

## Murphy, Thomas Herbert

Notes of conversation with Thomas Herbert Murphy, at Tulameen, July 18, 1930.

[Note: written by hand: "Interviewed by R. Haitte??" There is an "Archives of British Columbia" stamp over part of the name.]

Wheelbarrow roads we had in them days; cattle trails as I used to say. A man would get off the trail and he found himself looking up a tree. If he was on a horse he might get through for the horse would follow the trail if there was one anyway plain, but lots of the fellows that came into Granite Creek or any other mining camp came in on their feet, maybe they came in on their uppers as the saying is, and plenty of them was not used to walking on trails and would miss even a good trail. If there is a bit of snow coming down it hides any trail in a very short time. It was in the spring of 1886 early that I arrived in Granite Creek. I am an old gold-mining hand, have tried it in Australia, New Zealand, the western states and British Columbia. There is not much about the game that I don't know, but I never have made any great fortune out of it. There are few prospectors who do. But I've had a good life of it; I don't know that I'd want to live it any different if I had my chance at it again. Maybe I'd have a fortune though if I did for I would know where I had made a bad guess. No living in the city for me though if I made a pile for there is nothing there to equal life out on the hills, with a comfortable shack to keep the winter weather off your head, and a good old prospector friend or two to come in and have a crack about mining and the good old times when some of the camps you have known were going good.

I spent my early days in Nova Scotia; my parents belonged there; my grandfather was a Canadian too and my grandmother was Scotch. Scott's novels were always my favorite reading and are still, and in my opinion I believe he was the greatest novel-writer there ever was. You'd be surprised what a lot of reading some of them old prospectors and miners used to do, and the books some of them used to read. Don't think they all did, for lots of them would rather have a game of cards than any book in the world, and I don't mind a game of cards myself, but I'd rather have one of Scott's novels any day if I had time for it. I get lots of time now for I'm not as spry as I used to be and can't

[2]

move about the hills as I used to do. My eyes bother me some but I can tell indications of mineral as well as ever I could. I had a good time as a boy, went to school and worked at the farm chores every farmer's boy has to do and in the evening neighbours would gather in and they would talk of politics and crops and the weather, and we kids would gather round grandmother's knee and she would tell us stories of Scotland, I had a great fondness for my granny and she liked me.

I went to sea out of Halifax in the West Indies trade, I was born in 1842. I am a native of Pictou county. I was about sixteen when I first left home for the sea. I was made an A.B. [able-bodied seaman] in the middle of the Atlantic. We got into a bit of a blow and some of our men were knocked about more than a bit, and as I picked up the work pretty quick the captain rated me as an A.B. and I believe that if I had stuck to the sea I'd have taken out my papers at as early an age as any do and have commanded my own ship before long. That sounds like blowing but it's the truth. Then I got into the China trade sailing from London, tea packets, and some fast runs we have made. There was quite a lot of rivalry between different lines and anyway two ships are like two horses or dogs or row-boats or anything else, both parties went to win and do all they can to win. They were great vessels those and I have some bright memories of the days I spent in that trade.

From the China trade I naturally got into the Australia trade, and after one voyage I decided to stay in the country for a while. It was booming then, thousands were emigrating there from the old country, and sheep-farming was offering big inducements. It didn't attract me like my own trade did and its opportunities. My looking around ended in my buying a little boat, the "Three Roses". A chum and I bought the schooner in Sidney and we went trading in the South Seas. There was good money in taking out a cargo of trade and coming back with the holds full of copra and shell. It was a good business but it got spoiled by the missionaries, too nosy they were for honest traders trying to make a living, even if we might run a cargo of black labour.

[3]

When we decided to give up trading and sold our schooner I got into mining in Australia. That was the end of my seafaring life, which I would have thought I was cut out for. Once I got into mining you could not turn me to anything else. Those were palmy days in mining like everything else in Australia. I did pretty well at it but like every successful miner I put most of what I made back into the ground looking for more and lost it. That's what makes them say that every dollar taken out of the ground costs a dollar; one man gets fifty thousand or a hundred thousand dollars out of his mine on which he has spent, say, ten thousand dollars; another puts fifty thousand or a hundred thousand into prospects and mines and takes ten thousand out. I followed placer mining for Victoria to the borders of Queensland; millions were taken out of these mines in the years they were active. Then I had a try at New Zealand. I liked the country and think a lot of it still. Then back to Australia and then from Sidney I found my way to San Francisco. Sidney is another San Francisco. I went to South America to a gold excitement. I went to several excitements: you may say I went to every gold excitement there was in those days. I had money in those days; after I went to gold-mining I always had some money. I went to San Francisco again. I was in Nevada in the early days there, in the seventies, and did a lot of prospecting; found mines and sold mines over there.

I came here to British Columbia at the time of this placer gold excitement on Granite Creek. Granite Creek was a nice creek, too; quite a bit of gold on it, and I liked the country, too. I have been here ever since. I expect to stay here, too. I came up from the United States on a steamer to Portland, and from there to Vancouver, and then by trail from Hope. I don't remember now what steamers I traveled on but I think it was the (sic) that took me up from New Westminster to Hope. From Hope I went over the trail to Otter Flat and down the Tulameen to Granite Creek. Being early in the spring there was a lot of snow still on the trail and traveling wasn't too easy. There were hundreds of men pouring into the creek and the other creeks in the district.

[4]

Gold was nothing new here, for Chinese had been mining on the Tulameen since 1860 or thereabout, and whites too, but until Johnny Chance found gold on Granite Creek that day the white miners had not made any attempt to try it out. I wonder Johnny ever made the discovery; if ever there was a lazy fellow it was him. It was his very laziness and easy-going way that led to his seeing "colour" in a pool he was bending over.

Besides the miners and prospectors that were attracted by the finding of gold on the creek there were several hundred men from the Canadian Pacific construction camps came over. They had no experience of mining but they had been living out in the open for months and years some of them, and didn't fancy going back to cities, so they beat it across to Granite from the main line, down the Nicola valley. A few made a little but the most of them got nothing and had to be content to make what they could at day-wages for those who had claims that appeared to be worth developing. By the time I got there all the promising ground had been staked and I had to buy a claim. I bought two or three on the creek.

When I came Bob Stevenson was the principal operator on the creek and he remained so

throughout its history. He was one of the finest men who ever mined in British Columbia, and was popular everywhere. He generally had a black horse, and Bob and his mighty black horse, which was the way he used to refer to it, were known in every part of the province I think. There was no place in the lower mainland and boundary country, at any rate, that he was not familiar figure in. He and I were the two who remained longest on Granite Creek and displayed most faith in it. Bob had disposed of his interests to a Montreal syndicate and was mining manager of it, spending most of his time on the creek. I forget whether or not he was the president of the company. My most promising claim was what we called the Pogue Hydraulic claim, which we tunnelled and worked as long as it yielded any gold. My partner in it was at first a man named Kyle and later a man named Newton.

[5]

There were so many men on the creeks here that I forget most of them. They came and went a lot anyway. Some of them that I can recall were Phil Smith, Dave Day, Johnny Chance, one of his partners, "Wild Goose Bill" Jinkins; "Black" Sullivan, "Lucky" Todd, Dune McRae, Pete Lester, Hughie Campbell, Nigel Ewart, Dan McKay, Sam Spencer, Herb Thomas, the Snowden boys, Jim Kelly, Harry Jones, "Belgie" Powell, Perley Russell, Harry Barnes, George Aldous, Sam Pearce, "Crazy" Brown, although he was not a Granite Creek man but Copper Mountain; Hugh Hunter, afterwards mining recorder; there were dozens of others but none of them are left about here now but myself and Sam Spencer, who is a good deal younger man than I am. "Crazy" Brown is still alive and full of his Volcanic Mountain claim somewhere over Grand Forks way; "Volcanic" Brown they call him too. Perhaps none of those made any fortune out of Granite Creek but we lived anyway and had a good time.

Granite Creek was a one-street town. It was down at the mouth of the creek on the left bank, and had just the one narrow street of log buildings. The big population of miners lived mostly in tents at first and then in cabins up the creeks on or close to their claims. There were three general stores in the town, F.P. Cook's, Mark Woodward's, and J.H. Duncan and Co's, which really was a branch of Howse's store at Nicola and was run by Charley Revely. The Granite Creek Hotel was kept by Mrs. Alice James and Dan McKay had a hotel. There were at one time thirty or more bars in the town. The hotels were storey-and-a-half affairs, the upstairs being what they call here a ram pasture, one large room in which anyone is welcome to shake-down in his own blankets.

As the town developed and traffic increased the government were wanted by us to build a road. We had only a horse-trail all the way from Princeton in the one direction to about sixteen miles above us in the other. There was a road of a sort from

[6]

Spences Bridge as far as Jack Thynne's ranch, but from there south there was only the trail. When Bob Stevenson brought in a steam sawmill he had a hard job to get it the rest of the way from Jack Thynne's, and he had to build a bridge over the creek to get it to his place. He wanted the mill to cut timber for a flume. Anyway, we thought that as the government was getting a good deal of revenue out of our development of Granite Creek camp and the province was getting the advertising they might at least make it easier for us to get stuff in and out.

I was always the man picked on in this section of the country to go to Victoria to get roads, bridges, trails and school-houses, and it is a strange thing that I always had to do it on my own, strictly my own time and my own money, every time. However, it was all for the good of the district. Smithe was the Premier and he was in charge of lands and works. John Robson was Provincial Secretary. We felt that the Similkameen was under great disabilities without a wagon-road, and that mining could not be properly developed unless we had one, which would enable us to get machinery and supplies in from the railway, which was just then getting into running operation. We had a meeting and got up a deputation to go

down to Victoria and see them about it. I was in it representing Princeton. We decided to make a demand for a road from Nicola, and I was asked to represent this section and also the Similkameen valley. Lower Nicola asked me, too. Howse was one of them also. The deputation had an interview with the government. We had a meeting of the members of the deputation in the Driard before we went over, and we made out plans who was to speak and what line we were to take. It was decided that I was to speak for the needs of Granite Creek mining camp and the Similkameen valley. The other fellows said afterwards that I made a fighting good speech. When we got through and the government promised the usual thing, that they would give our request careful consideration, Smithe came over to me and said; "Where in hell did you come from anyway?" "Oh." says I, "I am a free-milling specimen of raw material from the interior." I talked to them pretty straight for I knew they

[7]

really had not much knowledge of the requirements of our part of the province. Smithe was a farmer from Vancouver Island and could not know the difficulties of a mining district in the interior. Howse made them a pretty good speech, too, for he is a great talker. Robson, the Provincial Secretary, was a practical man and knew something about what mining men needed and what sort of a country we worked in. He was pretty friendly to our request.

Mayor James Fell, of Victoria, came over to see us in his buggy. They were interested in Victoria in our deputation because everything that helped the mining districts helped Victoria, which was the place where all the wholesale houses were then and where all our supplies came from that didn't come in from the States. "We will have a public meeting," says the mayor to me, "and we want you to be one of the speakers". I said I would. We had quite a lot of people at the meeting and the mayor was in the chair. Smith Curtis was the speaker ahead of me. He is a dry speaker and I could see the crowd was getting sort of restless and wasn't inclined to listen to long speeches, so I made my speech as humorous as I could. Before the meeting I had taken a walk around the waterfront and I had noticed a man scraping moss off the roof of a house which had a very nice garden round it. I got to talking to him and he told me that the damp weather produced moss on old roofs. It was pretty thick moss, at that. Further on I noticed on the beach an octopus which had been thrown up by the tide and outside was a C.P.R. boat coming in from China. So when I got up to speak I told them about this mossy roof and in a good-natured way poked some fun at Victorians as mossbacks. I told them if they did not get out and rustle instead of coming down to their offices about ten o'clock or later they would find the little baby city over on Burrard Inlet, which was just then busy building up again after the fire, would take their trade all away from them. I told them to get out and rustle and to insist that the government put the new mining camps in a position to get in supplies from Victoria over good wagon-roads. And where is the big trade Victoria used to have with the upper country today? Gone to Vancouver, just as I told them over forty

[8]

years ago would happen. Then I talked about the C.P.R. and likened it to an octopus, whose tentacles would be found tight round the people of Canada if they were not careful. It was a fine thing to have a railway right across Canada, I told them, but they must see that the railway did not become the boss of the country just because it was filling a need. "I see a C.P.R. ship in your port today", I said. "What is she bringing? Six thousand bales of silk for eastern mills and six hundred Chinese for British Columbia." Cheap Chinese labour built the C.P.R. and the people of the coast got such a taste for cheap Chinese labour that they were quite content to see them come in by hundreds, and where are they today? They have thousands of Chinese and Japs filling the places that white men ought to be in and there is no more cheap Chinese labour; you have to pay him as much as you pay a white man. Anyway, I made a speech that pleased the crowd and they agreed that Granite Creek and the Similkameen were entitled to a wagon-road.

I made money in Nevada when I was there. I owned the Evening Chronicle in Virginia City, and sold it to John I Ginn. A lively little town Virginia City was in those times and fortunes

were being made and lost in the camp. the Comstock lode was the making of Virginia City and other towns round about. I was familiar with the leading operators in that district, and with the numerous towns there, Carson City, Genoa, Washoe City, Dayton, Silver City, Empire, Gold Hill, and other mining camps which had their origin in the discovery of the Comstock lode. When I went to Granite Creek I wrote for the Colonist, and for the time the camp was active the Granite Creek news in the Colonist came chiefly from me. I met Amor DeCosmos several times, not that he was connected with the Colonist at that time. I don't think Dave Higgins was then either; I think he had sold out to Bill Ellis then. DeCosmos was a tall solemn man, very serious in his manner but a nice man and a good writer. Dave Higgins was more popular and made himself more liked than DeCosmos, but he had his enemies too. Like myself, they were both Maritime Provenance men.

[9]

Granite Creek was a little frontier town when I first saw it, just one street of log cabins. The Granite Creek strike must have been made about the time of the finishing of the C.P.R., for there must have been three thousand men drifted in from construction. The government took a lot of money out of this country but all we had to show for it were the trails. However, the petition we made to the government when the deputation went to see them was reasonable and we got what we wanted. We had Denis Murphy the Ashcroft lawyer for our member for a while and Shatford got to be our member after Murphy. Shatford was a fine man and did a lot for our part of the country. He lived down in it for several years and most of his interests were in the Similkameen. He was a great loss to Canada when he died. Denis Murphy is now a judge and I guess he is a good one, for he is a man of great common-sense and a sense of fair play. We had three general stores on the creek at the outset and another one or two started up afterwards, but one by one they all got out. F.P. Cook's was the last to go, and then we had to go into Princeton to his store there or to Charley Thomas' store or Howse's.

It would make you laugh their idea of business in some of the stores. They were never in a hurry, but of course the customers were not in a hurry either. If trade was not very brisk the merchant might as likely as not be down at the hotel at a game of billiards or cards or having a drink, and you had to go and find him, and that generally meant that you had to have a drink or maybe two or three of them before you started back to the store. they charged pretty steep prices. I had territory up Granite Creek and first thing that fall I came down to get supplies to where I was working on the bench with two men. I went into Thompson's and he wouldn't give me prices. I went around to see what the others had to say and there was a Chinaman at the lower end of Granite Creek; another in Kamloops; another on the road; all had twenty men on the creek that summer. Ah Loy. I had seen him on the road. He was there for the same reason I was, and he wasn't getting any more satisfaction than I was getting. "What's your trouble, Ah Loy?" I asked him. "White man started tell me prices of flour in the winter", he said, "I no want flour in

[10]

the winter, I want him now". I had my list of what I needed. Ah Loy went to a Chinaman who had a general store and has as good stuff as the other stores had, and we both got what we wanted at one half the price. The white store-keepers wanted to charge the prices they would later on when it was not possible to get stock in, but I was entitled to get the advantage of the price in the fall. I'd rather deal with a white man if everything is the same, but when you are developing a mining proposition that may not yield a cent you can't afford to be throwing your money away.

British Columbia is a great province and has always come to the front. No one really knows what is in it in the way of minerals. The future will show mines the equal of any there have been for there is only a small part of the surface of the country that has really been thoroughly prospected. I have always tried to keep the mining industry to the front and never lost a chance to say what I thought about it and I have encouraged all the capital I could to invest here.

I have been a justice of the peace of twenty-five years, and I was a member of licensing commissioners frequently for Similkameen and Nicola when bar licenses were in force.

One of the hotels in Granite Creek in the early days was the Driard House, called after the Driard in Victotia, (which was the principal hotel in the capital for a number of years) and this was run by B.F. Boyce and Cairns. There was another Driard House at Nicola Lake, which A.E. House ran for some time and then sold in Stanley Kirby. John Clark owned it before that and Joe Richards was managing it for him.

I was often in Victoria on deputations for one thing or another and I was always called on to speak. I was chairman of the public meeting held in Princeton to advocate the payment of a bonus to the V.V.& E. Ry. to get them to come through the valley, and I was one of the members of the deputation that went

[11]

from the valley to urge that policy upon the Dunsmuir government. The others from Princeton were Charley Thomas, George Aldous, Jimmie Anderson, Bill Knight, and Charley Harris, the assayer. I told them down there that the C.P.R. had the dry-rot and that if they did not do something to give us competition and railway service in this valley I would begin to think that the dry-rot had attacked Victorians and the Dunsmuir government too.

Otter Flat was reserved for townsite purposes by the government in 1886 on the advice of Gold Commissioner Tunstall, who made a special trip in here and reported to the government what the thought was advisable. The area reserved was made a townsite and called Tulameen in 1901, and that summer Joshua Davies was sent here from Victoria to hold the first sale of lots. It went well and they got good prices.

After J.H. Jackson gave up keeping hotel he came here to Tulameen and devoted all his attention to his mining interests. He had a number of claims, some mineral and some coal. He had coal lands on Collins Gulch which he disposed of to the Similkameen Valley Coal Co. That company got from Smith Curtis the townsite he had organized on Whipsaw Creek and called Copperfield, and they also bought Bob Stevenson's ranch and I think also Captain S.F. Scott's residence, which was out that direction, and amalgamated the lot as the townsite of Ashnola.

Thomas Rabbitt was an early settler in here and gave his name to Rabbitt Mountain. He had a good ranch, and for a while he ran a road-house. Mrs Rabbitt and Mrs Jack Bromley were sisters.

The Tulameen and Similkameen were worked for gold by placering back in 1859 and 1860. What brought J.F. Allison into the valley first was that on his arrival in the colony Governor Douglas sent him in here to report upon the gold discoveries and on the opportunities there were for ranching. Allison liked it so well that he came back and settled on the Similkameen.

[12]

Pete Gunderson, who owned the Idaho claim in the Summit City silver-lead camp, near the head of Tulameen river was killed in September, 1900, by a tree falling upon him. At the time he was prospecting for coal about two miles from Otter Flat, that is, from this town here, you can almost see the spot. He had gone out in the evening to care for his horse for the night when the limb of a large tree fell upon him. His chums went to look for him when he did not turn up and found him terribly injured crushed under the limb. They got him out and into the tent and sent for Doctors Whilliams and McPhail, but they could do nothing for him. Pete was a Swede and had been several years in this country, prospecting and mining. He was a decent soul.

There is no doubt that in periods of prosperity the miners and prospectors of earlier days were reckless and prodigal, but they had generous dispositions which never failed to respond to appeals for assistance, or to relieve the distressed and unfortunate. The lives of all these men are closely associated with the early history of this country, on which they have left an impression so deep that future years cannot obliterate it. They ere always noted for self-reliance, rugged endurance, and sterling worth. The probability of the discovery of rich placer camps even yet is the star that keeps leading the prospector on into the most remote and inaccessible places, and through hardship and privation which does not kill or diminish their hopes.

The fellows who were with Pete Gunderson the time he got hurt were John P Cunningham and J. A. Fitzsimmons. They got Dr McPhail from Granite Creek, which is handy to here, and he had them go in a fetch Dr Whilliams from Princeton. Dr McPhail was a good doctor and well liked in Granite Creek. He was a hard working fellow. He died there and is buried on the hill. [[Note: a handwritten "NO" is entered after this last sentence.]]

[13]

Similkameen mining dates back to 1860, when both whites and Chinese were busily engaged placering on the Similkameen and Tulameen and all their tributary creeks. That was partly the reason Governor Douglas sent J.F. Allison in here to investigate what was being done and report to him. Old Allison mined the first copper around here. He worked the mine for a short time and a shipment of ore was sent out over the Hope trail by pack-train bound for San Francisco. The smelter report from there was very good; it gave 37 percent copper; but the expense was too great at that time to make it profitable, and so nothing more was done about it and everyone forgot all about copper. Indications of other metals were found in all gold-mining in the province nearly, and an odd man thought of a time when these would be recovered, but in those times gold was the only thing anyone wanted or cared about.

After Granite Creek as played out as a placer camp, about 1895, say, hydraulic companies were formed. The Vermilion Forks Mining Company had leases on Tulameen River and that brought the Watermans in. The Boston and British Columbia Gold Mining Company had leases on Similkameen River and Granite Creek. The Slate Creek Hydraulic Company had leases on Slate Creek and Tulameen River. Then there were my own company and Bob Stevenson's company. We stuck to the old creek longer than anyone else did.

There were a lot of mining camps in this district at that time. I do not believe I can remember them all now, after thirty or thirty-five years. On Copper Mountain there was, of course the great Sunset claim, or group of claims of "Sunset" Brown, which has developed into such a tremendous property; the Helen H Gardner, the Sunrise, Vancouver, Oriole, I.X.L., and others. Along Wolf Creek, which takes its rise on Copper Mountain, there was the Lost Horse claim, a good gold and copper proposition. On Kennedy Mountain, across on the west side of the Similkameen River, there were the Magnetic group, the Olympia group, Red Buck, La Reine, Gladstone, all

[14]

copper properties. Up at the head of the Similkameen was the Roche River camp, which started in 1896 when Charley Bonnevier and Gus Pouwels discovered the Golden Crown. At that time there was no trail in there and everything had to be carried in on men's backs. Summit City was a silver-lead camp, which is coming back again. Oh, yes, at Roche River was the Pasaytan, Red Star, and Anaconda, too. Summit City had the Mountain View, Summit No. 1, Summit No. 2, and Skyline. In the Boulder Creek camp the principal claims were in the Cousin Jack group, owned by Jack Thynne, Edward Todd, and other prospectors.

Aspen Grove was a lively place, and had a lot of promising claims all round, some of them

being the Golden Sovereign, Liverpool, Boomerang, Cincinnati, Portland, Mabel, Big Dutchman, the Georgia group, Monte Mira, and Nelson group. The pioneer claim was the Big Sioux, which had a great showing of grey copper and copper glance, running nearly twenty percent copper. About ten years ago, R.R. Hedley, of the Silver King, revived work upon it. On Five-Mile Creek, Luke Gibson, Perley Russell, Clive Pringle, Charley McIntosh, the lawyer that was in Princeton then, Dave Day, and D.M. French were all busy developing claims. Sterling Creek, across the river from where Hedley is now, there was some work going on, The Lion's Head being one of the chief claims. About that time it was, I guess, that Frank Bailey started his townsite of Similkameen, a couple of miles this side of Hedley, but it never came to anything. The boundary country is full of townsites that never were and old mining camps that were but are no longer.

The quick rise in the price of copper drew many prospectors here in the summer of 1898, and a number of claims were staked on Copper and Kennedy mountains. There was a big rush in 1899.

It was March 22, 1901, that the V.V. & E. Railway deputation saw the government. I told them that dry rot had crept into the coast cities as well as the interior because the

[15]

country was in the hands of a giant corporation which had no consideration for anything but its own interests.

Granite Creek was narrow, with little fall, and there is four miles of natural sloughs in the mountains. When the news of the discovery of gold in 1885 got out, and it spread quickly as is always the case with gold discoveries, there was a great rush, especially of old miners from Cariboo, Cassiar, California, and Australia. Its life as a mining camp was comparatively short, but it had a marked effect upon the future development of quartz mining in the Similkameen. There was a big rush in 1886, consequent upon the completion of the C.P.R. and thousands of men who had been on construction finding themselves out of a job. Large numbers of them came pouring down to Granite Creek in the hope of making a strike or at least of getting a job in the rich new camp that so much was being said about.

A considerable town sprang up in the course of a few months, a typical mining town, saloons, gambling-houses, and restaurants, and stores of course. The town of Granite Creek was on the left bank, near the mouth of the creek, where it enters the Tulameen, slap up against a steep bank on the left side of the river. In November, 1885, there were fifteen houses in the town, of which seven were general stores, three of these being Chinese. There were two bars, two restaurants, and a butcher shop. Of course there were a number of men living in tents, and to accommodate these and the hundreds others coming in building was brisk through the latter months of 1885. By the beginning of 1886 there were two hundred houses in the place and at a conservative estimate there was a population of about 500 whites and 250 Chinese, besides those living out on the creeks. There were six saloons in town that first winter.

[16]

In 1886 some of the claims on Granite Creek made a yield of thirty to fifty ounces of gold a week. Of course, there were all the other creeks in the district being worked too, but the Granite Creek, being the largest and some of the others being tributaries of it, got its name to the camp. There were Bear, Slate, Collins, Eagle, Siwash, Railroad, Sutter, Badger, and Kelly creeks, besides a number of little creeks and gulches that I have forgotten the names of if they ever had any names besides the colloquial ones they were given at the time. Much gold was taken out the first year from Granite, Slate, Bear and Collins creeks, well on to half a million dollars, it was estimated, when you consider what got out without being reported. From Granite Creek there was nearly \$50,000 reported, and the gold commissioner's estimate was that there must have been \$90,000 taken out.



The gold was coarse, with one or two nice nuggets being found frequently and larger ones occasionally. In 1886 two were got from Bear Creek, one of which was worth \$400 and the other \$415. A Chinaman working for a company on Boulder Creek found one in 1887 worth \$900. It was exhibited by Wells-Fargo in their windows in Victoria that winter. Placer claims yielded from \$5 to \$30 a day to the hand. A young chap from London paid his last dollar to record a claim, borrowed a rocker, and the first afternoon took out \$400. He left the creek with about \$11,000. I remember that on Discovery claim over \$800 was taken out in one day's washing. A little below that Adam Fay had a fraction which he worked with a rocker, banking his dirt in the forenoon and washing in the afternoon. When the sun shone on that bank the gold could be seen glittering like sparks. Pat Synon, a genial old Irishman, named his claim the Gladstone--it was right in the heat of the Irish Home Rule fight--sent Mr Gladstone a big nugget, and got a letter of acknowledgment which he greatly prized. I was the chief owner in the Pogue company claim, which I tunnelled and got fair returns from. My partners were Bill [William J] Kyle and Joe Newton.

[17]

In 1900 I was working in my tunnel with Johnny Amberti when the entire bank caved in and buried me up to the neck in mud and wash. I tell you it was a pretty narrow shave I had of being covered up altogether. If I had no doubt I would have been smothered to death. I managed to keep my mouth clear of the debris that was tumbling down, and gave Johnny directions how to go to work to dig me out. It took him two hours hard work to get me clear. The stuff kept flowing and falling in as he dug, and when you see how tall I am you will know he had a long way to dig down. I'm a bit stooped now but in my prime I was a good height. I was pretty badly crushed and had some ribs broken. Caving banks are always a dread of miners and a man does not like working where there is any danger without a partner near. If he is by himself in such a case he goes at it very carefully, for many a man has got caught as I was and lost his life for lack of help.

Johnny Amberti was a fine old fellow, none better in the game, and had been all over the world you may say in mining camps. He was born in Northern Italy and had been in South America a lot. He did a lot of placer and quartz mining on the Orinoco and used to spin yarns about his experience in that country. He was an expert prospector and miner and a good companion to have.

We used to have lots of exciting experiences in earlier times around here. One time Jack Thynne left DeBarro's Hotel at Otter Flat to walk down to Granite Creek to a political meeting. A mile out of Otter Flat he found a she grizzly and her cubs on the trail. Jack walked around them gingerly but he did it too carefully and happened to step on one of the cubs. It squealed and the mother lit out after Jack. She chased him down to Granite Creek, or so Jack's story made it, and he saved himself by swinging up into a tree as he got near the town. His shouts for help brought out Dan McKay, who chased the bear off and got Jack down. I can see and hear

[18]

Jack and Dan telling the story over drinks in Dan's bar. All the same a she grizzly is no nice thing to have chasing you.

Father Pat [Rev Henry Irwin] held the first mining camp services conducted outside the Cariboo in British Columbia in Granite Creek. He held it in Archie Irwin's cabin and he held services later in the bar of Mrs Alice James' hotel. He was a very fine man, was Father Pat, and always busy helping someone or another. He was a big power for good among the miners and settlers throughout the boundary country, and to him principally should be given the credit of establishing the Episcopal church as generally as it is through the southern parts of the province.

Archie Irwin and Swan were mining recorders at the start of the Granite Creek excitement. George Tunstall was gold commissioner at Kamloops and they were under him. He was an

old Cariboo miner, of kind heart and ready hand; he would never see any old miner or prospector in want. He was noted for strict administration of the mining laws but he was a man of great common-sense and judgment. He came down himself to help in the office at Granite Creek, and he held small debts court, which was a great convenience. I was a Justice of the Peace; I guess I am still; and I used to be license commissioner with Charley Thomas, Bell, Armitage, and more of them.

The houses in Granite Creek were nearly all log cabins and very comfortable they were. There were a few frame houses, like Cook's dwelling. Living was not at all high when you consider that at first the place wasn't even on a road. Flour was \$9 or \$10 a hundred, potatoes 7 cents a pound, beef 10 cents a pound. Board was very reasonable, \$8 a week as a rule. We lived well, plainly but substantially, and out in the open air so much gave you a good appetite all the time.

[19]

The winter of 1886-87 was a very bad one. It was as cold as 38 below zero and there were three feet of snow on the ground in many places. Horses were dying for lack of feed, hay being scarce and the deep snow making it impossible for them to get any grass. There was good deal of hardship, although there was no lack of food nor fuel, but there were some men who had not saved anything to tide them over a long spell of enforced idleness. I remember that winter a miner known as Poker George got his feet frozen badly out on the hills and he died in a few days from gangrene.

There was no mail to Granite Creek for some time after it started, and George Tunstall complained to the provincial government about it and asked them to take it up with the people at Ottawa. The mail came in by Spences Bridge and was sorted at the Nicola Lake office, but there was no post-office at Granite Creek and any mail received at Nicola for the creek would be thrown in a gunny sack and brought to the creek by any teamster that was passing there or going to the camp. At the creek it would be thrown loose in an old box and you picked out your own. When Tunstall came down he took charge of the mail delivered that way and acted as an unofficial postmaster. Later on the complaints he made had their effect and we got a post-office, of which William Jansen was the postmaster. [Granite Creek post office was established in 1888, with William Jansen as postmaster; W T Thompson, store-keeper, was postmaster in 1890; F P Cook in 1896.]

Platinum was found mixed with the gold as a greyish substance. It was found associated with alluvial gold and was of two grades, magnetic and non-magnetic. It was found in fine flakes where the gold was fine and in small nuggets and pellets where the gold was coarse. It contains small quantities of iridium, osmium, and palladium. The iridium is exceedingly valuable, being used for tipping the points of gold pens and for other purposes where great hardness and indestructibility are

[20]

essential. At first it was brushed aside as worthless and in that way many thousands of ounces were lost. When a miner brought his gold in to a dealer the dealer would empty the poke out on the counter, brush the platinum out of it on the floor, and of course a little gold would go with it but what was a little gold in those days! Miners who knew its value would separate themselves before bringing their gold in, and save it for a possible market. There were some buyers for it. In 1886 it sold at Granite Creek for fifty cents an ounce, but it was worth outside \$2.50 an ounce. As its value became realized its price increased gradually to \$4 and ounce on the creek. In 1888 fifteen hundred ounces of platinum were produced at Granite Creek in the sense of being saved and purchased; it was then worth \$3.50 an ounce at the creek. During the war several platinum mining companies were formed, mostly by Vancouver people.

Diamonds have been found in the Tulameen but not in commercial sizes yet. When Charles

W Thompson, the South African diamond expert, was out here during the war he spent some time on the Tulameen around Champion Creek and got some tiny stones. In one pan from the alluvial deposits of the Tulameen he washed gold, platinum, iron, garnets, rubies, and diamonds. Just because I say that it needn't start a rush here to dig precious stones. Their presence in minute particles is certain and it may be that some day commercial sizes may be found.

Between Railroad Creek and Sutter Creek, at the head of Tulameen River, practically on the line of the old Allison trail, there was thirty years ago a silver-lead camp known as Summit City. About the beginning of the war it had a revival, when some Spokane men bonded a number of old Crown-granted claims there, and the name of the place was changed to Leadville, after the famous Colorado mining camp. Some of these claims had been Crown-granted in 1899 by the Star Company, of Indiana. Pete Gunderson owned the Idaho, on which there was a vein two feet thick of solid galena carrying high values in gold and silver, with a little copper. Patsy Clark had a number of properties

[21]

under bond. The Golden Treasure Mountain Mining Company, a Spokane outfit, tunnelled in several hundred feet on that old property. That excitement died out and little has been done in the neighbourhood since, but many claims are still held there and prospectors believe there is much mineral if the means of transport were better. One of the arguments advanced for the building of the trans-provincial highway by that route was that it would give access to profitable mines.

The Lost Creek Mining Company was a Seattle syndicate which was organized about 1914 to work on what was supposed to be an old channel of Granite Creek, about four miles down the Tulameen from where Granite Creek falls into it, and of course on the right bank. They worked there for some time on a group of claims and got some small indications, but gave it up after a couple of years. There were lots of cases where what looked to be a good prospect turned out nothing. Donald Rankin, Jim Turley, and Angus Lamont prospected Five-Mile Creek in 1887 and got good showings, but their expectations were not realized and they did no go further. They were old Cariboo miners.

There was considerable excitement around Aspen Grove some years ago in regard to copper, of which there are considerable deposits, as there is generally all through this district. Near Aspen Grove and up Ten-Mile Creek very promising indications were found and a good deal of money was invested. Copper ore from there was shown at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific fair in Seattle in 1909. There is also considerable gypsum in that district.

George C Tunstall said that Johnny Chance discovered gold on Granite Creek in 1885, and that is the generally accepted story, that Chance, Tom Curry, and Bill Jinkins discovered Granite Creek while hunting; that Johnny got lazy and lay down on the bank, and that while taking a drink from the creek he noticed the sparkle of gold on the bottom. It is also said that old Marcel found it first; that he and his son used to hunt and

[22]

trap that district and found gold but didn't bother about it. That might be, too, for Marcel and Johnny Chance were very thick and had been hunting together, and it may well be that Marcel did find gold first and that Johnny was in with him, but that does not shut out the likelihood of Chance leading his friends to what he knew was a certain prospect. It is a strange fact, which I know because I was mining recorder here for a short time, that these men do not appear as making the first record in the Princeton office. The claims recorded in 1885 were all laid over that fall by J F Allison, acting as gold commissioner for Tunstall, and then in February. 1886, Henry Nicholson, as mining recorder, started the records from number one, although there were a number of valid claims already recorded. It is likely that these will be found recorded in the Kamloops office, where Tunstall was gold commissioner for all this part of the province, and as whose deputy Nicholson was acting.

When the Granite Creek excitement began the government asked John F Allison to take the position of gold commissioner or mining recorder at the creek, but as this would have required his residence there he declined the job, although he acted for a short time.

Before 1886 Chinese had been working on the Tulameen above Granite Creek, and they were doing well, but of course no one knows how much they took out. You never can tell what a Chink takes out, even to this day. If you ask them how they are doing they will tell you they are making two bits a day, four bits, maybe six bits if it is in a good place and they know that you know that. You can multiply that four or five times anyway. It is possible to tell by what white men can do. Peter Briggs and Joe Bromley took out \$400 in an afternoon with a rocker. Sherburne and Rashdell, near the mouth of the creek, did about as well one day. The Point company [was this Pearce and Harvey?] wound up with forty-five ounces, worth over \$750, for eight men in thirty hours. Collins, Cedar, Bear, Champion, Slate, Hines, Kelly, Eagle, and Boulder creeks were all worked that time. A Bear Creek nugget worth \$320 was one

[23]

day found; in Slate Creek a nugget worth \$215; in Granite Creek nuggets worth \$90 and \$100 were frequently found.

I was familiar with the doings at Camp McKinney and was over there several times and took some interest in the camp, but that was all. The camp was founded and brought into prominence by the continuous success of the Cariboo-Amelia mines, worked continuously after a stamp mill was put in in 1894. The history of the camp began in 1884, when the Victoria vein on Rock Creek was discovered a short distance above the placer diggings of early days, but little was done until 1887, when the Cariboo vein was found, standing boldly out of the ground with free gold showing. But even then little was actually done until the Cariboo Mining and Milling Company took hold. James Monaghan & Co., Spokane, had the Cariboo in 1893. Monaghan organized this company to develop the property. He was its president. George B McAuley, another well known Spokane mining man, was secretary, and J P Keane, a familiar figure among miners and prospectors around Camp McKinney, was superintendent of the mine. The group consisted of the Cariboo, Amelia, Alice, Emma, Maple Leaf, Saw Tooth fraction, and some other claims that I have forgotten. The company was putting in ten stamps in 1898, when the control passed into the hands of the Cariboo Consolidated Mining & Milling Co., Ltd., of which Robert Jaffray, of the Toronto Globe, was the head and George McAuley was mining director. They put in ten more stamps. That was a live camp and there were a great many claims located. Henry Nicholson was the mining recorder, justice of the peace, and general big man about the camp. He was a real old timer, moving into the Similkameen valley in the very early sixties. I think the only old-time miner and prospector left in that part of the country now is Jimmie Copland, and he must be getting on for a hundred; he is a long way older than me.

[24]

Hedley is another camp that has grown up round one mine, the Nickle Plate, on which work has been going on steadily for thirty years. The start of the camp was when Peter Scott came in from the Slocan country and located the Rollo claim in August, 1897. He was grub-staked by Hedley, of the Hall mines and smelter, Nelson, and Johnson, of the Greenwood smelter. Later on he located the King, Princeton, War Horse, and Kingston. Two Swedes, Albert Jacobson and Carl Johnson, grub-staked by William Yolen Williams, of the Granby mines, superintendent of them, located the Mound and Copper Cliff, afterwards purchased by the Yale Mining Company. In August, 1898, Wollaston and Arundel [Francis E R Wollaston, Kelowna, farmer, and Constantine Harris Arundel, Osoyoos, miner] located Horsefly, Nickle Plate, Copperfield, Sunnyside and Bulldog. At that time M K Rodgers was representative in the Similkameen of Marcus Daly, the big Montana mining man, and he got interested in this Nickle Plate group of claims, took a bond on them later on in 1898, and started development work on them. Rodgers had gone in quietly and packed out some samples of the ore without the owners knowing anything about it, and on the assay of these

bought the claims. The Yale Mining Company was incorporated to mine the ore and the Daly Reduction Company to handle it. Gomer P Jones was brought in from Australia by Rodgers in 1899 to manage the mine, and now he is head of the Hedley Gold Mining Company, which succeeded the Daly interests in the ownership of the property. The credit of naming the camp Hedley is claimed by Pete Scott and Frank Bailey, a mining engineer.

On the Hope trail the first stopping-place out from Hope was a house fourteen miles out. The second was at Cedar Flat, The third was Summit House, The fourth was Bromley's, twelve miles from Granite Creek.

Dan McKay had one of the first hotels in Granite Creek, if not the very first. Mrs Alice James had another. After she gave it up she was housekeeper in one of the

[25]

Princeton hotels, and she is living now on her ranch at Coalmont, quite an old lady. Herbert Godison ran the Granite Creek Hotel a few years before the war, and I think he was the last in it. [Dan McKay sold the Granite Creek Hotel to Mrs Alice James in June, 1900, together with the stable and farm.] Charley DeBarro and Jack Thynne owned the Otter Flat Hotel for some time and then Charley ran it alone. He sold out to Jack Lundy, who had it only a year or so, selling out to W J Henderson [William John] late in 1906. Henderson had been interested in hotels in Hedley up to that time, He moved here to Tulameen, Otter Flat had ceased to be the name of the place at that time, and ran the Hotel until he died shortly before the war. His widow and son Charley opened and managed it until about twelve years ago, when it went out of existence. It was a two-story building, part of it being afterwards used by Jim Schubert as a store.

Donald McRae, had build the Dominion Hotel, a three-story building, before the war and is still carrying it on. About twenty years ago. or as soon as Coalmont began to be a coal-mining town Louis Marcotte [Louis Napoleon Marcotte] put up a hotel there which he called the Hotel Coalmont. He sold it out a few years ago to James McKiernan and Frank [Frank Joseph] McMahan, and they ran it until last year [1929]. Then the Miller Brothers took it over and have it now. Old man Worgan [Alfred Dashwood Worgan], whose wife had the first Similkameen Hotel at Allison, is living in Coalmont. Mrs Worgan is dead several years. The old Granite Creek Hotel was near the road from Princeton, which ran on the east bank of the river, a little way across the bridge.

J H Jackson, who had been running the Jackson House in Princeton, the second hotel there, for several years, came back to Otter Flat about 1910, and had a store, the post-office, and a stable. Later on he gave that up and was in the mining brokerage and notary public line, and looked after his own mining interests, which were extensive. Gilbert Blair was one of the early ones at Granite Creek. He was a member of the

[26]

firm of Blair & Co., of Nicola. He has been living in Vancouver for many years now, and is a partner in some firm there. [Blair & Co. were of Coutlee, where they had a general store, ranch, and cattle, and had branch stores in Princeton and Granite Creek. Blair was postmaster at Coutlee. He moved to Vancouver in the late nineties and joined Mackay, Smith & Co., drygoods and men's furninshings, retaining his interests in Blair and Co.]

The Victoria, Vancouver & Eastern Railway was completed from Princeton to Coalmont somewhere about 1914, and about the same time the Columbia Coal & Coke Co., Ltd., owners of the coal deposits there, put on the townsite of Coalmont. It was and is about a mile west of the old town of Granite Creek. They were a Winnipeg outfit.

Hugh Hunter had been ranching up at Otter Flat and then did some mining before he was made constable and mining recorder. He held these positions for some time before he was promoted to the government agency and to be gold commissioner. Some of those who were

in Granite Creek with me in early days who I don't think I have mentioned were Thomas B Burton, Joe Florence, Henry Jones, Sam Pearce, Alex Swan, mining recorder for some time; Tom Rabbitt, mining and keeping a stopping-place on Slate Creek, whose name has been given to a mountain on the west side of Otter Lake; Jim Wallace, who ran an saloon in Granite Creek before he went into Princeton to establish its first hotel; Bill Manning, who had a ranch on the road between the creek and Vermilion Forks, or Allison's as it was generally known. Hughie Campbell was another very fine old chap, and one of the real old-timers. He was born at sea while his parents were on their way from Scotland to Halifax and spent a number of years in my native province. He was in his late twenties when he set out for the west. This, he has told me, was in March, 1862, just as the American war was a year going on. [Another source gives the date of Campbell's birth as May 18, 1835.] He went by

[27]

sea to New York from Halifax, then to Panama, from there to San Francisco, and he used to damn the officers and the food and the accommodations of the ship that took him from Panama to Frisco; from where he travelled to Victoria, over to New Westminster and Yale, and landed in Barkerville in 1863. He was there for a couple of years and went from there to Helena, Montana. He spent a number of years in Montana and other American camps. He returned to British Columbia to the Similkameen, coming up here with Captain S F Scott for the Golden Creek Mining Company, which had claims on the south fork of the Similkameen.

An old character of Granite Creek was Frenchy, really an old Chinaman. He was about ninety when he died, fifteen years since or thereabout. Frenchy lived on the right bank of the creek just after crossing the bridge. Of later years he made his living by market gardening, but he always kept on doing a little placering.

Walton Holmes and his wife are old-timers at Blakeburn, but that is a new name for the place; they are really old-timers of Granite Creek. They were to have celebrated their golden wedding day after tomorrow and I was invited, but it has been postponed for some reason. [Originally set for July 20, 1930, it was some time after the Blakeburn disaster before it took place.] Walton Hugh Homes is his name and he is a farmer. He was born in Liverpool and was educated there. He came out to America with a brother. He was in several places in the States and finally landed up in Oregon. He worked on the mule-operated ferry over the Willamette River. He was married to the daughter of a hotel-keeper there. I knew the family and have stopped at the hotel. He left his wife and came to British Columbia and took up with a squaw. He is quite English in his speech and ways.

[28]

We had lots of means of communication with the railway at Spences Bridge, between stages and private rigs. There were regular services by stage all the way down to Princeton. John Clarke, of Nicola Lake, who used to run the Driard Hotel there for a long time, had a line leaving Spences Bridge early every Thursday morning for Nicola, Granite Creek, and Princeton, getting down to Princeton Saturday afternoon or evening and leaving for Spences Bridge Sunday morning. Jack Smith had a stage line that covered the same route, leaving Spences Bridge on Mondays and starting back from Princeton on Fridays. His headquarters were at Lower Nicola. Mat Steward [Matthew Prust Stewart] was another Nicola Lake stage proprietor. When the town of Merritt came into existence Nick Peterson put on a motor stage between there and here. He left Merritt Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, got in here in the afternoon, and left for Merritt the following morning.

The wagon road ran along the river from Nicola to Coutlee and then turned south, crossed Nicola River and over the flat where the town of Merritt is now, and then up Hamilton hill to the commonage reserve, a fine piece of pasturage. It follows up along Hamilton Creek to its source and turned south again, crossed the head waters of the Quilchena River, and

then passed over the divide to the head waters of Otter Creek. Aspen Grove was the first stopping-place. Dodds'. W A [William Alexander] Dodds had a fine ranch and stock farm, and had a store and the post-office at his house. Leaving the Aspen Grove country the road dropped into the Otter canyon, and came to the Canyon House, kept by Dan McKay, a well-known and popular stopping-place. Nine miles further down, that is, about halfway between Canyon House and Otter Flat, is Jack Thynne's ranch [John Granville Thynne], where Jack is still living hale and hearty.

Jack has one of the finest ranches in that part of the country, and in addition to his excellent cattle and horses he has the oldest orchard around, and a market garden. He is a most enterprising farmer , and has always put up several hundred

[29]

tons of hay every year. Not far from there and near Boulder Creek are the Cousin Jack mineral claims, located by Emmitt Todd, a mining partner of Thynne's. It is nine miles from Thynne's place to Otter Flat, or Tulameen, as it had now been known for several years. About twenty years ago Captain Frank C Turner acquired the Dodds ranch and took over the post-office, and about the same time Frank Crowder's ranch became the customary stopping-place, where the stages from Merritt going south stopped for the noon halt and dinner. The Canyon House and Dan McKay's ranch were owned at that time by Joe Collett [Joseph Richard Collett], of Merritt.

"Sunset" Brown's name is so much associated with the Sunset mine and the discovery of copper on Copper Mountain that many people think he discovered it. He did in the sense that use was made of the knowledge, but the real discoverer was a trapper named James Jameson. It was in 1888 that Jameson found immense beds of argentiferous copper ore on the divide between Similkameen River and Wolf Creek; ledges of it over one hundred and fifty feet wide. He was a trapper, not a miner, but he took some lumps of ore down to his cabin and they were lying about there when Brown came around buying furs; that was the business he was in then. He got quite excited when he saw the specimens and persuaded Jameson to take him to where they had been found. They staked some ground between them but did no work on it. The ground was actually not the Sunset claim but what was afterwards taken up as the Sunrise by Ed Burr, the Princeton garageman. Brown and Jameson re-staked on it two or three times without doing anything more, but finally Brown staked the Sunset on his own, leaving Jameson out in the cold, and that's that.

-=-