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Earliest Placer

LURE OF WEALTH CAUSES TROUBLE BETWEEN PROSPECTORS AND INDIANS

Establishment of Fort Colville One Result of Quest of Riches in Northeastern Washington

By John B. Slater, Historian Stevens County Pioneer Association

The power of mammon, the lure of gold, which has led the advance of civilization into all the new worlds, played the royal part in the redemption of the Northwest as it had previously done in California and the neighboring commonwealths, the prospector in his quest always enjoying a similarity of emotion and corresponding motive—to wrest with the best provocation to his environments, the real token of value from its primeval hiding place. However, despite the peaceful and harmless intentions of the prospector, his invasion of the interior of the Columbia basin, following the report of the discovery of gold, caused bloody wars with the Indians with the consequent sacrifice of the lives of innocent people. A cursory review of those wild times may serve of interest now.

On June 9, 1855, at Walla Walla, Governor Isaac I. Stevens concluded negotiations with the 58 Indian chiefs of the Inland Empire in a treaty for peace among all the interior peoples, both aboriginal and white, living in the country. Notwithstanding the pact was carefully drawn in form and solemnly executed on the ground, it was understood by all the contracting parties that its binding force would not be impelling until finally ratified by the congress, and this was not done until March 8, 1859, nearly four years later. In the meantime, nevertheless, Joel Parker, superintendent of Indian affairs for Oregon and Washington, made this treaty the basis for his proclamation, July 10, 1855, declaring all of the country east of the Cascade mountains and from latitude 44 north to Kettle Falls, was set aside for the signing of the treaty a party of four French Canadians from French Prairie in the Willamette valley on a prospecting expedition had camped at Fort Shepard at the mouth of the Pend Oreille river. Their leader Wau-ke panned out a considerable color of gold from the bar at that point. This is said to have been the first gold discovered in Stevens county. Exaggerated reports of the find reached the coast papers and the gold hunters from the south immediately rushed across the country to the New Eldorado. The Wells-Fargo Express Co. immediately dispatched an agent to examine and report on conditions, having in mind the extension of their especial traffic in gold dust. His report affirmative of the new discovery gave fresh impetus to the excitement and without further delay miners were riding with reckless abandon across the country to the utter disregard of the Indians who deemed it an unwarranted trespass upon their territory. They had been given to understand that the whites had no rights in the country until the terms of the treaty which, among other things, provided for the payment by the government of \$200,000, had been confirmed at Washington, and in many instances resisted the oncoming of the miners. Pierre Jerome, an Indian chief at Kettle Falls, refused Mr. Wilson, the Wells-Fargo agent, permission to proceed to Fort Shepard. The murders of a number of prospectors precipitated the troubles which brought expeditionary forces of the U. S. army into the field, and ultimately Fort Colville was established to preserve quiet, but not before the Indian wars of 1855 and subsequent years had been fought and won by the whites with great disaster to the Indian tribes.

During the progress of all these hostilities the miners plied their activities. From the mouth of the Spokane river along the Columbia as far north as Death Rapids, B. C., over a distance of 400 miles thousands of men were sluicing the gravel bars, fluming the waters of the small streams to their diggings, and today one may see great winrows of gravel and boulders where hundreds of rich claims were worked for the riches of gold aggregating millions of dollars. The steamer Forty-Nine carried a commerce of great magnificence and merchants gathered wealth from the trade that sprang from the wealth of the sands.

The first mining was in placer and the gold was extracted by rockers and similar contrivances operated by hand. This was speeded by the introduction of sluicing, quicksilver being employed in gathering the dust which was retorted preparatory to market. The merchants took the dust in lieu of coin and measured its worth by weight. They, in turn, passed it on to the U. S. mint at San Francisco. The Wells-Fargo express guaranteed the safe transportation of the metal to its destination, and business was thus established on a safe basis.

The names of the camps were designated as bars. From the mouth of the Columbia from what is now Pasco, to the British line, they were, in the order of location: Ringlow Bar near Rock Island; Rogers Bar, near the town of Hunters; Whitestone Bar, Leo Bar, near Rickey; Half Mile Bar, below Marcus; Six Mile Bar, near Evans; Twelve Mile Bar, above Bossburg; Fifteen Mile Bar and China Bar, near Marble; Sheep Creek Bar, near Northport. There were many other workings that enjoyed a short spell of prosperity but their names disappeared with their abandonment.

Twenty acres were considered a claim, and property rights were regulated by local customs and rules promulgated by miners at meetings called to settle disputes. These organizations had a tentative basis in the general laws of the United States which were remotely referred to as a source of authority, but there was little occasion for their observance over local customs. Where partnerships engaged in the operation of a claim, each individual owned a divisible portion of the property, but all was worked in common. Each organized miner's district had its recorder and location notices were posted and recorded, and in many instances where the district was disbanded the records were buried in the ground within the boundaries of the district. When a transfer of property was made the written instrument of conveyance was recorded by the recorder of the district. While most of the claims were worked for what they had in them, few transfers were at first made excepting by physical delivery of possession; later the tendency to profit by bargain and sale, or by gift, began to fail the Chinamen came into the country. They, being aliens, were not allowed to locate claims, but were made the instruments of those inclined to speculation and were permitted to purchase the right to mine claims already located by citizens. These privileges were frequently sold on a lease. The claim near the town of Daisy which the whites eventually could not work at a profit was sold to Chinamen for \$5000 and was known as the Five Thousand Dollar claim. The Chinamen, being patient plodders, made good money on their investment and worked it for nearly 30 years. Two factions in the camp clashed and one Chinaman murdered another in 1893, the assailant slashing his victim in a horrible manner with a cleaver. The claim was then abandoned. In 1863 the firm of Smith & Pipes sold the bar at Boundary, where gold was first discovered by the Frenchman, Wau-ke, to Chinamen for \$3000. Excepting by the Chinamen in the Columbia river region, about the last placer mining of importance was done at Marcus by Henry Sudbrink who took the waters of Pingston creek by ditch and flume to Half Mile Bar, the original steamboat landing.

In the beginning of mining operations prices of provisions and supplies were high. The axe, pick and shovel formed the first equipment. Panning for gold was too slow and with the saw and hammer came the manufacture of lumber by whipsawing for the sluices. The gold dust was very fine and having been cast up by the flood of the river in the process of forming the gravel benches was soon exhausted. Only the richer deposits were sought and worked and when pay dirt became too thin to interest his tense disposition, the miner shouldered his pack and trekked across the range to the newer discovery. Some went to the Similkameen, some to Frazer river and to Montana, Idaho and Eastern Oregon camps. These, with the first quartz mining in the country, will be the subject for another story.

Additional contributions to Near East Relief not previously reported: additional for Colville, \$13.75; Christian Science church, Colville, \$12; Middleport, additional, \$13.50; school district No. 99, Mae Stilling, \$5; school district No. 70, Minnie Lesh, \$20; school district No. 102, W. E. Bushnell, \$13.50; South Fork Grange No. 220, \$28.50.

A marriage license was issued Wednesday to Ralph L. Stewart and Myrtle Smith, both of Daisy.

Baseball News

"JIM'S DOPE" ON MATTERS OF INTEREST TO BASEBALL FANS

According to the available dope, the Colville "fans" will witness during the 1920 baseball season the highest class of ball ever seen in the historic city.

The Inland Empire Six Team League is now being organized. Among the members are Colville and Chewelah of Stevens county, two teams from Spokane, and Davenport, Newport, Sandpoint, Harrington and Colfax are seeking membership.

The Stevens County Livestock Association is moving the grandstand from the old fair grounds and, assisted by the Chamber of Commerce, will lay out the new diamond in the fair association grounds.

According to baseball local authorities, Colville has more and better material for a fast team this year than ever before and the prospective players are full of "pep" and the fans are beginning to "ginger up."

Tom Hart Norman, proprietor of the Central Barber Shop, states he will furnish two men for the lineup from his shop. Arrangements are being made for two outside pitchers who will be given positions by local business men. It is claimed that Chewelah will alternate Laird and Battiste in the box. Big Bill Laird, commonly known as "Slats," first gained prominence as a pitcher on the Colville diamond in 1912. Since that time Bill has been pitching semi-professional and minor league ball. Battiste, an Indian, lives in Tum Tum and is a spit ball artist who is hard to hit.

The final arrangements are being made this evening at "Smith's Dope" in Spokane, where all the club managers are arranging the details and a schedule. This will be a twenty-game series, ten of which will be played with the various teams on the Colville diamond. The series is expected to begin the latter part of the season and apparatus are now doubled in price. Spalding League balls by the dozen cost \$2.50 each, formerly \$1.25. Bats that sold a few years ago for \$1 now retail for \$2, and fielders' mits sell for from \$7 to \$10. The admission to these games in all probability will be fifty cents, including the 10% war tax.

Full details of the league will be published in "Jim's Dope" next week.

FRUIT GROWERS COMPANY DOES LARGE 1919 BUSINESS

The annual meeting of the Meyers Falls branch of the Spokane Fruit Growers Company was held at Meyers Falls, March 12. The high prices received for last year's crop was the cause of real satisfaction on the part of the growers. C. H.

Gerking, local manager, reported that a large business had also been done in the sale of hay, flour, feed and grain, and it is expected to enlarge the selling end of the business, retailing to the public and making attractive prices to members.

As proof that the growers of the district had maintained the high standard set in previous years, he mentioned the fact that the Skookum inspectors and the state and county horticultural inspectors had gone carefully over all the fruit in the warehouse at several different times, but they had never turned down any fruit as below standard. He also stated that during all of these inspections only one wormy apple had been found.

C. J. Webb, assistant general manager, and W. H. John, treasurer of the Spokane Fruit Growers, were present from the Spokane office, and reported on the year's business and on plans for future development. They demonstrated that the company now is in even better condition than heretofore to serve its members efficiently.

Treasurer John announced that Hanson Brothers of Bonnevale would receive \$5200 for 1600 boxes of Delicious apples raised by them on one and one-half acres. Assistant Manager Webb visited the Hanson ranch and was enthusiastic in praise of the manner in which Hanson Brothers are conducting their enterprises. He stated that the block of Delicious (Continued on next page.)

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