

HOW COBALT MADE GOOD

The Romance of the World's Greatest Silver Mining Camp

By F. W. BECKMAN

EVERY true story of Cobalt, the world's richest silver camp, reads much like the story of a black sheep that made good.

A few years ago when the news came down from the desolate regions of northern Ontario that silver had been found there in veins of unbelievable richness, most men doubted it and many wise ones sneered cynically.

Science looked up its geology and declared that silver had never been found on this continent in quantities worth while under such geological conditions; nature was not in the habit of mixing up its precious ores and other elements in just that way; so, while it might be true that silver had been found up there, the chances were that it was all an accident.

A million dollar-a-year mining expert who visited the district for his multimillionaire employers, called the find a freak, as did lesser experts. And because he was supposed to know everything worth knowing about mining, his mine grabbing employers followed his advice and kept out of Cobalt. Other big promoters did likewise.

Fakirs, who didn't care whether there was silver at Cobalt or not, took advantage of the loud noise that was made over the alleged discovery and made the noise still louder. They practiced the gentle art of making every knock a boost, staked out claims anywhere, sometimes miles and miles away from the real find, lied so eloquently and painted the picture of sudden wealth so alluringly that they sold wildcat stock by carloads and fleeced the people of Canada and the United States unmercifully.

Hardly had the news of the strike become known, therefore, before it was discredited and the district given a bad name whose mention led men to smile or revile.

But Cobalt made good.

The man with the sledge and drill and dynamite stick who had actually seen the precious white metal in veins so rich on the surface that they were veritable silver sidewalks, kept right on taking claims, exploring and blasting them, and accumulating in tremendously valuable ore heaps indisputable evidence that they were right. Science, which, it must be said in fairness, was never cock-sure about its first opinion, went into the matter thoroughly; geologists made careful surveys and then frankly admitted that what had not been, now really was, and revised their geologies accordingly. Many experts came back again, took back what they had said before, and assisted in the formation of legitimate companies to develop the field.

And all the while an increasing stream of ore found its way to the smelters of the United States, where, under final test, it produced marvelous quantities of silver, sometimes as much as 12,000 ounces per ton, rarely less than 2,000 ounces, while the average was near 4,000 ounces. An amazing production, when it is recalled that miners in Mexico and the United States were satisfied with 40 or 50 ounces per ton, and jubilant if it went higher. Even some of the wildcat companies began to produce, and stock that had been worthless went soaring in price until it made substantial fortunes for those who had been tempted to throw it away.

Now the Cobalt district, less than ten miles square, is ranked as one of three great mineral discoveries of the present century, the other two



Arriving at Cobalt—Its railroad brings in hundreds daily.



FRED LA ROSE
The blacksmith who accidentally uncovered Cobalt's wealth

being the Premier diamond mines in the Transvaal and the Goldfield-Tonopah mines in Nevada. Last year it produced approximately 30,000,000 ounces of silver, at least one-seventh of all the silver produced in the world, and more than the product of Montana and Nevada combined. There are now thirty-five shipping mines, whose output this year of 1910 may go to 40,000,000 ounces. Up to date, dividends amounting to more than \$15,000,000 have actually been paid to stockholders, a five-year record never before attained by any mining camp in the world in the first five years of its history. More wonderful yet, new and richer veins are being uncovered every little while, one of the more recent showing an assay of from 12,000 to 15,000 ounces per ton, while old veins have shown richer with development; experts have about concluded that in Cobalt there is almost an inexhaustible supply of silver—at any rate, enough to upset the silver market of the world unless the output is carefully regulated and controlled.

Looking backward, it doesn't seem to have been a very hard task to bring about this development in a short five years, but the men who tried to convince the world that Cobalt had the silver and to save its good name, know better. Among them, Frank B. Mosure, formerly a Toronto newspaper man, holds a unique place. Soon after the wonderful stories began drifting down from Cobalt, Mr. Mosure was sent by his editor to make a personal investigation. He saw that which coincided him that in the district lay a supply of wealth that would amaze the world. He wrote back and told his newspaper readers so. He was ordered to stay in the field and continued his letters. His stories of rich discoveries were so unbelievable that both he and his newspaper were ridiculed and attacked, and when the wildcat companies fleeced the people of their money, the attacks were doubled. But Mosure was on the spot, as he declared, and he knew; his paper believed in him, kept him on the spot and continued to stand by Cobalt. Subsequent developments soon justified Mosure's stand and they gave him a name by which he is known throughout the mining world—"The Man on the Spot."

Accident Led to Discovery

IT was by accident that Cobalt's vast treasure store was unearthed, and solely by accident for nobody dreamed that in this dreary stretch of northern Ontario wilds lay such wealth. There was absolutely nothing in the known geology of the rock hills to lead men to dream of the existence there of silver or any other precious metal, and prospectors never ventured into the region. For a hundred years and more, hunters and trappers and Hudson Bay employes had trailed back and forth across the district, without any thought of wonderful wealth lying beneath their feet. Within a short distance of the present camp, a wagon road ran for years, and none of the many pioneers who traveled it ever recognized the valuable metal that in some places literally thrusts itself into the open. For several years a lumber camp was maintained within a stone's throw of a surface streak of silver ore, worth thousands of dollars per ton, and nobody ever suspected it. As you see the silver veins now, practically naked, and so rich that when you polish them a bit with the sole of

your boot, they shine like a bright silver dollar, you wonder that men passed near and over this treasure so long without suspecting its existence.

Sometimes trivial, sometimes tragic, have been the accidents that led to the discovery of great mining districts; sometimes the kick of a mule, sometimes the desperate chance stroke of a starving prospector. In the case of Cobalt it was the accident of a railroad. The railroad itself was not an accident, for it was carefully planned by the Canadian government. But it was not designed to reach a mining district, but to open up a possible agricultural territory—a great belt of rich land lying south of James Bay. It was solely by chance that this line of railway was projected through the very center of the little area of ten miles square in which lies Cobalt's silver treasure. A few miles to the east or to the west, and the survey would have missed the district altogether. It was solely by chance that the right of way of the railroad passed over some of the richest ore so far found. Even then, the railroad builders almost finished cutting their way through the hard rock hills of the district without an inkling of the character of the stone that stubbornly resisted even the attack of dynamite. They cursed it and piled it up for ballast, utterly ignorant that much of it was worth \$5,000 a ton.

The Romance of Fred La Rose

ALMOST simultaneously the discovery was made in two different places in the district that some rich ore abounded. Tradition has it that a blacksmith, a brawny French Canadian named La Rose, employed in one of the railroad camps, threw his hammer at an inquisitive red fox (or was it a rabbit as another story goes), that ventured too near his forge. He didn't hit the fox, but his hammer broke off a bit of stone that fell beside it. La Rose saw it as he picked up his hammer; he examined it; he wondered at it and inasmuch as he knew of nickel mines a hundred miles or so to the south, he thought perhaps the stuff that glistened might be nickel. He talked it over with his boss; later they picked up more of the strange rock and sent it to Toronto for assay. Imagine their amazement when the word came back that the rock was rich in silver ore. The fox part of the story may be merely tradition; the other parts are not. Several miles to the south, two contractors, McKinley & Darragh, likewise found unusually shiny bits of rock while tramping over their section. They examined them and concluded that they must contain some ore of value. They sent their specimens away for assay also, and also got the sensational information that they showed unusual percentages



THE WORLD'S RECORD NUGGET.
Mined last year at Cobalt and valued at \$10,000.