (14:June 12, 1897) In March he took out \$102 in one day (14:June 12, 1897), a nugget worth \$160 in April (14:April 24, 1897), and in May he raised his force to fourteen men. In June he sent out \$1,200 (14:June 12, 1897) and \$90 in one day in October.

The big producer of the camp that year was George Henton. In partnership with Dr. J. C. McCauley of Ellensburg, Henton sank a 103-foot shaft to bedrock and set up a hoisting and pumping plant which they worked night and day (14: January 9, 1897) employing eight men. (14: May 1, 1897) The results were:

20 ounces worth \$300 (14: February 9, 1897)  
 12 ounces (14: April 24, 1897)  
 36 ounces in one week worth \$520 (14: June 26, 1897)  
 \$526 of nuggets in four days (14: July 24, 1897)  
 \$560 of nuggets, one worth \$127 (14: August 7, 1897)  
 \$266 nugget of wire gold (14: August 7, 1897)  
 13 ounces (14: August 21, 1897)  
 \$140 in one day, \$80 the next (14: October 2, 1897)  
 27 ounces, 11 ounces (14: October 16, 1897)  
 \$200 nugget, \$240 nugget (14: November 20, 1897)  
 sent 92 ounces to Seattle bank worth \$1,400 (14: Dec. 11, 1897)

In August Henton displayed \$1,100 worth of nuggets in the Post Intelligencer office window in Seattle. (14: August 14, 1897)

Another big producer was Gus Nelson. He found a quartz ledge in Mill Gulch and took out \$60 from thirty pounds of ore. He bonded the mine in March to Tacoma parties for \$5000 (14: March 20, 1897), and then bought the York and Linden quartz claim for \$250 cash and began a three stamp mill. (14: March 20, 1897) Nelson then put ten men on his Liberty Bar claim and two men on his Boulder Creek claim.

A tragic accident occurred in the Mill Gulch diggings when the miners were forced to rig up a blower in order to get good air to the bottom of the 70-foot shaft. One morning in August the men lowered a candle to the bottom of the shaft to test the air. The candle burned badly but the men decided

to go down anyway. Ben Twiss, who had been in the camp for about four years, climbed into the bucket and was lowered. At the base of the shaft he got out, attached the rope to a bucket of dirt and signaled to be hoisted up again. A few feet up from the bottom he was overcome by gas and fell out of the bucket. It was quickly raised and Joe Anderson then volunteered to go down. He was tied in the bucket and lowered. A few seconds passed and no signal came on the rope so the bucket was hastily raised with Anderson's limp and apparently lifeless body in it. Another miner, Ernest Wheat, at that moment rode up on his bicycle and seeing the difficulty ripped Anderson's shirt open and began to pump his arms which finally revived him. With Wheat's help, Twiss' body was brought up, but he was dead. The body was shipped to his home in Centralia. (14:August 28, 1897)

Other producers of the season were Quietsch and Erickson who took out \$600. (14:January 9, 1897) Louis Quietsch bonded his claims later in the summer to the Mining and Milling Co. of Wisconsin. Quietsch was to receive \$10,000 for the seventeen month's lease and 25 per cent of any returns. (14:August 28, 1897) Later in the fall he bonded another claim for \$25,000.

W. A. Ford was a busy man that summer. He bonded his claim to O. W. Barlow in July for \$2,000. Barlow, with others, formed the Ford Mining Co. with Ford as manager. (14:October 16, 1897) When it began to produce in September



Ford offered Barlow \$500 to annul the bond. Poor Ford had been working the same ground for eight years without success. (14:September 25, 1897)

1898. The year 1898 saw the turn over of many small holdings into the hands of a large eastern company. First, Whittaker, York and Meagher sold their Trilby group on the Boulder Creek to the Swauk Creek Mining Co. of Wisconsin for \$10,000 in January. (14:January 15, 1898) The company put in hydraulic workings with Mr. Robert Engels from Philadelphia as treasurer and general manager. He put an assay outfit into his office which helped everyone in the camp. (14:February 26, 1898)

Another group of holdings were sold to T. P. Carson who was manager of the Cascade Mining Co. of Wisconsin. L. H. Jansen sold all his ownings to this company, which included nineteen claims and was the largest transaction ever to take place in the Swauk. (14:May 28, 1898) Carson put hydraulic machinery in these diggings also and constructed a reservoir on the creek. He made himself so popular that he was chosen postmaster in December after F. C. Lauderdale had resigned. (14:December 17, 1898)

Bigney, Meagher and York, Henton and McCauley bonded six claims on Williams Creek to a St. Louis syndicate for sixty days at a total of \$15,000 (14:July 16, 1898) It is not recorded what transpired after these companies took over

except to mention a total of about \$400 worth of nuggets taken by Robert Engels at various times during the summer.

In the meantime George Henton was piling up profits. In March he took out fourteen ounces (14:March 19, 1898) and \$408 worth of nuggets in June. (14:June 18, 1898) In July he took out a \$325 nugget plus others totaling \$410 and in July he received receipt #1 from the new U.S. Assay office in Seattle for \$4,000 in nuggets.

The lagging summer was enlivened by the discovery of gold in the gizzards of several ducks on the Wm. Jordan place six miles northeast of Ellensburg. Nez Jensen, as an authority, was called in to verify the fact and soon all of Duck Creek was claimed by anxious prospectors (14:June 9, 1898) while other men either joined the Spanish-American War or moved to the Klondike.

1899. Many individual holdings continued to work on during 1899. Charles Bigney, for one, was still prospering but the camp was depending more and more on the two major companies, the Cascade Mining Co. managed by T. P. Carson, and the Swauk Creek Mining Co managed by Robert Engels. The Capital quoted its correspondent as saying, "a great portion of the people in camp are depending largely for their work on the Cascade Company." (14:July 8, 1899) When it closed down in September, twenty men were put out of work. (14: April 15, 1899)

During the summer the Swauk Creek Mining Co. hired ten men who were all thrown out of work when a fire broke out, setting off a dozen sticks of dynamite which destroyed their shaft house and blacksmith shop. (14:October 28, 1899)

The only other excitement in camp seemed to be a rash of weddings: W. C. Marshall and Cora E. Robinson; Edgar R. McCallum and Jessie Lundberg; Herb Lundberg and Ida Virden; Ned Geary and Maggie Laws. The Mcallum-Lundberg ceremonies were accompanied by serenading the young couple on oil drums.

1900. Although the Ellensburg papers repeatedly said such things as, "Times promise to be better in the old camp this season than they have been in many years," (14:March 17, 1900) and, "It is the general belief that the coming season will be one of the livliest ever known in the Swauk mines and an unusual volume of business is expected," (14:March 17, 1900) the opposite proved to be true. The old "camp" was rapidly losing population. The Cascade Mining Co. erected an elevator to carry away tailings from pipes and flumes and was said to have a payroll of over \$1,000 per month, but the elevator didn't work as well as was expected so the clean-ups were small. (14:May 26, 1900)

Robert Engels created excitement in May by finding a huge nugget, "smooth as satin", worth \$300 (14:May 26, 1900) but that is all that was heard from him that summer. The papers lamented, "There seems to be some kind of a hoo-doo hanging over this camp. It is almost impossible to get

capital interested here." (14:April 14, 1900) Verbal attempts were made to re-establish a stage line from Ellensburg to the Swauk but nothing succeeded. (14:March 17, 1900) During the peak of the season, in July, the Swauk correspondent noted briefly, "There is not a great deal of work in camp because of some claims being in litigation." (14:July 14, 1900)

1901. The 1901 Swauk census showed 252 persons with 129 residing in Liberty. (14:February 23, 1901) If the unofficial figures of past years are reliable, this would show a decrease of about 50 per cent since 1894.

Two stirring events of the summer included the discovery of a huge nugget and the uncovering of a huge fraud. Henton and McCauley found a tremendous nugget said to be worth \$1000. This was the record for a nugget found in the camp. It was exhibited in Seattle with great excitement and taken to New York for the Buffalo Exposition. (14:March 20, 1901)

As for the fraud, in the early part of the year suit was brought in the federal courts against the Cascade Mining Co., L. H. Jansen, F. A. Rice, and John B. Dow. The Wilen brothers, A. M. Hawks, and James Hamilton alleged that Jansen presuming to act as secretary and manager of the Swauk Creek Mining Co. conspired with Rice and Dow to call a meeting of the Company and pass a resolution for the sale of the property transferring the same in 1898 from Rice to Jansen, then from Jansen to Dow and from Dow to the Cascade Mining Co. (14:January 19, 1901) Jansen, in the midst of the uproar,

absconded with the books to Kansas or Nebraska. The complainants asked for an annulment of the transfer, (14:January 19, 1901) which was evidently granted.

Another minor stir of interest in the camp occurred when "too much free beer" created a situation in which one man had a large slice bitten out of his ear by another fellow. (14:June 15, 1901)

Telephone lines were put into the Swauk that fall. (14:October 19, 1901)

1902-1904. The years 1902-1904 were slow ones for most miners. Swauk society was swinging with music, dancing, card playing and the formation of a literary society, but mining was very slack. (14:February 1, 1902) Men were drifting down from the Klondike and resettling, some of them on farms in the area but the old mines seemed worked out. Charles Bigney, who was still hiring men for his claims, took out some large nuggets, but his wife had died the preceding fall and he was slowing down.

1905. How things were progressing in the camp by 1905 is difficult to say because the outside world, as represented by the Ellensburg newspapers, seemed to have lost all or any interest and the big irrigation canal appeared more fascinating. Several of the old timers passed away; Andrew Flodin, Ole Anderson, and John Bloomquist.

It is strange to note, therefore, in the midst of this lethargy that the miners organized themselves into a new

mining district. Whether this move was intended to revive the camp or to draw itself together for protection is difficult to say. The boundaries were platted by A. F. York and reached from the westerly slopes of Table Mt. north to the line between Kittitas and Chelan counties, northeasterly to the high range dividing the Swauk basin from the Teanaway River, thence southeasterly along said divide to a point of intersection near the confluence of Swauk and First Creeks. (14:August 2, 1905)

1909. In 1909 A. F. York made a typical old timer's optimistic statement to the editor of the Capital. He was in town for the first time in two years and "spoke most hopefully of the old camp which he says is probably doing as well now as at any time in its history, although conservative men are the controlling element there."

"No dissatisfied men can be found in the camp," he said. "Some splendid prospects indicate that the camp will do even better from now on and the flow of gold that has marked the history of the Swauk for the past thirty years will continue on an increased scale." (14:June 4, 1909)

In spite of Mr. York's optimism, the Ellensburg Capital that year printed a booster supplement to the paper consisting of eight pages and did not once mention gold mining in the county. (14:April 16, 1909)

1914. In 1914 activity in the mines ceased almost completely with the advent of the First World War. The

younger men enlisted and the older men were pressed into service in the Cle Elum coal fields so the camp lay dormant for the duration of the war and some years after.

#### Dredging Activities

In 1925 Frank Bryant appeared on the Swauk scene with plans for turning the old camp into a boom town again. He lived in Roslyn and had prospected in the camp in 1917. The man was quite a promoter and knew how to interest people in his work as few other miners could. When he purchased the rights to Nelson's Bar (formerly worked by Gus Nelson), he spread the word so widely that over two hundred people came one Sunday afternoon to watch the clean up of the sluice boxes. The Ellensburg Record reported fifty-three cars parked along the highway. (15:April 1, 1925) The Bryant gift of persuasion and a lively imagination were put to work to plan a dredging operation on Swauk Creek. He promoted the formation of a corporation named the Swauk Mining and Dredging Company and made himself field manager. In the early twenties he set up a small second-hand gasoline dredge with two cubic foot buckets. He did pretty well with it, recovering an average of thirty-seven cents per cubic yard. In order to acquire more capital for a larger dredge in 1925 Bryant leased all of his holdings to the Kittitas Gold Mining Co. Several influential men of the Ellensburg Community were involved in the venture. Bryant became vice-president and general manager of the concern,

but A. E. Emerson, former deputy county engineer, was president. The Board of Directors included: treasurer, Charles F. Stafford, M.D. of Cle Elum; secretary E. J. Bryant, a realtor from Seattle (brother of Frank Bryant); Mark Pennington, president of a Yakima fruit company; D. L. Thacher a Yakima contractor; O. H. Solibakke, western immigration agent of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad; and John Faust, owner of the Ellensburg Telephone Co. Judge Ralph Kauffman was attorney for the company. O. W. Boice was dredgemaster. The corporation was capitalized at one million dollars with 10,000 shares at \$100 par value and \$300,000 treasury stock. Shares were sold all over the state and in the mid-west. (29)

Seven thousand shares of the new company were transferred to the old Swauk Mining and Dredging Co. in sole consideration for the entire property including water rights, ditches, and flumes. This constituted 106 acres of land, much of which had once been owned by T. P. Carson's Cascade Mining Company. (29)

A large second-hand dredge was brought from the Powder River in Oregon. Eighteen railroad cars were needed to help transport the dredge which had a 350 horsepower motor. (15: April 7, 1925)

On February 22 of 1926 the dredge began its first operation. Hundreds of people from all over the state spent Washington's birthday watching the big dredge swing into action for the first time. Forty people came from Seattle



on a special sleeper the preceding evening. Typical of the Bryant's showmanship was an American flag floating high over the dredge. Its owner, E. A. Weeks, was quoted as saying, "Seven other gold dredges from the arctic snows to near the tropics have flown the flag. Every dredge which carried that flag on its first working day is a success and is still working successfully today." The dredge worked three hours that day with crowds watching, newspapermen questioning, and a movie camera grinding. (15:February 6, 1926)

Excitement over the machine continued to run high during the spring and summer. Even though the company made no statements as to their recoveries (Editor of Record later stated the company took out nearly \$50,000) (15:May 8, 1940) two thousand people watched the work on Livingston Bar on March 15 and again a party from Seattle came in a special Pullman car in April to watch a clean up. Many of this crowd were former Alaska miners, all having had a hand at panning. It is said they all found color. (29)

An observer remembers that the dredge carved its own pond. It brought gravel on a chain into the bridge, where the gravel was washed into the riffles to catch the gold. The tailings were then piled behind. Five or six men worked on the operation. (36)

E. A. Batwell, writing for the Puget Sound Electric Journal, described part of the operation in more detail.

"Gravels of different coarseness are screened through the rumble and to the riffles where the gold makes its first acquaintance with mercury. From the riffles the gold impregnates the quicksilver and is taken to the amalgamator house where the mass is processed.

"From the amalgamator the gold bearing mercury is taken and the steel plates are carefully scraped of everything that has the appearance of value and is put into the container or the crucible. When the heat is applied, the mercury is driven off in the way of vapor and through a condenser pipe into an enameled pan of water where the mercury solidifies and is ready to go on its way again, separating gold from foreign matter." (44)

Mr. Batwell said he watched the making of a twelve pound brick. (29)

An accident shut down the dredge for about a week. A big cave-in of the bank ahead of the boat caused a large wave in the pond which raised the forward end of the dredge. When it settled back, it settled over the jagged end of a huge stump, piercing the hull and sinking the dredge. The water in the pond was lowered and the hole patched. (29)

Later the company found its machine too large for the shallow gravel of Swauk Creek and moved the boat into Deer Gulch. There they constructed a dam to raise the dredge eight feet. (29)

All of the work halted abruptly after only 71 days at a 200-foot bank which the dredge could not surmount. The editor of the Ellensburg Evening Record described it this way:

"The Kittitas Gold Mining Co. ... was officered and managed by highly respected, well known and successful Northwest businessmen. These men were not essentially mining men and a wide divergence of opinion as to how

the ground should be dredged arose at all times, with the inevitable result that no really definite policy or definite objective was ever fully outlined. The ground and dredge were never worked with proper efficiency."

"Furthermore, it became evident that although the dredge could dig and wash a 65-foot bank it could not stack its tailings. No money was available to lengthen the stacker as all stock had been withdrawn from sale."

The dredge was too large to work the Swauk Creek and too small to handle the heavy over-burden of Williams Creek. (29)

So the operation folded up and Frank Bryant became the scapegoat for all the problems of the company. Many of the stockholders looked on him as a fraud. He continued to live in the camp and work on his tunnel.

The excitement over the dredge, however, had not begun to change the population of the Swauk much. By 1916 everyone had left old Liberty except the Livingston brothers who had operated the post office and a small store there for years. Everyone else was living in Meaghersville. So in 1916 when the Livingstons went out of business the post office building was moved up to Meaghersville and the tiny community was renamed Liberty because of the post office. The old Liberty buildings gradually disintegrated. In new Liberty Mrs. Billy Johnson ran the store and the post office for many years. Mrs. Powers was recorder of notices. (27)

The camp lay quiet from 1926 to 1932. When the Jordin brothers, Ollie and Clarence, each made strikes that year, the gates burst open to a rush of depression penniless men. There are no records as to the exact number that came, but

it is thought there may have been almost one thousand in the beginning years. (14:June 24, 1932) It is certain that all of the old and abandoned cabins and claims were taken up. Almost all of these men were inexperienced and consequently high hopes dwindled rapidly.

The Jordin brothers, three of them who had lived in the camp since the early boom days, were almost the only old timers left and were the authorities of the camp. Ollie ran a weekly wagon to carry supplies to the miners and continued to take out gold from his Flag Mountain tunnel.

A rash of robbing sluice boxes and number of attempted claim jumpings, several fist fights, and the stealing of supplies caused the organization of a vigilante committee being patterned after those organized in the early days. (14:June 24, 1932)

Perhaps typical of the activities of the depression years is the story of the Wall Street Mine. About 1909 three men, William Newstrum, George Radabaugh, and George Sides, took the advice of an old prospector and put their money into developing a shaft high on a steep hillside in Cougar Gulch. They formed the Wall Street Mining Co. and developed a tram-mel to carry the ore far down the hill to a mill which they built on the creek. Several men were hired to work the mine and mill.

The mine produced well. Billy Newstrum's children can graphically remember, for instance, a big sugar bowl of dust

and two gold bricks each three inches long.

In 1915 the miner in charge of the works absconded with all the gold. This forced the discouraged men to give up and close the mine. Although the robber was caught in San Francisco two years later and served a jail sentence none of the gold was recovered. The men kept up the assessment work but the mill and mine were looted and most of it destroyed over the years. Many people went up to live in the cabin and dig in the mine. There is, of course, no record as to the amount of gold taken out during those years, but official records show \$50,000 prior to 1935.

In 1933 Billy Newstrum, who had never given up the idea of the mine, grubstaked his jobless son-in-law, Jack Jordan, to work in the Wall Street. Jack's wife and year old son went with him to live in the old cabin. They repaired, calcimined it, put linoleum down, screens on the windows and cleared out the pack rat debris. Jordan, with the help of Tom Livingston, began to cut a tunnel from the base of the hill into where they figured the shaft would meet it, the idea being to join the two so that it would be easier to remove the ore. The hillside was solid basalt and quartz. For two back-breaking years, the work continued. The second summer Ed Lannigan, manager of the Roslyn Company Store, bought out Newstrum and paid wages to the miners. Newstrum continued to grubstake his son-in-law, but Lannigan also paid \$3 a day. A tractor was taken up the steep trail and used for power in the reconstructed mill. One entire summer was spent in re-building the mill in preparation for grinding

the stock pile of ore taken from the tunnel. But Lannigan and Jordan had a falling out in the spring of 1935 and so Jordan left. There had been no profits from the venture which results were only typical of dozens of others who had tried to make a living on gold during those depression years. Camp conditions gradually dwindled to pre-depression proportions.

Then in 1940 a new dredging operation became interested in the Swauk. The defunct Kittitas Gold Mining Co. had sold all of its property and equipment to the General Gold Corporation, a Washington subsidiary to the General Placers Corporation. This in turn was sold to the Clear Creek Dredging Company of California which acquired a total of fifteen miles of creek bottom stretching from the Virden Ranch in Horse Canyon to Mt. Home and one and a half miles on Williams Creek. The holdings included forty mineral claims and three hundred acres of patented ground.

The operations were well advertised because Clifford Kaynor, editor of the Ellensburg Record was one of the stock holders and published a four-page slick paper newspaper supplement to promote the company. John Faust was president of the new company, and John Thompson was secretary.

Fifteen to eighteen men operated the dredging unit in three eight-hour shifts. The diesel dredge had a two and one-fourth cubic drag line. The washing plant was mounted on a 42-foot by 34-foot steel hull operating on caterpillar

treads. The machine operating from shore dumped gravel into a hopper with a drag line at the estimated rate of 3,000 to 3,500 yards a day. The 80-ton washing plant and 60-ton drag line unit consisted of a tromwell, stacker, and Hungarian riffles. (15:May 8, 1940)

The outfit worked for about two years and, according to Albert Lauch, took out about \$100,000 above expenses. He says it quit because the company couldn't get permission to take its heavy equipment across the highway where the creek crossed. George Bettas, who sold some land to the company, said that when World War II started the government took over the equipment.

All was quiet in the hills for almost twenty years after the dredging. Only the old timers, the die hards had stayed on. The three Jordin brothers were among them, satisfied to make only a living, but always working for a strike. Others were Lawrence Autherier who worked for Frank Bryant, Jack Kirsch who came during the depression, and Frank Bloomquist, a cousin of the Jordins.

The rest of the camp lay idle and gradually has been taken over by "summer prospectors"; people who want free summer cabins but who have no intentions of ever mining. There are all kinds of ways of getting around the government's requirement that \$100 of assessment work must be done yearly in order to hold the land. Some very pretty summer homes have been built on old claims.

The only excitement in this interim was a large strike in 1957 by Clarence Jordin. He and two brothers working for him, Ted and Albert Marcear, took 120 pounds of gold from Jordin's Ace of Diamonds mine on Flag Mountain. The take included two seven pound chunks of massed wire gold. As thrilling as this was the papers paid little attention and there was certainly no rush precipitated.

#### Present Activities

In 1963 there were three very active concerns in the Swauk besides Ollie and Clarence Jordin's persistent scraping and Jack Kirsch's endless digging. The most important of these operations is a dredging concern being carried on by Midnight Mines, Inc. with Virgil Hiner as its manager.

In the early twenties the Salem Mining Co. consolidated many claims on Williams Creek and filed a patent on them in 1928. This company lost the claims through mortgages when they were sold in 1943 at a sheriffs sale for \$5,500 to Dr. Eastwood (the second husband of Mrs. Frank Bryant) who died before they could be paid for. Mrs. Eastwood then sold the ground to Nugget Properties who invested about \$160,000 into hydraulic and dredging units. They worked hydraulically in 1953 and dredged in 1955. Both operations were unsuccessful. They leased to a Tacoma company in 1957-58.

The Golden Thunderbird Mining Co., a closed corporation of five stockholders, (Virgil Hiner controls with 65 per cent of the shares), leased the property in 1960 and



purchased it in February of 1963. During the fall of 1963, Hiner joined with the Midnight Mining Company which is owned by Ed Winecoop. Midnight Mines have several holdings elsewhere and deal mostly with uranium.

The property now consists of ten patented and four unpatented claims which includes all of the town of Liberty and the famous diggings of Charles Bigney and Tommy Meagher. See the details of this on page 135. Hiner maintains that he owns all of the buildings in the little town and that the fourteen people still living there are squatters. He will allow them to remain until he begins to dig there which will be, according to his plan, in 1965 or 1966. Of course the people of Liberty deny that he has this right. They maintain that it is a town site and not a mineral site.

At the same time, The Wenatchee National Forest Ranger declares that most of the land in Swauk and Lion Gulch is of questionable mineral value and has hindered the sale of the timber because the claimees are loath to give timber rights. Therefore, the Forest Service declares it will attempt to remove this land from mineral status. (11:17) So it would appear that the days of the old camp are numbered.

Hiner is using old equipment which he partially has designed himself. It consists of a shovel on treads which digs into the bank to bed rock hoisting the gravel into a hopper. The hopper deposits the smaller gravel into a shaker screen where it is washed. A nugget trap is con-

stantly watched by a worker and large chunks of rocky quartz are piled for crushing. Any particles smaller than seven-eighths inch is pumped through a hose over a shaking drum with rubber riffles. There large particles are picked out by hand. Eighty five per cent of the gold is caught here. The minute particles go on for further washing and panning.

Five men work this equipment and take out about ninety six cents per yard. They process about fifty cubic yards an hour. Hiner states that they have recovered 221 pounds of gold in one year's work.

The plan is to put in a larger, more efficient operation in 1964. To acquire capital for this was the reason for the merger of Golden Thunderbird and Midnight Mines.

Hiner says that when the dredging is completed he intends to level off the ground and sell it for residences. He also speaks of using the old store and post office building as a small mining museum.

Another interesting operation currently busy in the Swauk is Miners Mining Inc. Ed Miner has carried on various activities in his twelve years in the Swauk but is currently using a trammel washer and screen on Snow Shoe Ridge to wash out wire gold. He encloses tiny samples of this gold in velvet-lined plastic boxes. On the back is printed a story of Swauk Gold. Miner sold these at the Seattle World's Fair and at Disneyland. He is presently perfecting a fascinating small glass tube with a magnifying glass in the top. He puts minute particles of gold and garnet sand into the tube. The

powerful magnifying glass shows off the gold and the garnet sand to perfection. Most of the gold material he uses is purchased from Hiner.

Albert Lauch is an ingenious man with another scheme. At present he operates the Swauk Eats Cafe a few miles north of Lauderdale Junction. He has resided in the Swauk for over twenty years, at first running a ball mill on Baker Creek. A few years ago he was active in an attempt to raise a company for recovering a new metal he claimed he had discovered but the company collapsed under law suits.

A fourth man should be mentioned although he is not actively mining at the present time. Harold C. Lewis was active with Ed Miner in an attempt to take gold from Mt. Stewart Serpentine. When the attempt failed, both men came to the Swauk. Lewis worked for Miner as a chemist. Miner intends eventually to put in a plant larger than the one he operated in Cle Elum. In the meantime Lewis explains the process in a letter dated, July 11, 1963.

"Most of the old time prospectors used a tangible and hard, but proven method of finding gold in the Swauk and Liberty Mining areas. They might dig numerous Test Holes two to four feet deep, then pan for color about every six or eight inches. If a color (gold) lead were found in this manner, they would concentrate on their chosen spot, in hopes of following a seam in the formation that may lead to a pocket of gold or a glory hole. A good seam or lead may widen out into what is called a Kidney and hold an abundance of the precious yellow metal. The habit or nature of a good Kidney seam usually repeats itself, and often leads to other pockets.

"The particular Sand Rock and Shale formations in certain areas of the Liberty Swauk area allow for the extraction of gold with a more complex method. Chemicals

and heat (furnace retorting) play the major role in this method. The aforementioned Sand Rock and Shale were sedimentary deposits of ancient ocean beds. It is general knowledge of our present oceans' wealth in minute gold particles. Reasonably thinking then, one might consider the results when an inland sea slowly dries up and deposits its heavier, precious metallic contents in its sandy floor bed. Although extremely fine, it is there, and can be recovered.

"First the proportional mixture of Sand Rock and Shale are ground to a rather fine mesh. This finely ground ore is then placed in a crucible, with the proper flux and roasted for a given time, according to size of the batch. The resulting "Button" of metal is then placed thru a metal roll in order to thin it out and let the second treatment of chemicals work faster. The rolled or flattened strips of metal are then placed in acid vats and processed thru what is known as the circuit. Impurities are removed in this manner, and the fine gold, looking like reddish-brown sand is filtered off, washed several times and allowed to dry. This dried fine gold may then be placed in a crucible, along with a simple melting flux, and again smelted. The results produce refined gold of high value.

"There are several other methods of chemically extracting this fine as "Frog-Hair" gold. Using three simple chemicals and a big pot kept below the boiling point, a leaching method for gold recovery is possible. The leached gold is picked up by Mercury in the bottom of the pot. When retorted off, the mercury yields the fine gold in the form of a mat. This mat contains pure gold as nature designed it.

"Black Sands in the area, usually ignored by the old timers also carry their share of gold values. Most people expect Nature's gold to come only in the familiar yellow, but the right type of Blacks produce abundant values also. The secret is to make this seemingly valueless product yield its wealth. By using a light oxidizing roast and a Chlorine Chemical treatment, the shell or binder of these blacks will part, thus allowing a simple acid combination to precipitate the freed gold, which is then filtered, dried and processed as before mentioned.

"Most oldsters scoff at these confounded methods, considering the pick, shovel, and sluice box the miners best friends. Right they may be, for many have made their stake. At the same time many agree up to setting 70 per cent of the fine gold has escaped over the end of the sluice box.

"Chemicals and controlled heat methods could create a new gold bonanza in the district, considering the untold millions of tons of sedimentary formations just lying around.

"Working with gold in its many interesting phases, it develops as an end product of eons of evolution. Gold is formed from brother and sister ores, Sulphur, iron, copper, mercury, and others. Sometimes these marriages produce a semi-gold chloride in itself not quite mature. If carried by erosion and water or a ferracti or ironized field this practically invisible gold may be precipitated by the just right iron ingredient from another zone. In this manner nuggets can be formed, and repeatedly formed in time, even tho the river or stream had been once swept clean by dredges or scuba divers.

"Miss Jordan, as you note, I did not give detailed formulas for the procedure mentioned above. They have come thru hard work and experience. I took the Liberty to reserve these for my own protection."<sup>2</sup>  
(32)

All of this harkens back to the mysterious alchemy of the middle ages but Professor Edward Klucking of the Central Washington State College faculty maintains that these processes are definitely possible.

Liberty in 1963 is a quiet little ghost town nestled in the hills on Williams Creek. If one were to drive up its street he would first see the Hiner dredging operation on the outskirts of the village. Next is the old school and town meeting hall standing delapidated and empty. Across from it is the old store and post office with ancient gas pumps leaning toward each other out front. Harold Lewis, his wife and three children live next to the school and then there

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<sup>2</sup>All spelling and punctuation errors are Lewis'.

is a row of weathered empty homes. On the right hand side in a log house he built himself lives Jack Kirsch, the only active miner left in the town. He scrapes out a living by working daily in his mine, bringing home the ochre and boiling it down on his old kitchen range, then going down to the creek to pan it out. His yard and the sides of his house are piled high with the varieties of stone he quarries out for sale to tourists and occasionally to garden shops in Seattle. Jack is of the old school, always looking for a strike but content to get his "living straight from nature."

Up the street a way and on the other side is the tiny one and a half room house of Clarence Jordin and his friend. Clarence is crippled with arthritis and doesn't work anymore but his friend rides his motorcycle to work every day at the Baker Creek Cafe.

Next to Jordin's house is the oldest building left in Liberty which is still inhabited. Across the road is the old Liberty Hotel which has been the home of Ollie Jordin and his wife for many years. And that is the population. That is the spirit of the old camp.

## CHAPTER V

### CHINESE

That the Chinese were in the Swauk before the whites arrived is well authenticated, that they took out plenty of gold is universally believed, but little else is known about them.

The Chinese population of Washington territory in 1881 was about 3,300. (17:50) Many were brought north from California as laborers in the Salmon industry, but harsh treatment soon caused some to escape to the gold fields. (12:50) Over six thousand were imported to construct the Northern Pacific Railroad. Many left for the gold fields of Idaho and Montana and possibly the Swauk. They seem to have been highly successful at mining. At least all of the miners believed they were. No one was quite sure, however, and the popular story circulated that whenever a Chinaman was asked how much he was taking out he would invariably reply, "Oh, sometime two-bittee, sometime four-bittee, sometime six-bittee....heap plenty for Chinaman." (16:September 10, 1892)

It is said that the Chinese were the most expert with the gold pan of all miners and the most tireless of all the workers. "Cleaning the bedrock that had been mined over by

placer miners and deserted for newer and richer fields of operation, he would sit scraping and scratching with his bedrock tools and sweeping with his little bamboo broom, gleanings in his gold pan for twenty hours a day." (4:13)

The Chinese were the first to introduce mercury for the recovery of fine flake and flour gold. (4:13) In the Swauk as elsewhere, they also used a "rocker" which was a wooden box with rockers on it similar to a cradle. Into this they would dump their "pay dirt". Using a long handled half gallon dipper they would pour water into the box, then slosh it back and forth. Copper plates were coated with quicksilver and they caught the gold while the dirt and the rocks were washed clean. Every four hours or so the rocker would be cleaned. (12:51) Similar rockers were at first widely used by white miners also.

The Chinamen were very clannish, seldom associating with the whites and seldom bothering to learn English. In the Swauk they lived under the most primitive conditions, evidently feeling that they were camped only temporarily as indeed the case proved to be. Clarence Jordin believes that there must have been four or five hundred men in the Swauk Camp at one time (no women) but the Cle Elum History Report quotes the number as "nearly 200." (21:14) They maintained their old world manner of dressing; long, loose robes, wide pants, wooden shoes or floppy, heeless slippers. Their long ques, says Clarence Jordin, hung almost to the ground.



They never caused any trouble, were always peaceable and managed to take care of their own problems as is demonstrated by the manner in which they disciplined a recalcitrant who stole gold from a friend. They cut off his head. (27)

Their diet seemed to consist mostly of rice which they brought in themselves, probably from the Dalles. The other supplies they bought at the Carson store on the mouth of Williams Creek, paying with gold dust. (27)

They always traveled on foot. Bat Masterson, a lifelong resident of the Teanaway, recalls his father telling that in 1879 he and his brother were hired by a group of Chinese to pack them down to Ellensburg. The gold was loaded in large sacks and there was a great deal of it. The boys led the horses while the Chinese followed on foot. The Chinamen couldn't keep up with the boys and were soon left behind on the trail. When the men reached Ellensburg an hour behind the boys and the gold, they immediately inspected the sacks. (36)

The Chinese miners built their own small cabins in which several lived together. They all held separate, individual claims. Evidently they were willing to perform any other work because Masterson says that in 1881 his grandfather hired a group of them to help build a four-mile irrigation ditch. Others were highly successful in the laundry and restaurant businesses in Ellensburg, Cle Elum, and Wenatchee.

The Chinese left the Swauk as mysteriously and as suddenly as they arrived. The reasons for their exodus is very clearly spelled out. First of all, the Exclusion and Immigration Act of 1882 specified that all Chinese who could not prove their legal entry into the U. S. were subject to immediate deportation. This caused a large population decrease. (17:50) Secondly, they worked for lower wages than anyone else. Thirdly, their strange, secretive ways aroused the suspicion and animosity of almost everyone. Evidently in some localities along the Columbia River, Chinese had established placer camps as means of concealing opium smuggling. The discovery of an opium den four miles below Wenatchee in 1893 must have angered a great many whites in the Swauk area also. (16:March 25, 1893) But most of the Chinese had disappeared from Swauk before that. There had been an Indian massacre of twenty-five Chinese in Salmon-la-sac (then called China Camp) (6:183) in 1880 and in 1884 the minutes of a miner's meeting in John Black's cabin read:

Resolved, that all Chinamen within the boundaries of the Swauk mining district shall leave and shall not be allowed to work on or hold any mining ground in the district, and that no Chinamen shall hereafter be allowed to come into the camp for the purpose of mining and that a notice be served on those now in the limits of this district to leave at once under penalty of the law. (29)

There is no account of the results of this notice, except that there were no Chinese left in the Swauk by 1890. (27)

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

The life of Swauk gold camp can be easily divided into seven areas of activity:

- A. Discovery and initial rush: 1873
- B. Moderate activity: 1874-1890
- C. Boom: 1891-1905
- D. Lag: 1906-1920
- E. Period of the Dredges: 1920-1929
- F. Depression Boom: 1932-1939
- G. Modern lag: 1940---

The first gold in the Swauk was discovered quite incidentally by the Goodwin party of Yakima in 1874. Although the party attempted to keep its findings secret, the word quickly spread and a small rush developed.

Very little results were made until Torkel Tweet hit a pocket in June of 1891. In rapid succession several other miners who had been working unsuccessfully for some time hit rich strikes. This precipitated a new rush to the area, and rapidly developed two little communities; Liberty and Meagher-ville, which became small scale boom towns.

As in all gold fields, the prospectors had little capital to improve their findings and were forced to either bond

or sell to large companies. The companies either held the property and did no developing or attempted development and found it too expensive. The largest of these corporations was the Cascade Mining Co. which after six years gave up the cause admitting that there was gold, but that it was too expensive to take out.

This pattern of small miners being forced out and large companies clinging to unused property caused the ultimate decline of the camp.

By 1916 the town of Liberty was empty although Meaghersville still had a handful. The Liberty store and postoffice was moved up the gulch to Meaghersville giving Meaghersville its new name of Liberty which it still retains.

The camp lay dormant until 1925 when an enterprising newcomer, Frank Bryant, pushed the formation of a dredging company and involved many prominent men in the affair. Thus because of inexperience, the endeavor was unsuccessful and was bitterly denounced.

A few years later the Great Depression seemed to sweep across the Northwest causing many desperate men to try gold mining as a last resort. This influx was spurred on by a strike of Ollie Jordin's; the only notable find during that period. The majority of inexperienced depression workers had no money to develop expensive machinery necessary to work the already multi-plucked diggings and most left the camp poorer and sadder than when they arrived.

The camp cleared out again during the war years and the following period of prosperity. Gold mining has been called a depression industry.

At the present time there are two small active concerns operating in the Swauk, three dedicated old timers and a few impermanent prospectors.

With the current cost of labor being what it is and the price of gold remaining static, gold mining is no longer a profitable occupation unless it is accompanied by some unusual feature such as Ed Miner's view-bottles or Virgil Hiner's ability to sell specimen nuggets to speculators at triple the mint value.

If one were to compare Swauk with the vast California rush, the camp shows up as a very, very inconsequential dabbling. If, however, it is properly placed in the over-all spreading out of the post-California gold era Swauk was about average in size and production. It was not nearly so large as some Idaho workings or even the Okanogan mines. It was one of the many, many pockets of discovery reaching across northern Washington, Idaho, and Montana. There were similarities in the history and character of these camps except that Swauk seemed to have had from the beginning a more settled nature.

There were a few saloons, little drunkenness, no killings, no bawdy houses, no vigilantes. In fact it would seem that the miners went out of their way to be respectable.

They formed dancing societies, literary circles, entertained with potlucks and musicals. The women in camp seemed to be jealously protected and treated with respect.

There were other elements, of course, but the prevailing atmosphere seemed to be one of cheerful, friendly respectability coupled with a healthy tolerance of anyone who had deviated from the norm.

I believe these things can be accounted for in two ways. Many of the earliest miners in the area were married men who brought their families with them into the camp and stayed for many years. Their children grew up and remained in the camp. This had a stabilizing effect on the area.

Secondly, of the three men who took out the most gold and were consequently the heroes of the camp, two of them, Thomas Meagher and Charles Bigney, were married, highly thought of and relatively cultured. These leaders helped set the tone for the entire encampment.

Liberty had men who were dedicated to mining but also were concerned with civic affairs. Many of the men were willing to take time from their diggings to assume responsibilities in town and camp government. Some were active in road development, in construction, in surveying. In other words, they were interested in developing a permanent community rather than a tent-town as many camps were.

In another respect, Liberty differs from the majority of Washington boom towns. It was, and is more permanent.

It has had, if one considers Liberty and Meaghersville as a unit, a continuous population since 1874. Few boom towns can boast this. Most boom towns are now ghost towns. Again the reason for this is the nature of the early prospectors. Families first on the scene have remained the longest. The Livingstons arrived in 1885 and remained until the 1950's. The Jordins and Bloomquists arrived with the initial rush in 1874 and still remain in Liberty. This has given continuity to the camp which few areas achieve.

#### Social and Economic Effects on Kittitas County

There are so many segments of a valley's social life that it is rather difficult to dissect them and determine what role one element contributes. However, I feel that the Swauk mines have played a double role in Kittitas County social life.

First, the miners who entered the valley for the sole purpose of mining had very little effect on the county. They usually drifted in and out of Swauk camp making little or no impression on Valley life. They frequented the saloons of Ellensburg, Roslyn and Cle Elum but even those sporadically. Because of difficult road conditions most of the year, the men were pretty much isolated. The Liberty and Meaghersville communities were also nearly self-sustaining and the miners had no real need to visit the larger communities. Very few of these men married and settled in the county. Of those who

did none ever played an active role in county social, cultural, business or political life.

Aside from the saloons the miners found little entertainment in Ellensburg. On the contrary, Ellensburg and Cle Elum often went to the Swauk in search of diversion. Swauk Fourth of July celebrations were colorful, well planned and hilarious. Dozens of Valley people left the city each summer to attend these events. Weekly dances at Liberty and later at Lauderdale also called forth many of the valley people on Saturday night excursions.

Although Swauk residents did not influence county life many permanent Valley residents played an important role in Swauk business. These men were largely investors in property or development companies. Ellensburg's pioneer merchant family, the Shoudy's, first laid out the town of Liberty and briefly opened its first store. Ellensburg's illustrious lawyer and first mayor, Austin Mires, was very active in the developing of claims. Its physician, Dr. J. C. McCauley had a partnership in an important claim. People from all walks of Valley life; the farmers such as the Schneblys and the Bulls, the merchants such as the Meaghers and the Shoudy's, the businessmen such as John Faust, saloon keepers, professional people, newspapermen, college professors, all delved into Swauk speculating, some were moderately successful, some not.

This leads one to discuss the economic importance of the Swauk to Kittitas County. To be sure, a great



deal of Kittitas money went into the Swauk. Did the county benefit from the mines?

The answer is a resounding "Yes." Much of the gold itself left the valley in the pokes ( a poke is a sack ) of miners. Much was sold to assay offices and mints in Seattle, Helena and San Francisco. But the bulk of the profits was spent in the Valley. The sporadic trips to town completely depleted the purses of many, many miners who felt a compulsion to rid themselves of the thing for which they had so laboriously toiled. For the majority of men the money was never invested but spent wastefully on good times, hard liquor and impressing the local populace. All of this profit fell into the hands of the waiting county merchant.

That the big boom occurred in the 1890's was of inestimable value to the county because during this time the whole county was suffering a severe depression. Ellensburg became the supply center for not only the Swauk but also the Blewett and Peshastin camps. Horses were constantly at a premium and other supplies shot up in price. Undoubtedly this local stroke of luck kept Ellensburg and Cle Elum heads above the water during a very difficult economic crisis.

Because the Swauk was the only place in the county with any money, Ellensburg, Cle Elum and even Yakima merchants flocked to the hills to peddle their wares. Food-stuffs in particular were profitable sources of income. The Swauk miners had an easy time acquiring supplies; they didn't have

to travel out of the hills, the supplies came to them. This was a distinct contrast to the Alaska fields where goods were so lacking that men paid a dollar per potato.

After 1900 the economic benefits of the Swauk to the county declined. During the mid 20's the camp revived very briefly when the dredging created a tourist attraction that brought scores of out-of-county people through Ellensburg to view the diggings.

During the depression in 1929-39 some money trickled from the Swauk, but not enough probably, to affect the county one way or another. The Liberty store flourished and, of course, bought its supplies from Ellensburg.

#### Amount of Wealth Taken From Swauk

After perusing all of the written material available, it is still impossible to make even an educated guess as to the amount of gold taken out of the Swauk. There are nearly consecutive reports on three or four major mines, but even those reports are largely estimate or heresay. Gold which was sold outside the county, as most was, was generally not tabulated or reported. The larger companies which soon took over individual claims were closed mouthed about their profits.

With exception of a few men; less than ten, only minor amounts were accumulated. Most men could not boast that they were taking out better than adequate wages.

Of those who hit "big strikes" not one became a wealthy man. There were no fortunes made such as in the California

and Alaska rushes, no dramatic rises to affluence. Swauk camp has had plenty of gold but it has been widely scattered among a good many individuals. Perhaps the Chinese who had hoarded their laboriously accumulated store and hauled it back to China with them fared better than anyone else. Who knows what heights of luxury and opulence Swauk gold provided in starving China?

### Personality of Miners

The gold prospector and miner remains an enigma to the modern man. What prompted his search for the impossible? What drove him to back-breaking labor year after year?

I think there were two kinds of Swauk miners. The first type was a gambler, a get-rich-quick man who perhaps out of adventure or desperation was willing to take the big chance of finding a fortune. This was the man who drifted from one field to another in rapid succession. This was the man who gave it a rush try and then gave up. The majority of all rush miners were like him.

The second type of miner was a man who wasn't really interested in money at all. He was interested in gold, yes, but not for money's sake. The miner who stayed with it year after year loved gold for all of its other qualities. He liked the feel of it in his hand, the gleam of it in his pot and the weight of it in his poke. More than that, he loved the anticipation of perhaps finding it. I really believe it was immaterial to him whether he made a strike or not. So

long as there was a possibility that he might strike he was in the perpetual mental and emotional state he found indispensable to life. He was willing to perform horrendous feats of labor so long as he could continue the digging.

This was a man who literally loved the freedom his work gave him. He could not bear to be tied down, to be inside, to take orders from someone else. His was the essence of all pioneer spirit which created America - the spirit of pilgrim and fur trader, of Daniel Boone and Walt Whitman - the spirit of personal independence.

It is interesting to note that these men, when they found the right conditions and kindred spirits, were willing to settle down and stay in one place even if they found no gold. They were not necessarily wanderers, they only sought the elements of freedom maintained in the Swauk and so long as it continued they were satisfied to stay - gold or not.

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B I O G R A P H I E S

TORKEL TWEET & A. W. JOHNSON

Billy and Tom could hold their liquor...usually, but Tom could never hang on to money. He worked the Swauk mines for forty-three years and took out a fortune, but when he died in 1940 they found \$500 in nuggets and dust on him. That was all. How did he get rid of the fortune? By just having fun. Torkel Tweet had more fun than any sour dough you ever saw and he could hold his liquor...usually.

Once he went to Seattle with \$1,500 and spent it on a long celebration. Later he took \$10,000 to Cle Elum and virtually bought the town for two days. He returned broke but had managed to salvage a five-gallon demijohn of mountain dew which he kept track of and took home with him.

"Ay was coming to das mine with my demijohn," he said. "She was ver' dark and ay cannot see too well. Ay was headed for one yuge boulder which is near cabin und ay feel sure ay can find him. Wile ay was getting drunk in Cle Elum, some fool Chinyman must have moved da road, because fer ay can say Yak Robinson, ay have slam dat boulder und smashed my demijohn. So wen ay get back home ay have not wan ting to show for all my yack which ay spend in Cle Elum." (29)

Tweet's partner, Billy Johnson was a hard drinker, too, but he kept a tight hold to his money. The two went to Cle-

Elum every week with their team and hauled home five gallons of liquor. On one occasion (perhaps it was the time Tom dragged Billy home with delirium tremens (26)), the pair hired the Cle Elum town band to come out to the camp. They serenaded every day until the liquor gave out. (35)

Although the two men were partners for many years, Billy mostly lived alone while Tom lived, at least part of the time, in a cabin with York and Peterson. In July of 1892 the cabin burned down and the men lost everything they had. (14:July 14, 1892)

But Tweet's claim was a bonanza and the loss couldn't have hurt him much. He was running an arrastra with Peterson in 1891 (14:November 19, 1891), ordinarily turning out an average of an ounce per day per man (14:June 25, 1891), but in three extraordinary June days of 1891 they turned up fifty ounces worth \$960 which were displayed in an Ellensburg store window. This was added to a week later bringing the total to \$2,320; the result of two weeks work. A lyrical newspaper editor called the display "a sight for the gods". (14:June 9, 1892)

Tweet later joined with A. W. Johnson in three quartz claims above Swauk Creek. They were the Little York, Phoenix and Settlers claims. At one time the two men hit a \$65,000 pocket. Tweet blew his share, but you couldn't get a nickel out of Johnson.

Billy Johnson was a typical quiet Swede. Tom Tweet was Norwegian. For awhile they lived together in a little

shack. Some days Tom would stay home to clean up the cabin while Billy went out to work the mine. One afternoon Tom went after Billy to make him help clean and found his partner calmly sitting on a hillside picking out gold pieces and putting them in his grimy handkerchief. They took \$10,000 out of that pocket. (27)

Perhaps it was the winter the two men cut the 180-foot tunnel in the Phoenix mine (14:April 6, 1893) that they got cabin fever. All winter long Tom cut his wood about three feet long and sat in his chair before the fire poking the wood in a little at a time. It saved him the effort of going out into the cold. The two men had a keg of blasting powder in the cabin to keep it dry and during the long, dark winter a quarrel arose over which of the two was bravest.

"I wouldn't be afraid to take the plug out of that keg and drop a match in it," Tom boasted.

"Would you stay there?"

"Sure, I'm just as brave as you are!"

"Well, go ahead, drop it, drop it, you old coward."

Tom lit a match over the keg and held it indecisively in his fingers until it burned out. He lit another.

"Here, you old coward, I'll do it," Billy shouted and lit his own match. At that Tom scrambled for the door. In anger Billy grabbed up a sledge hammer and swung ferociously at the escapee. Down went Tom with a yell. The hammer had caught his heel and fractured it. Billy spent the rest of the winter nursing his irate friend. (36)

Tweet entered the Swauk in 1882 after a career as a buffalo hunter under General Nelson A. Miles. He remained in the Swauk until his death around 1940. Tweet never married, but in later years Johnson married the divorced wife of W. A. Ford and in 1906 bought the Gus Nelson ranch on the Swauk divide. (14:September 12, 1906)

CHARLES E. H. BIGNEY

"The Bonanza man of the camp is 'Handsome Charley Bigney. He has been getting four ounces to the pan and the very best quality gold ever found in the camp." (14:June 30, 1892) 'Handsome Charley' was a big man, a big worker, a big singer and a big spender.

Bigney's strike came in 1892. Various accounts report that he averaged \$30 a day (14:August 18, 1892) and forty ounces in seven weeks. Huntting records that Bigney took out more than \$200,000 prior to 1903. (22:186)

That summer of 1892 was a fantastic one for him. He was the talk of the camp and tremendously admired by everyone. The newspapers were full of his exploits.

In 1893 he took out an "average of \$700 per month" by working two men. (14:June 29, 1893) He took very large nuggets from his claim on Williams Creek. Over the years he picked up a \$280 chunk (14:September 27, 1894), one worth \$173 (14:January 30, 1896), one the size of a saucer worth \$260. In one day he found three huge pieces worth \$486, \$372, and \$282 (14:July 9, 1896). There were other big ones worth \$160 (ap 24, 1897), \$200 (14:February 26, 1898), \$107, \$180, \$300, \$104, and \$272.88. (14:October 21, 1899, April 28, 1900, October 7, 1899, January 18, 1902) From reading so many

of these accounts one is easily misled into thinking such nuggets were common in the camp. This certainly was not the case. Bigney was the only man in camp so consistently taking out these mammoths.

Bigney, because his claim was so successful, stayed with the same ground through the years. He was unlike most of the miners who held several claims over a period of time.

In 1894 he hired eight men to work for him and took out an average of \$5 per day per man. (14:August 23, 1894)

By 1895 he was a legendary figure already and so very popular that amusing songs were written about him. For instance, the favorite that fall was played in A minor with lyrics as follows:

A boy stood on the Bigney dump,  
A bandage on his head;  
And when the band began to play  
He tumbled over dead. (14:October 24, 1895)

That summer of '95 he leased his claim to Bozarth and Seigel, (14:October 17, 1895) under some sort of sharing basis. So phenomenal was his ground that after taking his seventy-six ounces down to Ellensburg to sell one week he arrived home in the evening to discover that the boys had taken out \$308 more during the day. By the end of that week he had accumulated an additional sixty-six ounces. (14:September 26, 1895)

It is no wonder, with such luck, that Handsome Charley was free and easy with his money. He imported a big Danish stag hound in 1895 (14:December 12, 1895), bought the newest

in iron dump cars (14:August 1, 1894) and, so the story goes, visited Ellensburg in a big buggy, buying drinks for the house in every saloon in town by flipping \$20 gold pieces over the bar. (26) In 1897 Charley had fourteen men working and was reported to be sending out \$1,200 a month. (14:June 12, 1897)

In 1898 Bigney included his property with the Williams Creek Mining Co. which bonded over to a St. Louis Syndicate (14:July 16, 1898) but he later withdrew from this group and 1901 found him suing the Williams Creek Mining Co. for running water through his ground. (14:April 13, 1901)

During the years when the money was big and his wife still lived (she died in 1901 (14:January 26, 1901)) there were gay times in the Bigney house at Meaghersville. Musicals were held almost every night. They managed to muster together a banjo, a guitar, a fiddle and the Bigney piano. Charley was a good singer and the rafters rang when everyone was assembled. There was lots of drinking but very little drunkenness. Later, when the Bigney fortunes rose, the Bigney's bought a home in Yakima. (26)

Eventually the mines petered out and Charles Bigney was as broke as the day he started prospecting the Williams Creek.



THOMAS F. MEAGHER

Tommy Meagher was a jolly, "hareum-scareum" Irishman who could play the fiddle and was full of fun. (26) He was, from all accounts, the most respected and well liked for all of the Swauk miners. He was also one of the most successful.

In later years Mrs. Meagher estimated that her husband had taken out over \$173,000 of Swauk gold. (29) His claim occupied about two acres on Williams Creek just above the bonanza land of Charles Bigney.

Meagher hit his strike in the spring of 1893. (14:June 3, 1893) Prior to that he had been working a tunnel with his partner Cook into a silver streak on Williams Creek. (14:July 9, 1891) He had also bought the store at Liberty. (14:January 26, 1893) and so was only mining part time.

Eighteen ninety-three was his big year. It was reported that he was taking in \$50 to \$60 per day. (14:June 29, 1893) In November he took \$170 of nuggets in three days, (14:Nov. 23, 1893) and Mrs. Meagher estimated that he took out \$30,000 that season. (29) He worked large crews of men (17 in 1895) clear through the winters. (14:August 1, 1895)

In 1895 Meagher went into partnership with C. C. Whitaker and A. F. York. In the spring of '96 their land on Boulder Creek began to produce. (14:June 4, 1896) So in addi-

tion to his rich placer on Williams Creek, Meagher was now taking two to three hundred per week from the Trilby group.

In June a week's total of \$900 was worked (14:June 18, 1896), in July \$540 (14:July 9, 1896). In the winter the pay dirt slackened and Meagher reduced his crew from twelve to six men. (14:May 1, 1897) During the summer the work picked up again and the men found an \$840 nugget as big as a dinner plate. (14:May 8, 1897)

The three men invested in a certain Professor Fox's gold saving machine; a device to save the fine gold from the dump. Professor Fox quickly moved on to other pastures when his gadget was unsuccessful. (14:June 12, 1897)

In those days, related Mrs. Meagher, only the nuggets were kept. All of the fine gold was lost. She recalled noticing a nugget in the dump which looked like a rock and when she had it weighed out she collected \$326 on it. (29)

In June Tommy jumped the townsite on Williams Creek which had been located by J. K. Morrill. Consequently, the little community that sprang up there was called Meaghersville.

For some reason that year the three men decided to quit and sold the Trilby group to the Cascade Mining Co. for \$10,000.

In the summer of 1898 Tommy and the prominent Ellensburg lawyer, Austin Mires, teamed up to prospect for gold in the Okanogan. They secured a bond on the Whiskey Hill mine

there for forty days at a cost of \$30,000. (14:July 2, 1898)  
The venture proved unsuccessful so they returned home in  
August. (14:August 20, 1898)

Meagher then seemed to lose his interest in mining.  
He was running a fish market in Ellensburg and sold out his  
Liberty store and the rest of his claims. (14:January 17,  
1903, February 23, 1901, June 15, 1901)

There are many flavorful stories related by Mrs. Meagher,  
a woman obviously used to nuggets as every day things. For  
example, she gave her son, Martin, a nugget too big to be able  
to swallow to teethe on.

On one occasion, preparatory to leaving for a dance,  
Mrs. Meagher had a can of gold pieces in the stove pipe and  
on returning from the dance forgot to remove them. The fol-  
lowing morning, after she had lighted the fire as usual, it  
suddenly dawned on her that she had left the can in the pipe.  
Putting out the fire immediately they fished out the can and  
found the nuggets coated with tin. This necessitated an extra  
trip to town to treat the gold with acid. The acid removed  
the tin and left the gold brighter than any in the district.  
For many years these particles were referred to as Meagher's  
gold.

In connection with Meagher is the inevitable tale of  
the lost treasure trove. It would seem that two men working  
for him for wages found a \$20,000 pocket which they did not  
want to share. They buried it in the creek bank intending to

return for it but could never find it again. There it still  
lies for the finder. (20)

LEWIS H. JANSEN

"Jansen is a crook!" "Jansen cheated me out of my claim! Wait'll I get my hands on him!"

The camp was full of such outcries in 1897 and again in 1901. Why the boys didn't learn the first time is hard to see. L. H. Jansen must have been a pretty persuasive promoter to cover the wooly eyes twice.

He first came to the camp in '92 during the big rush and created great excitement with his talk of a bedrock flume. It would be ten miles long. The machinery would come all the way from San Francisco. The company would build a \$10,000 sawmill, so he said. So a company was formed, The Swauk Bedrock Flume Co., with prominent Ellensburg businessmen, such as John Shoudy, involved. Jansen and the Wilen brothers worked the claim but no machinery appeared and no sawmill.

Jansen next appeared as a buyer of gold. He bought from Bigney, Meagher and Black at different times between 1894 and 1896. (14:June 28, 1894, July 2, 1896)

In '97 Jansen and Gus Wilen were again involved in constructing "a bedrock flume". Jansen tried to appropriate land and met opposition from people who insisted that land was good for agricultural purposes only. The district land office in Yakima decided against Jansen. (14:January 2, 1897)

Simultaneously Gus Wilen appeared before the land department of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Tacoma and purchased from them the land on which Gus Nelson had his claim. (14:January 2, 1897) Nelson contested this hotly and won.

There may have been several motives behind this move on the part of Jansen and Wilen. Perhaps Jansen did need the land for his flume. It is also possible that he hoped to obtain the land under mineral rights and later sell it for agricultural purposes.

Wilen's ruse to get Nelson's rich claim was bald and unmistakable. Jansen and Wilen left abruptly for greener pastures in Alaska. (14:January 15, 1898)

Back at his old tricks in May of 1898, Jansen dexterously managed to convey twenty-one claims into the hands of the Cascade Mining Company for \$25,000. At the time it was hailed as the largest sale ever made in the county. (14:May 28, 1898) Perhaps it would have been Jansen's master-piece except that he left out his old cohorts, Charles and Augustus Wilen.

In retaliation, suit was brought in federal court by A. M. Hawks, the Wilen brothers, and James Hamilton against the Cascade Mining Co., L. H. Jansen, F. A. Rice and John B. Dow to set aside the alleged transfer and sale of the Swauk Chief Mining Co. claims to the Cascade Mining Co. The plaintiffs alleged that Jansen, assuming to act as secretary-manager of the Swauk Chief Mining Co., to which they all

belonged, conspired with Rice and Dow to call a meeting of the company and pass a resolution for the sale of the property transferring the same in 1898 from Rice to Jansen, then from Jansen to Dow and from Dow to Cascade Mining Co. (14: January 19, 1901)

Jansen immediately absconded to Kansas with the company books and the complainants asked for a receiver and the annulment of the transfer. This was the end of Lewis H. Jansen as far as the Swauk camp is concerned. (14:Jan. 19, 1901)

## JOHN BLACK

John Black, the first mayor of the Liberty community, lived in the camp from about 1885 to 1899. He had originally mined in California, Nevada and Utah. (14:August 13, 1891)

"His wife did him in; poisoned him for his money," they say. The legend whispers that he had no trust in banks and saved his gold in half gallon buckets. He knew how much a half gallon bucket of nuggets was worth. When he had saved up five buckets, he decided it was time to get married. Fifty thousand dollars should satisfy any woman. He was wrong. She wasn't satisfied until it was all hers so she did him in; poisoned him for his money. The legend says she was tried, convicted and sentenced for life to the penitentiary. Where the facts are I don't know. But the legend is there. (29)

Why Black came to the Swauk is unknown but he made a good living there on his Discovery claim at the head of the Swauk Creek. In 1891 it was reported that he was taking out from \$25 to \$75 a day and that his 1890 yield was approximately \$2,900. (14:June 25, 1891)

The Ben Snipes Bank bought many of his nuggets and displayed them at the Northwest Industrial Exposition. The display was listed as follows on the following page:



14 ounce nugget worth	\$325
8 ounce nugget worth	\$135
6 ounce nugget worth	\$110.55
3 ounce nugget worth	\$ 49.66
3 ounce nugget worth	\$ 53.70
2 ounce nugget worth	\$ 46.00
7 small nuggets	\$ 39.70
2 ball retort gold	\$ 48.80

The report on the display maintained that Black had taken out \$175,000 to date. (33:637)

In addition to working his claim Black was postmaster for a time in 1891 and in 1892. He was so well liked and trusted in the camp that he was elected first mayor of the community and the first election inspector when a new election district was set up in Liberty. (14:March 17, 1892)

In 1893 Black bonded his Discovery placer to B. C. Pilcher who worked it hydraulically. (16:June 17, 1893) In the fall the claim was turned back to him. (14:October 5, 1893)

In 1895 Black prospected in the Olympics but returned in the fall and (14:August 1, 1895) worked alone, without a partner until his unfortunate marriage.

WILLIAM A. FORD

An unsuccessful man, W. A. Ford. A man who failed in marriage, in mining and in business. Ford came to the Swauk in 1861 (14:November 12, 1891), one of the first miners in the county. He spent thirty years prospecting before he teamed up with Kaup and T. W. Smith. Separately and together they worked a series of claims on Medicine Creek. The Big Blue, Oro Fino, El Dorado, Little Joker, and St. Patrick were sold off one by one to others until in November of 1891 the three men hit a good ledge above the Hampton ledge and named it the Buckhorn. (14:November 19, 1891)

Ford didn't seem to be really interested in the strike because he and Theo Johnson soon set up a freight line between Liberty and Ellensburg. (14:March 17, 1892) The "schooner", carrying freight and passengers, made two round trips a week during the busy rush seasons of '92 and '93. (14:March 10, 1892)

During the summer of 1892 Ford and Smith also worked hard to improve the road between Ellensburg and the Swauk. Flooding water each spring played havoc with travel so Ford constructed the new road over the hill to able avoiding the creek. (14:May 4, 1893) He put ten men to work and by mid-summer had cut the travel time from Ellensburg to four hours. (14:May 25, 1893)

In '94 Ford gave up his freighting business and took over foremanship of the Northwest Development Company's work on the Delig and Power placer. Five men worked under him. (14:May 10, 1894) The following year he filed a lien on the Delig claim in '96 and the court gave him the property by default. (14:January 23, 1896) He worked it hydraulically in 1896 and the spring of '97 but with no success and then bonded it to O. W. Barlow of Tacoma and went to work for Barlow for wages. (14:September 4, 1897) That same month Ford took out for Barlow \$500 in nuggets. He offered Barlow \$500 to annul the bond and evidently was successful. (14:September 25, 1897) In October it was reported that Ford was averaging \$350 a week. (14:October 2, 1897) He then turned around and sold the claim to Barlow for \$2,000. Then together they formed the Ford Mining Co.

In April of 1898, after his daughter married, Ford divorced his wife and went prospecting in the Okanogan with his son. (14:April 23, 1898) He later moved on to the Klondike and at last report had lost \$1,800 when his sluice boxes were robbed. (14:July 19, 1902)

## GEORGE VIRDEN

George D. Virden (born February 23, 1847) left Iowa to become a buffalo hunter in Kansas. He moved on in 1876 with the wagon train to Washington territory intending to head for the coast but he was way-laid in Ellensburg for lack of money. He stayed in Ellensburg doing some prospecting on the side and then homesteaded 240 acres in Horse Canyon, perhaps to be near the mining.

Virden held five adjoining claims on Williams Creek above the Alley Ranch and worked them all alone. When his seven children grew old enough, they kept up the farm while he mined full time.

In 1891 Virden bonded his placers to a San Francisco party and later sold them for \$20,000. (14:November 12, 26, 1891) His last claim was a quartz mine called the Summit. On this he constructed one of the camp's first stamp mills. The paper reported he was taking out \$10 a day. (14:June 23, 1892) When the vein petered out, he leased the claim to others.

As an early prospector Virden claimed that he was the first man to discover the Roslyn coal. He was prospecting and trapping around Lake Cle Elum when he came across an out-cropping. Thinking it couldn't amount to anything, he did not file on the land.

Viriden remained on his homestead until his death in 1921. His children have scattered except for one son, Chester, who still lives on the old property.

T. P. CARSON

T. P. Carson came to the Swauk in May of 1898 to look over several claims offered for sale by L. H. Jansen on behalf of the Swauk Chief Mining Co. When Carson bought the claims for his sponsors, the Cascade Mining Company, it is doubtful that he realized the perfidity on Jansen's part.

(14:May 28, 1898)

Carson immediately hired men and began hydraulic work on the twenty-one placers. This gave a tremendous boost to the sagging camp which by '98 was far out of the boom stage and desperately in need of capital.

In December of that year when Lauderdale resigned from his postmaster position a petition was circulated asking for Carson as postmaster. (14:December 17, 1898) Upon receiving the appointment Carson took over the old Liberty store, remodeled, repainted and put in a new line of groceries and dry goods on behalf of his company. (14:April 1, 1899)

During the 1899 season Carson concentrated on developing the old Black claim and seemed to do well although he released no figures. (14:April 15, 1899)

The camp was very much aware of Carson's importance to them. He had hired twenty men so when there was trouble with the hydraulic ditches the newspaper correspondent fretted "A

great portion of the people in camp are depending largely for their work on the company." (14:July 8, 1899) Despite the problems Carson termed the season's results "very satisfactory as it was intended as exploratory work." (14:September 20, 1899)

In 1900 Carson moved his family from the east and he bought a home in Ellensburg. (14:October 27, 1900) He entered his son, Ross, in a Tacoma boy's school. (14:January 9, 1904) That summer his payroll was over \$1,000 per month (14:April 14, 1900) and he concentrated on installing a rock elevator to hoist and dispose of large boulders. (14:March 24, 1900) But the elevator didn't work as well as was expected (14:May 26, 1900) and the work shut down for the winter.

Carson and the company stayed manfully on the job for six more years but finally they had to give up. In his statement to the newspapers Carson said, "Gold was found but not in quantity to justify an expensive operation." With that he and his family returned to the east. (14:August 8, 1906)

GEORGE B. HENTON

From the Henton claim came the Swauk's biggest nugget. Henton and his partner, Dr. J. C. McCauley, hit a bonanza on Williams Creek in 1897 which continued producing so well that by 1901 they were still working two ten hour shifts of two men to a shift. A huge \$11,000 nugget was turned up one night by two miners. A third man picked it up in the clean-up the next morning. (26) The nugget created intense excitement all over the camp and was personally taken to Buffalo Exposition by Dr. McCauley. (14:March 30, 1901) Besides this freak the partners took out plenty of other nuggets. See the listing on page 49.

In 1898 McCauley and Henton included their claim with the property bonded to a St. Louis Syndicate. (14:July 16, 1898) The following year they resumed their own work and received the first receipt from the new Seattle assay office for nuggets worth \$4,000.

In the spring of 1899 Henton left for Dawson in the Yukon and returned the following year, evidently not very successful. (14:May 6, 1899, May 12, 1900) It was after this return and the taking up of the old claim that the eleven thousand dollar nugget was found.



Evidently Henton was the active miner in the partnership while McCauley provided the support. Dr. McCauley owned a hospital in Ellensburg and was a physician of good repute.

## GUSTAF (BULL) NELSON

Gus Nelson was an old Swede with only one eye and snow-white whiskers. After being in the Swauk for several years, he went to California to prospect. Before he returned, he dyed his hair and whiskers, got a glass eye and a new suit of clothes. He wandered around Liberty for two days with his heavy accent before anyone recognized him. (36)

It is to old Bull that Liberty owes its name. Having been chosen the first postmaster, he invited a bunch of the boys in to inspect the new building which was still devoid of furniture. "Sit down, lay down or do as you please, boys," the big Swede boomed. "You're at liberty here." When the post office department wouldn't accept the name Swauk for the new post office the boys promptly suggested Liberty as a substitute. (27)

Gus Nelson was a bachelor all his days and was ninety when he died. Like all miners, sometimes he had pay dirt, sometimes he didn't. He worked in the Culver miners for awhile and in Peshastin. He prospected in California and probably elsewhere, but always returned to the Swauk.

Nelson had a placer on Williams Creek from 1891 to 1898 which he called The Liberty Bar. It produced so well for him that at various times he had working for him five to eight men. (14:June 25, 1894, January 15, 1898)

In 1897 Nelson added to his holdings a quartz claim in Mill Gulch on Boulder Creek. He worked it some years and bonded it others.

In 1900 Nelson bought the May ranch on the Swauk divide. Nelson never became rich, but he made a comfortable living. He lived in the Swauk over twenty years. (14:January 16, 1897, September 12, 1906)

## C. FRANK LAUDERDALE

C. F. Lauderdale wasn't interested in mining, but he was interested in miners and the supplies they needed and the money they spent.

He first purchased the original store in Liberty from Dexter Shoudy in 1893. (14:February 16, 1893) Later that same year he opened a hotel or lodge under the direction of Mrs. Lauderdale. (14:June 15, 1893) The hotel had a few boarders and an eating place. (26) Because of his store, Lauderdale was appointed postmaster and was also elected justice of the peace on the Republican ticket. (14:November 5, 1896)

Business was so good that he built a second store in Meaghersville. (14:February 27, 1897) In order to maintain the new business Lauderdale resigned in 1898 from his postmastership. (14:December 17, 1898)

The following year he was elected deputy sheriff. (14:August 12, 1899)

When the roads were improved Lauderdale opened a little store at the corner on Swauk Prairie where he was quite successful. That corner, with some houses built around it, has been called Lauderdale ever since.

## DAVE LIVINGSTON FAMILY

Dave Livingston brought his Indian wife to the camp in 1885. (14:July 22, 1910) After prospecting, he located a claim in Deer Gulch and began hydraulicing with two sluice heads of water. For awhile he made good wages.

Later, Dave took over the Liberty post office and the store which he ran until 1916. This gave him a steady income while he kept at his real profession of mining. (36)

Livingston had two sons, Tom and Jim, who followed in their father's tracks and remained in the Swauk most of their lives. During that time none of them ever hit a good strike but they made wages. It is estimated that their father took out about \$60,000 in his time and the boys about \$50,000. (29)

At one time Dave constructed a saw mill but it took him two years to finish it and when the first log went through he shouted, "Mission accomplished," and never ran the mill again. (27)

The Livingston store had the only phone in the camp for quite awhile. Old Dave had a healthy fear of electricity. On a stormy summer night during the 20's an automobile race was to pass through Liberty on its way over Blewett Pass To Wenatchee. The Livingstons were to stay up during the night to

offer water and service to the racers. As the racers drew closer to the store, the smell of their carbide head-lights filled the air. When the phone started jangling furiously amidst a crack of thunder, old Dave backed away from it in fear. He could smell the electricity in the phone he said.  
(27)

The Livingston boys were good hunters and trappers and supplemented their income in that way.

Dave was a hard working man but full of fun. He was always laughing and joking. His wife was a fine looking woman who dressed and wore her hair in the modern fashion and spoke excellent English. The Livingstons were extremely well thought of in the camp.

Dave and his wife both died in the camp. The boys stayed, Tom married but Jim remained single. Only in their old age did they both come to live in Ellensburg.

## A. F. YORK

A jack-of-all trades was A. F. York. He worked hard at anything he put his hand to and was always moderately successful.

In 1892 York hit a strike along side Tom Tweet's claim on Swauk Creek. He went into partnership with Tweet and Theo Johnson for the purpose of building an arrastra. (14:March 17, 1892) The three men worked their own claims and the Phoenix tunnel during 1892 and 93 taking out good returns. (See Tweet pages 91-94) In July of 1892 their cabin burned down. (14: July 14, 1892)

York discontinued his partnership with Tweet and Peterson for some unknown reason and **joined** with C. C. Whittaker in 1895. They joined with Tommy Meagher in 1896 to form a partnership around their three claims on Boulder Creek which they called the Trilby group. (14:June 4, 1897) This venture was highly successful for all three men. It is recorded that during that summer they took out over \$4,000 between them. In '98 the men sold out. (14:June 8, 1898)

The following spring York and Harry Bryant put up a store at Meaghersville, (14:April 15, 1899) and moved the old Lauderdale store from Liberty to put it along side the first building. (14:April 22, 1899)

The History of Klickitat, Yakima, and Kittitas Counties recorded that in 1904 York was operating a general store and hotel and running a daily stage between Liberty and Cle Elum. (24:266)

At the same time, however, the newspapers reported that in 1901 York sold out his store to Meagher and was hydraulic-ing on Meagher's claim. (14:January 26, 1901)

In 1905 York was given the duty of platting the new mining district just set up which would indicate that he had some experience in surveying.

In 1905 York was elected recorder for the district. Nineteen-nine concludes any known history of A. F. York in the Swauk with reports that he had made another rich strike. (14: August 20, 1909)

We have had very little indication of the personality of this miner except for one incident in November of 1898. He had exploded some dynamite outside of Ellensburg declaring there was no enthusiasm in town and it needed waking up. (14: November 12, 1898) This energy made him a hard-working man and led to accidents.

In 1896 he dislocated his shoulder when a stump he was trying to remove from his diggings suddenly gave way and it pitched him over the bank. (14:July 9, 1896)

Again he was badly injured when a horse he was mounting reared and fell on him. (14:September 17, 1904)



## JORDIN BROTHERS

Since the depression days the name Jordin has magical connotations in the Swauk. To some it means amusement and scepticism, to others envy and awe and to a few, deep respect. The Jordin brothers have become living legends and active relics of a by-gone era.

The Jordin family came over the Oregon Trail to the Washington territory in 1848. After acquiring one of the daughters of Asa Mercer for a wife, the father set out for the rich farmland over the Cascades. He and his brother traveled from Seattle to the Kittitas Valley by ox team before there was more than a trail over the mountains. When they reached the head of Lake Chelan, they made a raft and floated down the lake. At first they settled in Ellensburg and later in Swauk Prairies. Jordin sold or traded with the Indians. For the fascinated Indians he used to grind flour in a coffee grinder and later started a real flour mill with the help of his brother.

According to Clarence Jordin, but refuted by his brother Amos, Jordin was in the Goodwin party who first discovered gold in the Swauk area and that in drawing for the seven claims which were staked out he got a bench claim which he didn't want because it had no water. He let the claim lie

vacant for years until Tommy Meagher took it up and turned it into the best claim of the lot.

Amos Jordin says his father was not with the original party, but that he and his cousin and John Bloomquist raced into the mountains the same night Goodwin reported his find of the original gold. He and Bloomquist located claims at the mouth of Baker Creek but didn't like the country, moved out and homesteaded on Wilson Creek in Kittitas Valley. It was there, in a log cabin with dirt floors, the twelve Jordin children were born with no one to officiate, but the father and an old Indian squaw. Amos, the oldest, was born in 1875 or 76 and the others following in close order were Al, Viola, Willy, Henry, Ollie, Clarence, Annie, Lida, Eva, and Alice.

The Jordins lived in the valley for about twenty years, farming and prospecting in and out of the valley. Amos says his father composed a song which he used to sing whenever he went out hunting for gold.

Ho, boys, Ho,  
 We're going for Swauk Creek Ore,  
 Where Goodwin tells us there's plenty of gold,  
 We're the boys who are well armed,  
 Ladies, don't be afraid of the Indians.

Melody unknown.

Leaving Wilson Creek for unknown reasons, the father went to Republic and there operated a saw mill, but he continued his interest in prospecting. It was during these days that the brothers of the family began their life-long search

for gold. Amos says he began working in the mines when he was eight years old.

After prospecting in and around Stevens and Okanogan counties, Amos moved permanently to Liberty in 1901 when he was twenty-six and began working in the McCauley mine. He batched alone for awhile and with another miner, Ed Minkle. Then he married an eighteen year old girl, who came to Liberty with him. The McCauley claim was flourishing in those days. Amos reports that there were "quite a few" men working it in ten hour shifts, one shift at night and one during the day. He recalls the men turning up the tremendous McCauley nugget which sold for \$1,000.

Later Amos reports that he ran an arrastra for George Virden and for the famous Charles Bigney. He fluctuated between the Swauk and the Okanogan area until the first World War when he went to work in the Cle Elum coal mines for four years. After the war he moved back to Liberty and began a placer claim which he worked for several years. During the depression he also ran an arrastra on Nelson hill making just enough to live on.

Amos and his gentle little wife are presently living in Ellensburg, but Amos, at eighty-eight, still holds interest in a Republic silver mine. He and his partner, Bill Wyatt, continue to work it during the summer.

Ollie Jordin and his sprightly little red-haired wife continue to live in Liberty in what used to be the old Liberty

Hotel. There Ollie sits on the back steps panning gold and joking with all the would-be miners that pass through.

After working in the Republic mines as a teen-ager, he struck out on his own. He was married and lived in Spokane during the 20's working for Washington Water Power. Says he, "On my birthday, September 16 (1932), I had a premonition there was some gold in Liberty. My older brother, Amos, was already there. I took a two week vacation to prospect." His boss, the superintendent of Washington Water Power, told him that if he found anything good he would buy in with Ollie.

While he was prospecting the Swauk, Ollie ran across a discouraged miner, Roy Lilne, who was determined to get what he could out of his worthless claim on Flag Mountain. Lilne salted the front of his tunnel to make it look good. After a little exploratory digging, Ollie bit hard and gave Lilne \$100 down with three days to raise the other \$500. When he applied to his boss for the promised help, the man backed out and Ollie was forced to borrow the \$500.

For three weeks Ollie worked in the front of the tunnel while Roy Lilne boasted around the camp that he had sold him a lemon. On the morning Ollie found the strike he said he had his last fifty cents in his trouser pocket. Mrs. Jordin wasn't one bit surprised, she claims, to see Ollie hurrying down from the mine carrying a bucket of gold that morning.... she was looking for it.

The radio and newspapers were full of the news; \$100,000 in one day, the radio reported. The Ellensburg Capital wrote,

"Ollie Jordin....uncovered the richest gold in the Swauk area in more than a quarter of a century. In less than two hours, in a pocket two feet long and eighteen inches wide, that man took out twenty-six one to four pound avoirdupois pure gold estimated at \$10,000 and took it to a Cle Elum bank. The gold is heavy wire gold so pure it needs no refining.

"In addition Mr. Jordin placed in the vaults many fruit jars filled with gold not quite so pure and three hundred pounds of rich gold ore. Armed guards are protecting the property night and day and the community adjacent is swarming with life and activity." (14:November 4, 1932)

Ollie says what he actually took out that day was \$5000 in chunks and that the total over a period of months was \$70 to \$80,000.

One of Ollie's first actions that day was to saunter up to Roy Lilne with a twenty-seven pound chunk of gold in his hands. "I've picked the lemons out of your mine," said Ollie and according to him "Lilne'd like to have a fit."

The strike brought in a swarm of inexperienced depression miners, so besides mining Ollie spent the winter of 1933 keeping a truck working full time bringing groceries to the prospectors.

Using the fruits of his lemon mine, Ollie and his wife traveled to the Worlds Fair in Chicago that fall in a beautiful new car.

Ollie has lived in Liberty ever since the strike delving into several claims and always bringing out a little something.

At present he has eleven claims and manages to keep up the assessment work on them each summer. Besides these, he has two sandstone quarries and is supplying the know-how for Jed Winecoop who bought out Ollie's claim on the Nelson Hill mine. Like all prospectors, the next strike is just around the corner for Ollie and he is hopeful that the bulldozer Winecoop has bought will help do the trick. In the meantime he answers all the would-be prospectors who stop at his door asking him where they could take a week-end off and pan that they should go up the creek aways and points it out for them. When they return tired, dirty and unsuccessful, he tells them that they just dug in the wrong place.

As a boy in Okanogan, Clarence Jordin, too, worked in the mines. When he was thirteen, the stage driver gave Clarence \$20 to build his cabin. The boy was so very successful in this one-man venture that the little community hired him to build the school building. After he finished the log building that spring he began first grade in it. He progressed from first to third grade that summer. In all he attended school four summers and one winter quitting just as he entered the eighth grade.

Clarence mined off and on, was a soldier in the First World War, and was around Okanogan and Big Bend after the war. He worked in the coal mines of Cle Elum, posted bill boards for Foster and Kliser and operated a fox farm in the Swauk. But he was always prospecting. It was in 1932 that he hit

his big strike also. It, too, was on Flag Mountain. The paper reported it this way, "Clarence Jordin....recently uncovered a vein of gold a short distance above his cabin from which he has taken out a considerable quantity of gold. In one day he is said to have dug twelve ounces." (14:January 15, 1932) In the following year the Capital naively printed, "Clarence Jordin discovered a fossilized fish of pure gold imbedded in a small rock. The fish is in perfect condition."<sup>3</sup>

"Mr. Jordin mines his claim only when he needs the money. He goes to his workings and takes out from \$75 to \$100 and then stops until the necessity for more gold requires another trip. All of Mr. Jordin's gold has been found in the form of fossils, mostly leaves and even tiny trees." (14:July 28, 1933)

The second Flag Mountain strike of 1957 was a continuation of the first. The men worked unsuccessfully for nine months on an average wage, Mr. Jordin figures, of one and one-fourth cents per day. Two brothers from Chelan, Ted and Albert Marcear, were digging for him. Clarence was so crippled up with arthritis that after showing the two men where to dig he went home to cook dinner for them all. He waited and waited and when they finally arrived at the door with

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<sup>3</sup>The fish does exist in Clarence Jordin's collection, but it is of stone with gold encrusted delicately and beautifully along one side.

their arms full he said, "Don't tell me, you found gold." The total strike amounted to 120 pounds amounting to \$35 or \$40,000. The most notable thing about this strike was the two seven-pound chunks of massed wire gold. The two men had been hired by Clarence on a percentage basis and when they drew straws over the take, the Marcear brothers got the big seven-pound chunks. Clarence soon sold his share, but the brothers decided to keep the two large chunks and try to sell them for specimen pieces.

Clarence still runs the Ace of Diamonds Mine even though he is crippled with arthritis and his sight is failing. Two coal miners from Cle Elum come over on weekends digging where he directs them.



## JACK KIRCH

"You always run into a lot of disappointments mining; a lot of set backs. Can't pay no attention to that. You got to expect that. I'm skeptical of all gold stories. I've been in the game too long. I haven't made any money mining. 'Made my living. I don't want to work for anybody. 'Take my money clean from nature."

These are the sentiments of Jack Kirch, the only Liberty man still doing any active mining.

Kirch came to the Swauk in 1931. He had formerly mined in Montana and in Alaska. A promoter in Alaska sold him a claim on a partnership basis and he never did any work. When the partner leased the claim to a company without Jack's consent, a law suit developed which Jack couldn't afford so he quit.

Kirch next took up hunting and trapping and stayed with it for three years until he got sick and was forced to return to the states.

In the midst of the depression Jack hired out to a mining engineer who brought him to the Swauk camp. The company staked out big portions of the camp intending to find a prospect and then sell. When nothing developed, they pulled out leaving Jack behind without wages.

He stayed in the camp and began working on a hydraulic job in Hartman's Gulch. He was able to make a living and save five pounds of gold over the years. Most of the gold was stolen from his safety deposit box during a Seattle bank robbery in 1955.

In 1951 Kirch began quarrying sandstone. This came about as another get-rich-quick promotion which influenced Jack to sell his saving's bonds to buy in. He says that if he hadn't hired a stone mason to teach him the trade he would have lost everything. Kirch sells his multi-colored building stone in Ellensburg, Yakima, Wenatchee and in Seattle.

The quarry is only a sideline for Kirch. His first love is gold. He has three different claims which he operates continually and which bear for him a living. He finds his dust in a yellow clay which he calls ochre. He brings it to his cabin by the bucket full, boils it and then pans it out at the creek.

Kirch has done prospecting in many places off and on and for the past fifteen summers has worked a hard-rock tunnel in Alaska.

Jack lives in a log cabin he constructed himself which is cluttered with papaya juice bottles and all the bachelor paraphenalia a woman would never tolerate. He daily drives his new red pickup out to work.

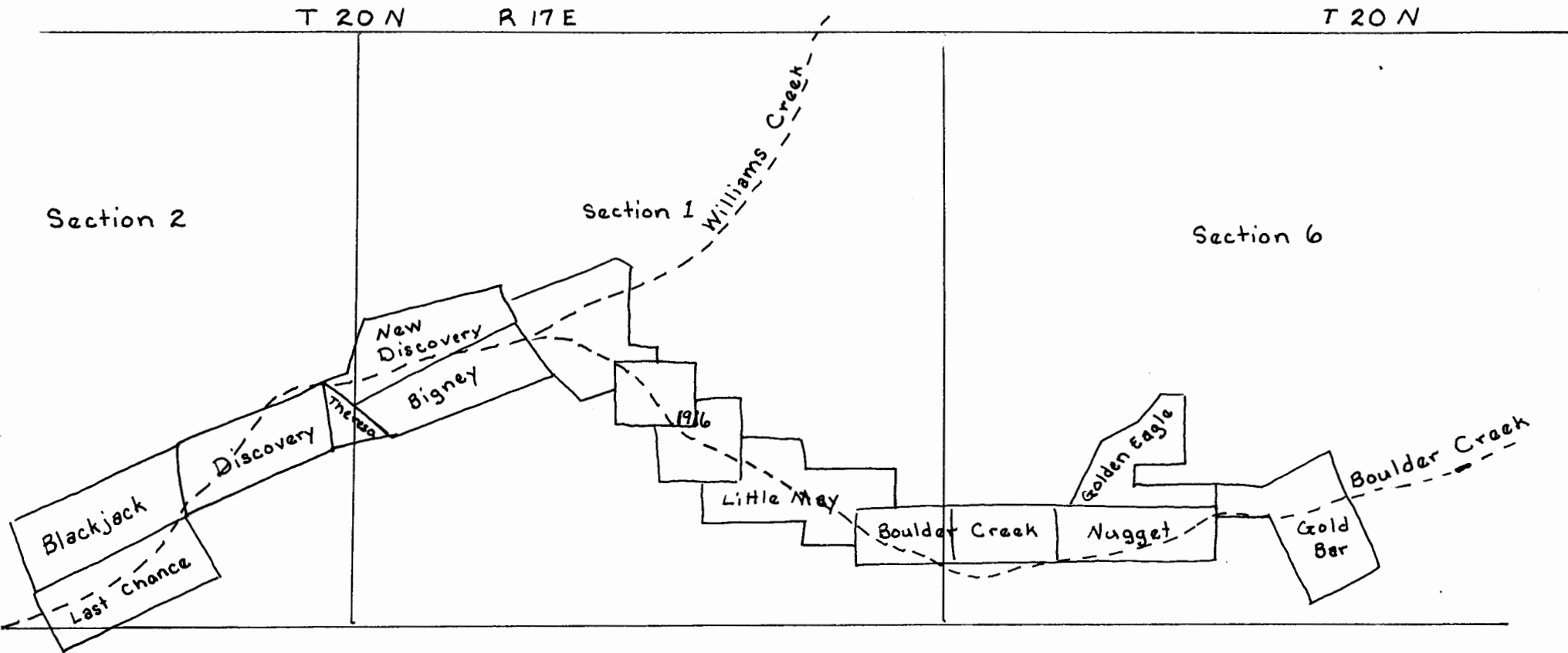
"I never found a pocket," he says, "Just enough to keep me digging."

## MINING TERMS

- Amalgam.....An alloy or mixture of mercury with some other metal.
- Arrastra.....Rude drag-stone mill for pulverizing ores.
- Assay.....A chemical test to determine the presence or absence or more often the quantity of one or more components of a material, in this instance an ore.
- Batholith.....A great mass of intruded igneous rock that for the most part stopped in its rise a considerable distance below the surface and extends downward to unknown depths.
- Bond.....To lease a claim for a specified amount of money for a pre-determined length of time.
- Cabin Fever.....Extreme irritability and combativeness resulting from the boredom of living in a remote region alone or with only a few companions.
- Camp.....A local mining area usually containing one small town.
- Claim.....A tract of land for which an assertion of title is made by following governmental directives for posting out its location.
- Colors.....Minute particles of gold.
- Dike.....A large crack in rock into which intrusive rock has flowed.
- Dredge.....A machine for scooping up or removing objects or earth from a body of water.
- Driffle.....Slats of metal, wood or leather in the bottom of a sluice box to catch gold particles.
- Dump.....The pile of earth and gravel carried out of a tunnel or shaft.

- Flume.....An inclined channel for carrying water for long distances.
- Gargue.....The worthless vein or rock matter in which valuable metals or minerals occur.
- Hard-Rock Mining...As opposed to placer mining, digging in tunnels or shafts.
- Hydraulic.....Mining with a jet or pressurized stream of water to undercut a stream bank or hillside and thus wash out metals.
- Jump.....To claim title to mineral property already claimed by someone else.
- Lens.....A very fine crack in rock into which intrusive rock has flowed, as opposed to a dike.
- Lode.....An ore deposit occurring in place within definite boundaries separating it from adjoining rocks.
- Mother Lode.....A mythical deposit of ore which early miners believed was the source of all gold in the area.
- Nugget.....A solid lump, especially a native lump of gold.
- Over Burden.....Earth and gravel extending above bed-rock.
- Patent.....To secure from the federal government permanent mineral rights to a tract of land.
- Placer.....An alluvial, lacustrine, marine, eolian, or glacial deposit (as of sand or gravel) containing particles of gold.  
To extract minerals from sand or gravel by washing, dredging or hydraulic mining.
- Pocket.....A small body of ore.
- Post Holing.....Digging experimental holes in search of gold.
- Prospector.....A person who explores a region for mineral deposits.

- Retort.....A vessel in which substances are subject to distillation or decomposition by heat.  
To treat a substance by heating in a retort.
- Rush.....A thronging of many people to a gold field.
- Seam.....A thin layer or stratum of rock between distinctive layers, also a bed of valuable mineral of any thickness.
- Shear.....The sliding of a part of a rock body past another part along a fracture.
- Sour Dough.....A veteran inhabitant (as an old time prospector) of Alaska specifically or any gold camp generally.
- Strike.....To discover a rich pocket of gold, also the place in which gold is found.
- Tailings.....Inferior or refuse material separated as residue in processing.
- Trammel.....A conveyor belt with driffles to arrest or slow the movement of rock and ore.



1963 Holdings of Midnight Mines, Inc.