

# THE GRAVE CREEK GOLD DREDGE

by Gilbert E. Walter

**A**s Mother Earth faces ever increasing pressures on her ever decreasing natural resources, we hear more and more about the wisdom of long-range planning with the object of achieving more efficient use of remaining resources.

This has not always been the case.

As an example, for many years prior to 1930, my father leased most of the bottom land along both sides of Grave Creek extending eastward from Leland for more than a mile. The land was then owned by the Leland Land Company of Portland. It was good farmland, and produced a variety of hay and grain crops as well as vegetables. It also included two small but well producing fruit orchards.

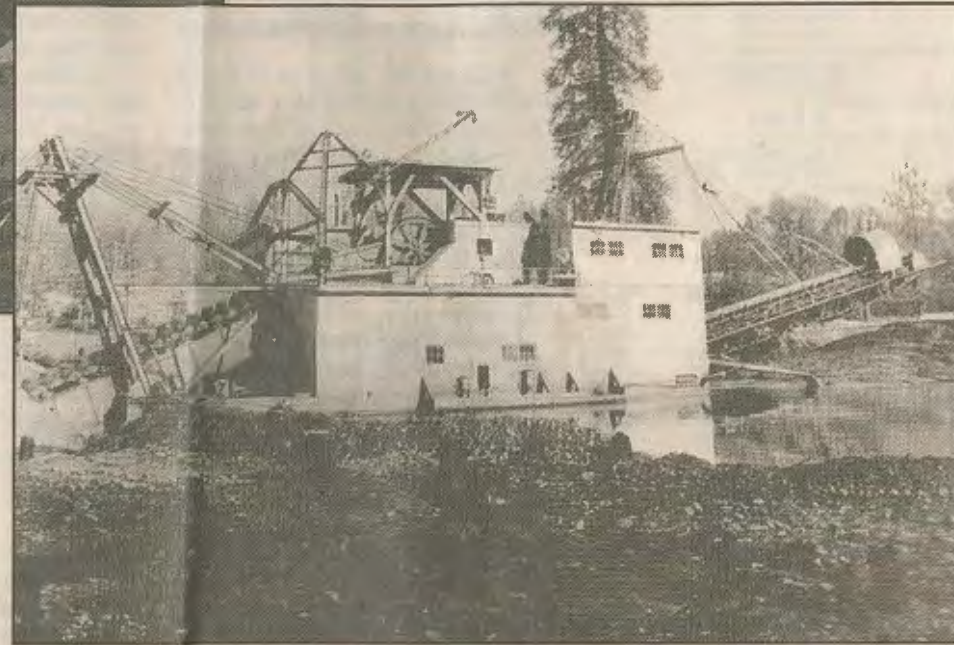
It also contained an unknown volume of placer gold which had been deposited there over the past thousands of years by Grave Creek. The gold was in the gravel lying on or just above bedrock and had never been considered by the old-time miners as having sufficient value to justify mining by conventional hydraulic methods.

During the early 1930s, the Depression deepened and unemployment became severe. With so many folks idle, rumors were plentiful but most of them were entirely false and soon



*Pictured is approximately 15,000 yards of the 150,000 yards of dredge area that were crushed this past summer; most was used in repaving I-5 near the Hugo interchange into the Cow Creek Valley.*

*The Leland dredge soon after it began operating. Photos courtesy Larry McLane.*



predecessors and persisted. The tale could not be confirmed, however, and skepticism remained high.

When the Grants Pass *Daily Courier* finally confirmed the story, all doubt was erased and most of us immediately experienced a drastic and only marginally justified reversal of emotions. Most of us began planning on all the wonderful things we could do with all that money we would be making from full-time jobs created by the dredge.

When it was learned that a massive land clearing job would have to be done prior to the actual gold dredging operation, optimism grew. This would mean employment for many men, everyone agreed, because the dredging operation demanded a surprisingly detailed degree of land-clearing work. All trees, both native and those of the fruit orchards had to be removed, roots included.

land clearing and operation was involved in the big project. The dredge, constructed on a 50- by 100-foot hull, was a floating device. This required the excavation of a 12-foot deep, 150- by 150-foot pond. The pond would be perpetuated by the dredge itself, as a large endless chain of buckets dug up the gravel and soil ahead, ran everything through a gold extraction process, then deposited the gravel, devoid of both topsoil and gold, behind. This, of course, required a rather large volume of water, which was brought to the pond via ditches from Grave Creek and/or Dog Creek. This demanded the construction of a dam of sorts in Grave Creek near where the dredge began operations.

Undoubtedly, at the peak of Leland's placer mining era, more men were employed than were to be hired by all the various phases of the

associated activities finally began, I was unable to get a job due to my age, so I enviously observed all the activities from the sidelines. I did benefit in one way, however. My friend Homer Goff and I were playing for Saturday night dances at Tom Clark's Blue Moon dance hall at Leland. In those days, the orchestra was given 60% of the door receipts. More people at the dances meant more money, and the dredge was responsible for just that happening. We noticed more strange faces at the Blue Moon and everyone said they were people from the dredge activities. Tom

which almost resulted in an honest-to-goodness fish story which no one would have believed. My older brother George, still unable to work at his regular job as a Southern Pacific fireman due to the Depression, was living at home (he eventually got work with the Skeeter Brothers clearing crew). He and I decided to go to the site of the newly constructed dam in Grave Creek to see if any salmon were coming up the creek and trying to get over or past the dam. As luck would have it, we saw one, well over 2 feet in length, apparently resting in a shallow pool near one end

fishing method was my very wet front, well plastered with silvery, smelly fish scales. So, the Grave Creek gold dredge almost produced a side benefit of fresh salmon steaks for our dinner.

The dredge was noisy and the loud clatter of the tailings, consisting mainly of rocks, some up to a foot more in diameter, falling from the conveyor belt at the stern, could be heard from almost any spot within a distance of a mile or more. Many times, while walking back to the ranch during the "wee, small hours" from a Saturday night at the Blue Moon, I

answer to this question is a qualified "yes." Many jobs were created during a time of deep depression when jobs were sorely needed. It is to be hoped that there were those who got a new start in life from that temporary employment. But the good things had a price. And, from the long viewpoint, it was high. When I visit the area and look out over the devastation—the many, many acres of rock piles, it's easy to create a memory picture of Dad following his old, single-furrow plow pulled by our two horses, Lady and Nelly, or of the stands of wheat rippling in the breeze; or images of Dad and the hired hands loading the harvested shocks of field-cured hay onto the big, rack-bed wagon in preparation for baling and to hear their voices as they worked with carefully coordinated movements. Yes, and I can easily remember my miserable soreness, especially in the seat, from riding Nelly around and around in an endless circle of 8 hours a day during the baling operations. I remember the blissful rests during noon hours, lying in the good-smelling grass in the shade of an apple tree in one of the orchards.

But it's all gone now. It will be a very, very long time before Mother Nature restores the land to any kind of condition suitable for agricultural activities—if ever.

Most of the gold is gone, too. I hope someone



achieving more efficient use of remaining resources.

This has not always been the case.

As an example, for many years prior to 1930, my father leased most of the bottom land along both sides of Grave Creek extending eastward from Leland for more than a mile. The land was then owned by the Leland Land Company of Portland. It was good farmland, and produced a variety of hay and grain crops as well as vegetables. It also included two small but well producing fruit orchards.

It also contained an unknown volume of placer gold which had been deposited there over the past thousands of years by Grave Creek. The gold was in the gravel lying on or just above bedrock and had never been considered by the old-time miners as having sufficient value to justify mining by conventional hydraulic methods.

During the early 1930s, the Depression deepened and unemployment became severe. With so many folks idle, rumors were plentiful but most of them were entirely false and soon died away. It was in this environment that a strange and, at first, unbelievable rumor took root and spread throughout the entire Grave Creek area. A large gold dredge, owned by the Rogue River Gold Company which had been operating for a number of years on Footh Creek in Jackson County, was to be dismantled and moved to Grave Creek (so said the rumor) for the purpose of dredging for gold in an area which included most of the agricultural land formerly leased by my dad.

This rumor refused to meet the fate of most of its

predecessors and persisted. The tale could not be confirmed, however, and skepticism remained high.

When the Grants Pass *Daily Courier* finally confirmed the story, all doubt was erased and most of us immediately experienced a drastic and only marginally justified reversal of emotions. Most of us began planning on all the wonderful things we could do with all that money we would be making from full-time jobs created by the dredge.

When it was learned that a massive land clearing job would have to be done prior to the actual gold dredging operation, optimism grew. This would mean employment for many men, everyone agreed, because the dredging operation demanded a surprisingly detailed degree of land-clearing work. All trees, both native and those of the fruit orchards had to be removed, roots included. All leaves and small remnants of limbs and twigs had to be raked. Then all flammable material was to be piled and burned. If it couldn't be burned, it had to be disposed of otherwise.

The Skeeter Brothers firm of Phoenix, Oregon contracted to do the massive clearing job and employed a crew of about thirty. This included a number of local men. The actual operation of the huge dredge would require a very small crew, but after dredging was begun, it would operate around the clock.

But much more than

land clearing and operation was involved in the big project. The dredge, constructed on a 50- by 100-foot hull, was a floating device. This required the excavation of a 12-foot deep, 150- by 150-foot pond. The pond would be perpetuated by the dredge itself, as a large endless chain of buckets dug up the gravel and soil ahead, ran everything through a gold extraction process, then deposited the gravel, devoid of both topsoil and gold, behind. This, of course, required a rather large volume of water, which was brought to the pond via ditches from Grave Creek and/or Dog Creek. This demanded the construction of a dam of sorts in Grave Creek near where the dredge began operations.

Undoubtedly, at the peak of Leland's placer mining era, more men were employed than were to be hired by all the various phases of the dredge preparation, construction and operation. But they were scattered about the area in smaller groups, and, despite the richness of many of the placer claims, and according to many of the old timers, excitement of the old days never did approach a level comparable to that created by the dredge. After several years of job scarcity, news of anything new was indeed fascinating, and the arrival of the dredge and all its associated activities brought excitement to an all-time peak.

When dredge-

associated activities finally began, I was unable to get a job due to my age, so I enviously observed all the activities from the sidelines. I did benefit in one way, however. My friend Homer Goff and I were playing for Saturday night dances at Tom Clark's Blue Moon dance hall at Leland. In those days, the orchestra was given 60% of the door receipts. More people at the dances meant more money, and the dredge was responsible for just that happening. We noticed more strange faces at the Blue Moon and everyone said they were people from the dredge activities. Tom benefited in another way. His wife, who was the town's beloved "Aunt May" Clark, sold more of her wonderful sandwiches and potato salad suppers.

Although the Prohibition era had passed, alcoholic beverages of the legal kind were expensive and a bit beyond the income of most folks. One or two local producers of the highly illegal and less costly substitute probably also benefited from the augmented dance attendance, conducting their business outside the hall.

One memory is of a dredge-connected event

which almost resulted in an honest-to-goodness fish story which no one would have believed. My older brother George, still unable to work at his regular job as a Southern Pacific fireman due to the Depression, was living at home (he eventually got work with the Skeeter Brothers clearing crew). He and I decided to go to the site of the newly constructed dam in Grave Creek to see if any salmon were coming up the creek and trying to get over or past the dam. As luck would have it, we saw one, well over 2 feet in length, apparently resting in a shallow pool near one end of the dam. George decided to slowly straddle the small pool, slowly bend down and attempt to scoop the fish onto the rocks with his hands. If he succeeded, I was to try to hold on to the fish until he could come to my assistance. It worked—up to a point. He straddled, bent down, and scooped. I found myself trying to lie belly down on about 10 or more pounds of wet, slick and very lively salmon. In about four or five maneuvers, Mr. Fish was back in deep water and all we had for our attempt at what is probably mankind's oldest known

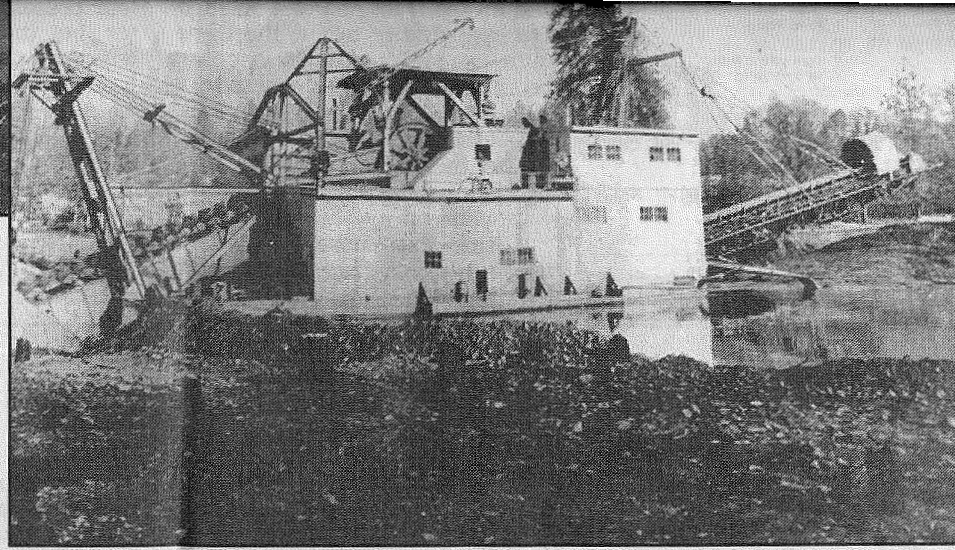
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The dredge was noisy and the loud clatter of the tailings, consisting mainly of rocks, some up to a foot more in diameter, falling from the conveyor belt at the stern, could be heard from almost any spot within a distance of a mile or more. Many times, while walking back to the ranch during the "wee, small hours" from a Saturday night at the Blue Moon, I would listen to the dredge sounds and wonder about the men working there throughout the night while most of the area's folks were making merry at the dance.

The dredge operated there until 1939, when it was once again dismantled and moved, this time to Alaska.

Had its owners profited from the years of operation? To my knowledge, no public announcement concerning the operation's success, or lack thereof was ever made.

Had the area profited from the dredge? The



When I visit the area and look out over the devastation—the many, many acres of rock piles, it's easy to create a memory picture of Dad following his old, single-furrow plow pulled by our two horses, Lady and Nelly, or of the stands of wheat rippling in the breeze; or images of Dad and the hired hands loading the harvested shocks of field-cured hay onto the big, rack-bed wagon in preparation for baling and to hear their voices as they worked with carefully coordinated movements. Yes, and I can easily remember my miserable soreness, especially in the seat, from riding Nelly around and around in an endless circle of 8 hours a day during the baling operations. I remember the blissful rests during noon hours, lying in the good-smelling grass in the shade of an apple tree in one of the orchards.

But it's all gone now. It will be a very, very long time before Mother Nature restores the land to any kind of condition suitable for agricultural activities—if ever.

Most of the gold is gone, too. I hope someone benefited from it for a longer period of time than most of us did.

*(Note: My thanks to Larry McLane for furnishing many historical facts without which this story could not have been written.)*

These stories collected and edited by volunteers for the Josephine County Historical Society.



*Medford Mail Tribune*

# Giant Gold Dredge Now Operating In Foots Creek District



The Eddiam gold dredge, which was assembled during 1925, has been operating recently in the Foots-Creek district. The big dredge floats in a small lake and pulls from the bank, guided in operation from side to side. Water for the lake comes from the creek and its position is changed as the big machine progresses. A great steel pipe under the supervision of E. H. Perry, keeps the dredge busy, day and night and it is estimated, there is an area of operation sufficient to keep the machine in operation for at least 10 years at the present rate.





ALPHEA MINE ON ROGUE RIVER





**OREGON WELCOMES** rock hunters to the Agate State. . . .

Collectors of every age enjoy the thrill of discovering a flawless gem or a rare fossil, and Oregon is the place to find them.

Come on out and try your luck in one or all of the state's many rich deposits.

However, don't be disappointed if you fail to "strike it rich" on your first outing . . . it took the residents of Canyon City, in central Oregon, 10 years to discover they had paved their streets with gold-bearing gravel!



### ROCKHOUND RULES

Oregon is a collector's paradise, but even in a paradise it is wise to follow a few simple rules . . . certainly they will tend to assure the best possible success.

1. Select several sites within a fairly small area to avoid spreading valuable collecting time too thin . . . become informed on the material available and its exact location.

2. Don't hesitate to ask local collectors for information about selected sites . . . check with rockhound clubs wherever they are found.

3. Bring along the proper tools and equipment—including boots and sturdy clothing—for field work . . . depending on the material sought, you may find use for a rockhammer, shovel, prybar, sledge and chisel, or light pick mattock. *SHUVE, HLE*

4. Make special preparations for seasonal weather conditions—canteens, caps and sunglasses for the desert, warm jackets for the mountains, etc.

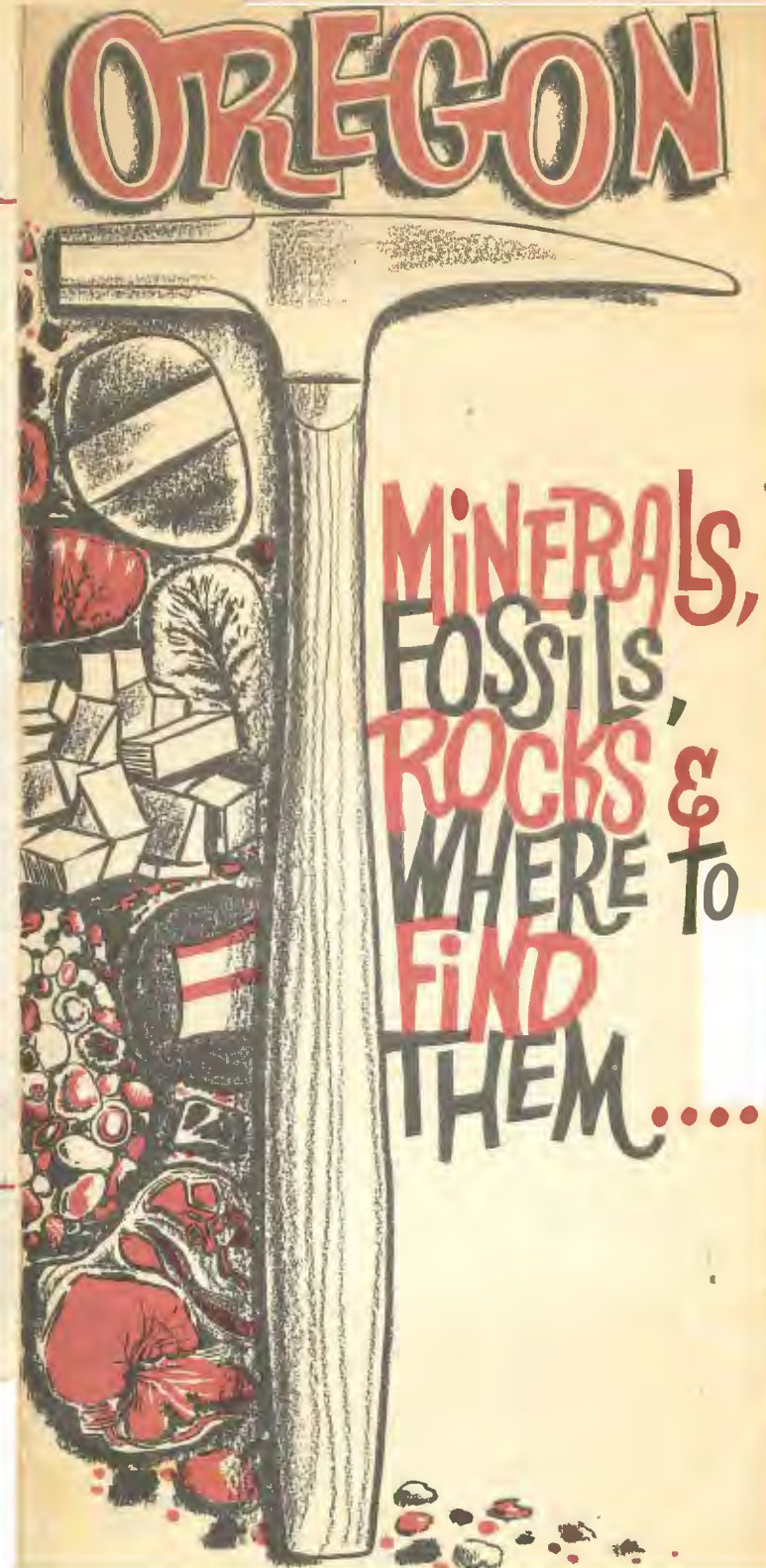
5. Obtain permission of land owners before entering private property . . . don't leave campsite debris scattered about and **BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE.**

6. Take care in entering abandoned mine shafts—you enter at your own risk. *SHUVE*

7. Don't throw rocks from cliffs and endanger persons who might be below . . . use proper care in handling tools.

8. Take only the material you will use and leave the rest for other collectors. *2 16 DE 11*

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## EXPLORING OREGON'S GEOLOGIC PAST

OREGON ABOUNDS with geologic wonders, ranging in size from the towering snow-capped peaks of the Cascade Range to the fossilized seeds and plant spores of the Clarno deposit. These features form a visible link between the present day and a history which spans 400 million years.

THE OLDEST ROCKS found on the surface are the schists of southwestern Oregon and the limestone formations of central Oregon. Among the newest are the scattered cinder cones and lava flows of recent volcanic upheaval . . . one eruption occurred no more than 250 years ago—a "fraction of a second" in geologic time.

OREGON'S CLIMATE has ranged between glacial and semi-tropical, and as a result the fossilized remains of such dissimilar creatures as the woolly mastodon and the crocodile may be found today.

SEMI-PRECIOUS GEMS are found in every section of the state, from the beaches to the eastern border . . . Oregon gems are "ageless", in that they are found among the rocks of many geologic periods.

## OREGON'S MINERALS . . .

The state's metallic mineral wealth may be measured—at least in terms of collecting—by both the abundance and diversity of available types. Topping the list are gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, mercury and iron. In addition, the only nickel mine in the United States operates in southwestern Oregon. Commercial grade uranium ore was discovered in south-central Oregon in 1955 and is known to exist in other parts of the state. The list of metals includes tungsten, molybdenum, cobalt, antimony and chromium.

## GEMS . . .

Oregon is famous for its semi-precious gems. Agates, petrified wood, jaspers, opals and thunder eggs are found in quantity in many areas of the state. Also to be found in gem quality are hematite, garnet, sunstone, malachite and azurite, rhodonite, chrysocolla, obsidian and rock crystal. Native gold and cinnabar, when found in matrices suitable for polishing, are used as gem stones. Oregon's annual gem production is estimated at \$1,000,000.

## FOSSILS . . .

Prolific fossil beds are located in many sections of the state. Of special interest are the John Day beds, first explored by Dr. Thomas Condon, the "Father of Oregon Geology." Fossils of plants and animals which existed 30 to 40 million years ago are taken from these beds. Clarno formation fossils, including many varieties of nuts and semi-tropical plants, have become world famous. Marine beds in western Oregon contain an abundance of fossil sea shells and occasional shark teeth and whale bones. Mollusks and rare specimens of marine reptiles occur in Oregon's rocks of the Mesozoic era (100 to 200 million years ago).

## CLUBS, SOCIETIES

Oregonians are aware of the scenic beauty of their state, but many are aware also of the beauty which lies beneath the surface.

Oregon has nearly 50 clubs and societies which exist because of this awareness. The members of these clubs are a friendly and enthusiastic lot and welcome inquiries from out-of-state collectors. Contact any or all of the clubs listed below for tips concerning little-known localities and "special" diggings.

- Agate Beach Agate Society, Toledo
- Albany Rock and Gem Club, Albany
- Ashland Mineral and Gem Club, Ashland
- Blue Mountain Gem Club, La Grande
- Camp White Rock Club, Camp White
- Clatskanie Gem and Mineral Club, Clatskanie
- Columbia Gorge Rockhounds, Corbett
- Columbia Rock and Gem Club, St. Helens
- Coos County Mineral and Gem Club, Coos Bay
- Corvallis Rock and Gem Club, Corvallis
- Deschutes Geology Club, Bend
- Eugene Mineral Club, Eugene
- Hat Rock Gem Club, Echo
- Hi-Desert Gem and Mineral Society, Bend
- Illinois Valley Mineral Hobbies Club, Cave Junction
- John Day Basin Gem and Mineral Club, Prairie City
- Klamath Mineral Club, Klamath Falls
- Lebanon Geological Society, Albany
- Madras Gem and Mineral Club, Madras
- Morrow County Gem and Mineral Society, Heppner
- Mt. Emily Gem and Mineral Club, Brookings
- Mt. Hood Rock Club, Gresham
- Newberg Gem and Mineral Club, Newberg
- Newport Agate Society, Newport
- Nickel Mt. Rock Club, Myrtle Creek
- Oregon Agate and Mineral Society, Portland
- Oregon Trail Gem and Mineral Society, Pendleton
- Owyhee Gem and Mineral Society, Nampa, Idaho
- Pioneer Prospectors Club, Toledo
- Prineville Mineral Society, Prineville
- Rogue Gem and Geology Club, Grants Pass
- Roxy Ann Gem and Mineral Club, Central Point
- Stonecrafters, Joseph
- Sweet Home Rock and Mineral Society, Sweet Home
- Tektronix Employees Geology Club, Hillsboro
- Tillamook Rock Hounds, Tillamook
- Trails End Gem and Mineral Club, Astoria
- Tualatin Valley Gem Club, Hillsboro
- Tyee Mineralites, Dalles City (The Dalles)
- Umpqua Mineral Club, Roseburg
- Vernonia Gem and Fossil Club, Vernonia
- Willamalane Rock Club, Springfield
- Willamette Agate and Mineral Society, Salem
- Yamhill County Rock and Hobby Club, McMinnville





# MINERALS, FOSSILS . . .

○ Agates

- b — banded
- c — carnelian
- i — iris
- m — moss
- p — plume
- s — sagenitic

● Jaspers

☾ Obsidian

⊕ Garnet, Oregon "jade"

☼ Metal minerals, ores

- A — antimony
- Al — aluminum
- C — copper
- Cb — cobalt
- Ch — chromium
- G — gold
- I — iron
- L — lead
- M — mercury
- Md — molybdenum
- N — nickel
- S — silver
- T — tungsten
- U — uranium
- Z — zinc

● Opals

🌳 Petrified wood

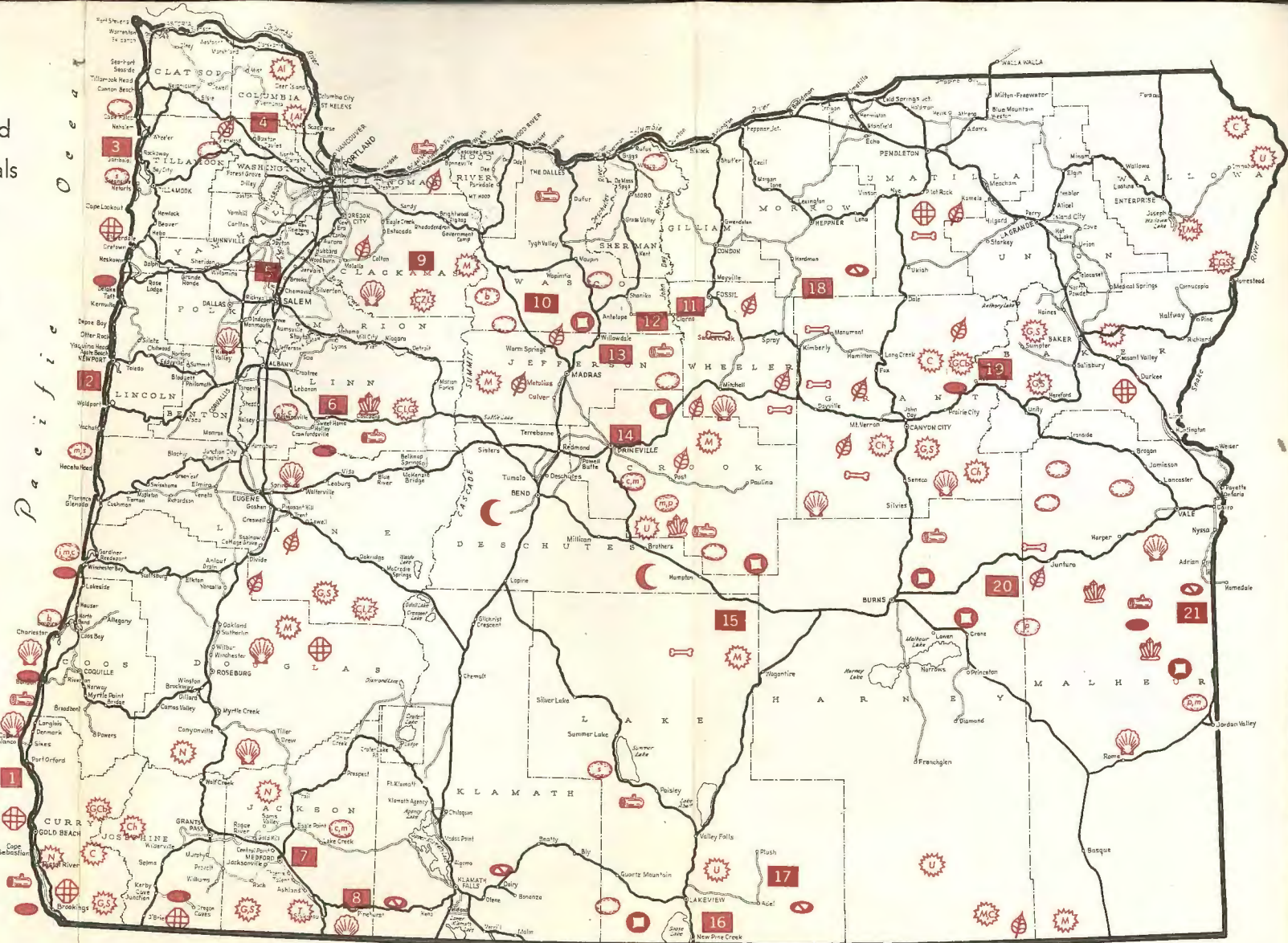
👑 Quartz crystals

📦 Thunder eggs

🌿 Plant fossils

🦴 Animal fossils

🐚 Marine fossils



AND WHERE TO FIND THEM . . .

similar to the "woodstones" of Utah in thunder eggs



## AND WHERE TO FIND THEM . . .

**1** SOUTHERN OREGON BEACHES—Gem quality agate, jasper, petrified wood, serpentine, Oregon "jade" (grossularite garnet) . . . Merchant's Beach and Whiskey Run produce agatized myrtle and other woods, blue and white banded agates, flower jaspers: located off Seven Devils Road, between Bandon and Charleston . . . Oregon "jade" and serpentine are found in the gravel bars of the Rogue and Illinois rivers, and on the beaches near Gold Beach . . . Eocene marine fossils are found in the sea cliffs at Cape Arago State Park, near Coos Bay . . . Pliocene-Pleistocene fossils are found in the cliffs south of the Cape Blanco lighthouse, near Port Orford.

**2** CENTRAL OREGON BEACHES—Quality agate, jasper, Oregon "jade", petrified wood . . . beach at Road's End produces colorful jaspers . . . excellent tumbling material is found from Oceanlake south to Newport . . . prized sagenitic agates (containing needle-like inclusions), bloodstones, and other jaspers and agates are picked up on the beaches between Yachats and Heceta Head—especially near the mouths of Big, China, Cummings, Tenmile and Squaw creeks . . . Miocene marine fossils, including shells and the bones of whales and sea lions, are found in the cliffs at Beverly Beach State Park, near Newport.

**3** NORTHERN OREGON BEACHES—Variety of jaspers and agates, petrified wood, Oregon "jade" . . . beaches near Oceanside contain fine material, including colorful jaspers and sagenitic agates . . . large specimens are found on Tillamook County beaches . . . cliffs bordering Tillamook-Bayoccean road contain Miocene fossil shells.

**4** CLEAR CREEK—Carnelian and plume agates, jaspers . . . Clear Creek is located near the Nehalem River southwest of Vernonia . . . fine material is found in the gravel bars of the creek bed and on the hillsides above the creek.

**5** WILLAMETTE RIVER—Gem quality agates . . . the best material comes from river bars and gravel company dredgings, especially from north of Salem to south of Corvallis . . . agates may be found even in the metropolitan Portland area.

**6** SWEET HOME—Petrified wood, banded agate, carnelian agate, jasper, crystal-lined geodes . . . the area around Sweet Home was the location of a vast prehistoric forest, and an abundance of silicified fossil wood—some beautifully colored with clearly marked grain and ring structure—is found here . . . places to look include Ames Creek and the Calapooya River south of town, Crabtree Creek and the hills north of town . . . the fields, woods and streams of the area hold banded agates, crystal-lined geodes and fire-engine red jasper . . . Chandler Mountain is the location of large carnelians . . . prized Holley purple or Calapooya blue agates are found near Holley, southwest of town . . . fossil leaves may be taken from the railroad cut on the hill above town.

**7** MEDFORD—Moss and dendritic agate, jaspers, milky chalcedony . . . many square miles of land in the area of Camp White and Eagle Point produce an abundance of gem material . . . a county road crosses Antelope Creek a short distance east of Eagle Point and

provides easy access to the creek bed . . . the Medford Chamber of Commerce has a listing of other locations.

**8** GREEN SPRINGS MOUNTAIN—Banded blue-grey agate, crystal-lined geodes . . . best locations are on Highway 66 about nine miles east of Ashland . . . nodules are found in place in a basalt seam exposed by a highway cut, on the left side of the road going uphill . . . various road cuts near Ashland contain fossil shells of Cretaceous marine life.

**9** CLACKAMAS RIVER—Cinnabar, petrified wood, jaspers . . . the river bed above Estacada produces gem quality cinnabar, a variety of petrified woods and dark green bloodstone, often associated with common opal . . . good to fair roads parallel the river for many miles.

**10** SUNFLOWER FLATS—Banded agate, crystal-lined geodes, jaspers . . . area is located on the Wapinitia cut-off southeast of Bear Springs Forest Camp, between the Maupin road and the Warm Springs Indian Reservation . . . hillsides and creek beds produce fine material . . . digging is necessary in most spots.

**11** CLARNO—Fossil nuts, leaves and prehistoric mammals, blue agate nodules, petrified wood, jaspers, zeolites, barite crystals . . . the world-famous Clarno fossil beds are located a few miles east of the John Day River, off the road between Antelope and Fossil . . . amateurs may collect specimens in the vicinity of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry's Camp Hancock, but the mammal beds are reserved for scientific exploration . . . an outcrop behind the high school at Fossil contains excellent imprints of cones, leaves and Metasequoia needles.

**12** ANTELOPE—Moss agate, jasp-agate, massive botryoidal agate, geodes, agatized woods . . . the Antelope area is one of the best known producers of gem-grade agate in Oregon . . . large boulders of moss agate in vivid shades of red, blue, green and yellow are found in the creek bed at the east edge of town . . . agatized wood is found four miles east of town on the hillside to the right of the road . . . obtain permission to collect on private land.

**13** PRIDAY RANCH (COMMERCIAL)—Thunder eggs containing blue agate, plume agate, green and red moss agate, opals; polkadot . . . this famed location is reached by driving approximately 15 miles northeast of Madras on U.S. Highway 97, turning right on the old Highway 97 and driving for two miles to junction of road to Ashwood, and following this road for almost nine miles . . . attendants will direct you to the diggings, and a per-pound fee is charged for gem material.

**14** PRINEVILLE—Thunder eggs, plume, carnelian and moss agate, nodules, petrified wood . . . the Eagle Rock area 15 miles southeast of Prineville produces outstanding red and black plume agate . . . the Maury Mountain area beyond Eagle Rock produces green, red, brown and golden moss agate and white plume agate, both "float" and "in place" . . . the Bear Creek area south of town produces red and green moss agate, nodules and agatized wood sections . . . the Wildcat Mountain area northeast of town produces Morrisonite—a hard jasper-like material

similar to the "wonderstone" of Utah—in thunder eggs . . . directions may be obtained at the Prineville Chamber of Commerce.

**15** GLASS BUTTES—Obsidian . . . this site is found on Highway 20 between Bend and Burns . . . black, variegated and silver sheen volcanic glass is found just short of mile post 79, south of the highway . . . red and gold sheen material in great abundance may be located by continuing east to mile post 81, turning south toward cinnabar mine and driving two to three miles on the right-hand fork of the road . . . prized rainbow and double flow obsidians also are found.

**16** LAKEVIEW—Thunder eggs, agate, jasper, nodules, agatized wood . . . Bullard Canyon and parallel Deadman Canyon, on the east outskirts of town, produce blue and purple agate, agatized wood, jasp-agate and orbicular jasper . . . highly prized blue agate is found near U.S. Highway 395, from two to five miles south of Lakeview . . . the Crane Creek area south of town contains agate-filled thunder eggs . . . Kelly Creek produces agate, jasper and thunder eggs . . . agates are found in quantity in the vast Dry Creek area west of town . . . directions at Davis' Rock Shop in Lakeview.

**17** HART MOUNTAINS—Quality agate nodules, fire opal, crystals of various kinds, sunstones, jasp-agate similar to Morrisonite . . . sunstone locations are on the desert flats west of the mountains . . . nodules and jasp-agate are found in mountain canyons . . . fire opal is found on the high peaks of the west rim . . . inquire at Plush or at Davis' Rock Shop in Lakeview.

**18** OPAL BUTTE—Opal-filled nodules . . . area is located about 35 miles south of Heppner, via State Highway 207 and forest roads.

**19** GREENHORN—Fossils, variety of gem material . . . sections and fragments of fossil Cretaceous fern "trunks" (Tempskya) may be uncovered about a mile north-east of the ghost town of Greenhorn—several miles north of U.S. Highway 26 from Austin . . . best location is east of the abandoned IXL mine, toward Olive Creek . . . clearly defined fossils are usually golden in color, sometimes red . . . Greenhorn fern is jasper-hard and polishes well . . . agate and other gem material is found in creek beds and gold dredge trailings down river from Bates to Susanville . . . digging is necessary in most areas.

**20** WARM SPRINGS RESERVOIR—Black dendritic and white plume agate . . . gem material is found along the west shore of the reservoir, located 18 miles south of U.S. Highway 20 from mile post 171 . . . best time to hunt here is when the water is low, from late August into winter . . . fossils of Pliocene plants are found in a road cut on U.S. 20 about eight miles west of Juntura . . . Pliocene animal fossils are found on the north side of the highway just west of Drinkwater Pass.

**21** SUCKER CREEK—Thunder eggs, jaspers, petrified woods . . . the area south of Adrian along Sucker Creek to Rockville is an extremely productive rock hunting location . . . thunder eggs may contain Pastelite or agate with inclusions of black dendrites, green moss or golden plume . . . excellent site is 19 miles south of Adrian, where the road and the creek converge.





# An Ounce of Gold For a Ton of Ore

*And Using His Ancient Mill, 82-year-old Miner  
Tiaman Hatcher is Determined to Get His Ounce*



A MAGNIFYING GLASS is helpful in determining the amount of gold in a sample of ore. Here Tiaman Hatcher examines bits of the ore and gold

he extracts so laboriously from his 20-acre claim near Rogue River.

ROGUE RIVER — Tiaman Hatcher says he never takes a job unless he knows he is a big enough man to finish it.

The 135-pound man has never turned one down. He has, in fact, taken on a bigger job than most men would dare attempt.

Hatcher, 82, is a gold miner, but he is not panning creekside, using giant streams of water to wash away hillsides or dredging with a gasoline-powered motor. He and two workers are taking ore out of mine shafts with picks and shovels, hauling it on their backs over rugged hillsides, and milling it in Hatcher's 50-year-old mill.

They are sure that any day, they are going to strike it rich.

Maybe they already have. The old shaft they are working contains ore that puts a glint in a gold miner's eye.

"Should work out to around an ounce a ton," Hatcher said optimistically. That does not sound like much but to a hard rock miner, the ratio is not bad. The old mill can handle about three tons of ore a day, and three ounces of gold are worth over \$1,500. The rub is getting the ore from the mine to the mill.

**HATCHER HAS MINED** a 20-acre claim near Rogue River for 20 years. He is never really made much off of it. When he started gold was only bringing \$35 an ounce and the original shaft near his house was full of low grade ore. "Not worth grinding up," Hatcher says. Still, the tenacious 61-year-old man held on to his dream of striking a rich vein, and he picked, shoveled, hauled and milled tons of it.

Often he would trek off through the woods with his cast iron mortar and pestal in his backpack to test the rocks around his claim. Trekking on Hatcher's claim is no easy matter. It is heavily wooded and straight up and down. Hatcher's almost daily examination of it over the past 20 years may explain his vitality.

He walks up steep grades, leaving less stalwart reporters in his dust. On one of his hikes Hatcher discovered a shaft that an earlier miner had covered over with tons of debris. Less than a year ago he got around to uncovering it. "I'd have taken a lot of gold out of this claim if I could get some good help," Hatcher complained. "The men I get up here to help me usually go out in the woods and drink and don't do no good."

**HIS CURRENT HELPERS** are exceptions, he said. "They're good. They're working hard," he said. "Hard" is an understatement.

The two men and Hatcher removed the debris from in front of the abandoned mine. It took them 11 days. Then they cut 100 small trees to bolster the entrance to the mine. Now they chip ore from the back of the 250-foot shaft, cart it out in wheelbarrows, load it into five-gallon pails mounted on wooden backboards and pack it up and down over three-quarters of a mile of hills to the mill. It takes a while to pile up three tons.

Three tons is the amount Hatcher likes to have before the mill is fired up.

Recently the men cut a rough road so the ore can be hauled by tractor and trailer over half the way, but there is still a long haul uphill. The conviction that the ore is rich keeps them going, Hatcher said.

Hatcher himself needs a lot less to keep going. In his lifetime he has been a carpenter, a roadbuilder, a painter, an oxen driver, a farmer, a mechanic and a miner. "There ain't any dern thing I can't do," Hatcher proclaimed with a little slap on his leg.

**HATCHER DOES NOT** ask anyone for anything. He keeps healthy with home remedies and tends machinery, buildings and animals on his own.

"When my big diesel (the one that provides power to run the mill) broke down and the gears was stripped, I took the dern thing apart and put it back together and it hasn't needed a repair for 20 years," he said. Hatcher's disdain for mechanics other than himself is just about as rigorous as his distaste for doctors.

"I wouldn't take any of those medicines," he said. His back was broken in three places after a car fell on him in 1952.

"Those dern doctors said I'd never walk again, but I didn't believe nothin' they tried to tell me," Hatcher related.

In the early 1960s Hatcher heard that a mill he had set up near Rogue River was being sold for back taxes. He bought it for \$1,450. He had done some mining near Crescent City, Calif., and had worked a poor claim on the Umpqua River but had not gone all out on hard rock mining before.

**WHEN HE AND** his now-deceased wife moved onto the claim, the small cabin was occupied by goats and deer, and the mill had not been worked in some time.

The rickety but functional mill is built on a hillside and uses gravity to aid the mining process. Ore is fed into the top, ground fine by a ball grinder and dropped onto tables where the gold is shaken to the bottom and the lighter sand washed away.

Hatcher mined for more than 20 years, but when his wife died four years ago he only had \$1.35 after paying hospital bills. He gets \$180 a month in social security and together with his mining receipts it is enough to eat and keep his 1965 Chrysler running. It buys gas for his mining equipment and feeds his chickens and cat.

But in the best tradition of gold miners, Hatcher is sure that riches are just around the corner. One day a load of ore is going to come over the hill that is going to make his gold miner's heart palpitate. He is not slowing down until it happens.





**A FLASHLIGHT** in one hand, Hatcher prepares to enter his mine shaft (above). The 82-year-old Rogue River miner and his helpers labor daily in the shaft. When they have a load of ore, they haul it to the ram-

bling mill (right) which sits on Hatcher's property. When the load of ore gets big enough to make it worthwhile, the mill is fired up, separating the gold from the rocks and sand.

*Story and photos*

*by Mary Korbolic,*

*Courier correspondent*



**GOLDEN NUGGETS**, here displayed in the palm of Hatcher's hand, are what keep the old miner and his helpers working hard day after day.



**HATCHER STEPS** carefully as he walks down the stairs of his ramshackle but functional mill.





Geo. W. Lance Sr. brought Chinese called Chinese Lock, from Weaverville with him. Chinese Lock was his overseer, managing Chinese laborers who worked for him. They mined between Rock Point bridge and Foots Creek, along Rogue River. Also mined near forks of Foots Creek, and up Gold Gulch, about 12 mile from point where Foots Creek runs into Rogue River.

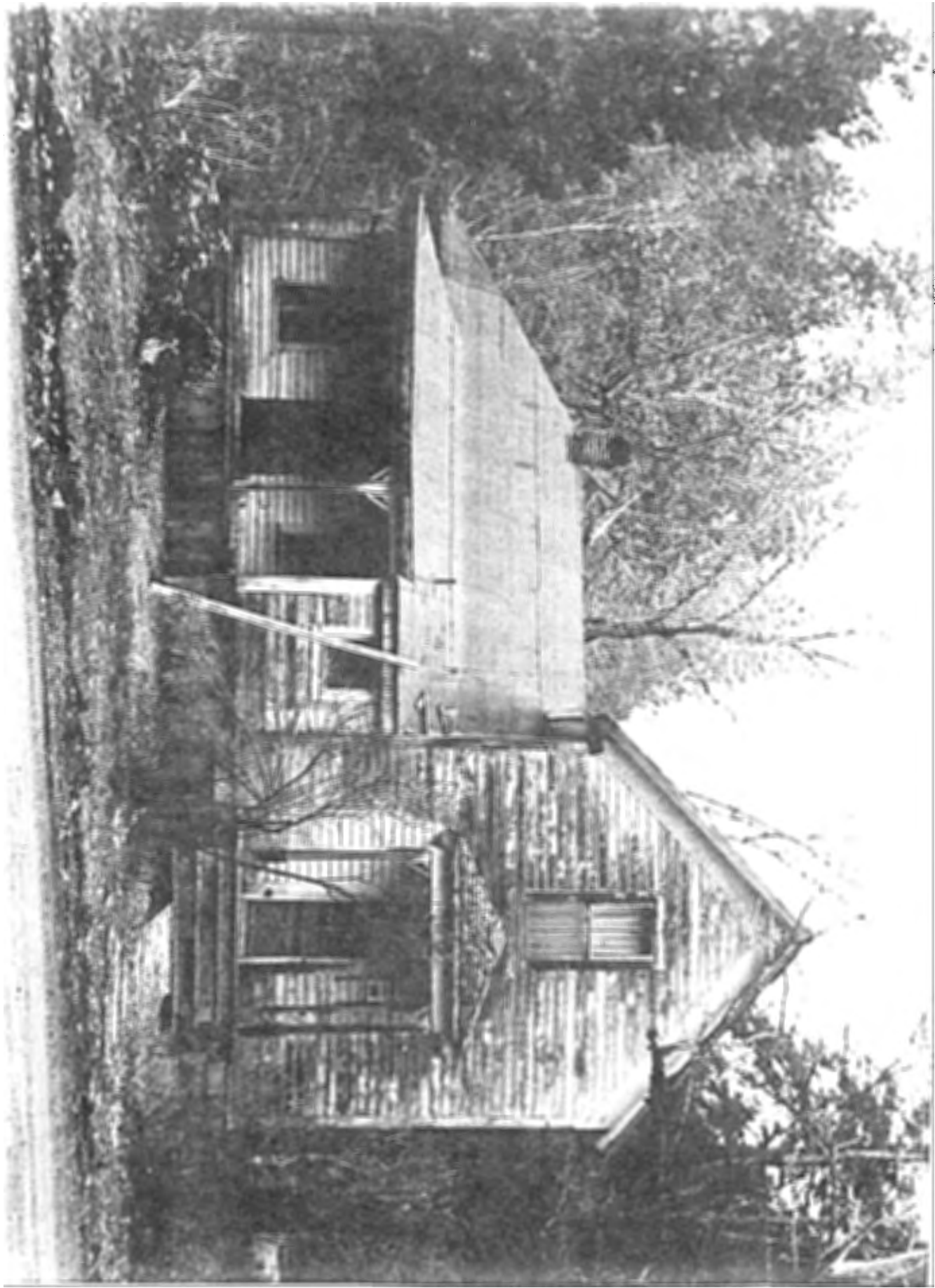
Chinese Lock was an exceptional Chinese in that he did not steal gold from diggings as other Chinese did. Mr. Lance trusted him. Chinese Lock make Chinese workers "Chink gang" take off shoes, boots, clothes, and searched them for nuggets each day before they left placers, or when they left placers.

~~Mr. and Mrs. Mattis~~ buried at sight of the ~~Sixax~~ Sieberlesen grave. Sieberlesen was a man who lived with them.

New York Engineering Co. built the dredge managed by D. H. Ferry for a stock company. Mr. Lance (Floyd) helped set the dredge up on Foots Creek in 1928.

(Mr. Lance uncle in Grants Pass named Henry Miller.)







Lance home where  
'Bill & Dorothy Garrett's  
house now stands. We  
tore this house down  
& used lumber to  
repair cookhouse and  
bunk house.







Lance Menning

1880



# A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF GOLD DREDGING ON FOOTS CREEK

BY LILLIAN KNOTEK NOSIK

The bulge of rusty metal, partially covered with moss, bellied out of the ground. The convex clump of iron, about twenty-four inches in circumference, rose to a rounded peak, about six inches above the surface. It was surrounded by brush and woods, not more than fifteen feet from the creek. Over a period of years, the small hill of iron appeared to emerge temporarily, then retreat again into the earth, like a ghost in a graveyard. It was during one such period of its showing, the iron was excavated.

Three buckets, which were part of a dredge, were removed. The buckets represented a time in the history of Fooths Creek.

In an attempt to walk in the time of the first dredges, a few surviving settlers were visited. The large monster-like machine, with its long steel cables reaching out like arms to steady itself, could not have gone its way slowly up Fooths Creek without being noticed.

Did it make any changes in the life of the settler?


Leslie A. Cook, 92, now living in Central Point, was born on Fooths Creek. His grandfather settled on Fooths Creek in 1865. The

happy faced, bright-eyed Leslie, knew precisely the year the dredge was first built and operated on the creek. Mr. Cook's response recalling the year 1903 as the birth of the dredge, made it apparent the early settler was aware of the boat, but with minimal curiosity to its function. He had very little information to add, indicating the early residents were too preoccupied with their own search for gold.

Records show the first successful dredge in Oregon was built and operated on Fooths Creek in 1903.

After purchasing property on lower Fooths Creek, the Champlin Electric Gold Dredging Company built a steam powered bucket-line dredge. In 1905 electric power from the Ray plant near Gold Hill, was obtained. The operating cost was reduced to one half. The electric-operated dredge was equipped with 36, 8 foot buckets. The capacity of this dredge was 2000 yards daily.

The old timers recall with pride, the electric power brought to their area. They accepted with indifference, the significance of its increase in power for dredging.




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*July, 1978*



(Photos by Ralph S. Fitzgerald)



In 1911, due to a problem, recorded only as an accident, a dredge was lost. Another immediately took its place. Parts of the disabled dredge were salvaged, but much of it was abandoned. Stories of a lost dredge had been passed down from one

generation to another. Often a newcomer to the creek would accept the story of a lost dredge as more myth than fact.

When the three buckets, which were part of the dredge, were exhumed by Robert

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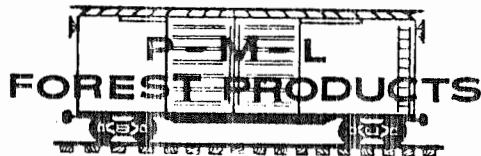
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Joe Nosik recently, the tale of a lost dredge became very real.

Elizabeth (Dolly) Harrison, in an interview was asked what her memory revealed, involving the lost dredge. The gracious and lovely Mrs. Harrison was born on Footh Creek in 1896. She had, she said, worked for various Champlin employees as a domestic aid at a very early age, but her recollection of the incident was not clear.

Her son Buster, born in 1912 on Footh Creek, was more reminiscent. Laughingly Buster Harrison recalled the many hours he and a friend spent on the inoperable boat. The imaginary sea voyages to distant lands provided satisfying entertainment in his childhood.

In the years that followed the remains of the dredge slowly vanished into the earth, but other dredges continued their invasion of the creek for a time.

The Rogue River Gold Mining Company, sometime referred to as the Ferry Dredge, dredged about two miles on both forks of Footh Creek for seven years. In 1935, the 1000-ton boat halted operation.

The last dredge to operate on Footh Creek was brought, unassembled, by railroad in 1939. In less than three months the elegant boat was assembled and on its way up the middle fork. This dredge was owned by the Murphy Murray Dredging Company. The 67 buckets, which dug 20 feet below the water line, boasted 4000 yards daily. Twelve men operated and maintained the boat. It had a steel hull 81 by 37 by 6 feet, gantries and superstructure. The barge had a screening and washing plant, conveyor belts for stacking tailings.

In March 1941, the dredge was dismantled and moved to another location.

The mounds and walls of rock paralleling the creek are the cold visible signs of another era, a yesteryear on Footh Creek.



**"IT REALLY WORKS"**  
BY JAMES E. BUSSELL JR.

'Tis when you shoo your dreams away  
Of being someone new,  
You'll find when you're at work or play-  
The joy of being you.





Wards Creek Hydraulic Mining  
before 1900. Jeff Kimer Sr. & Jeff  
Kimer at quant. Georgia Kimer, Carl  
Kimer, Sabe Booker & Florence Taylor.







before 1900

Jef Wimer sr } at giant  
Jef " " }

Georgia Wimer

Carlie "

Sabe Booker

Florence Taylor

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" River, Ok 97537

X  
45-





Leland Oregon hydraulic mining 1899  
Harry Taylor in shirt sleeves.



Telamond Oregon  
Harry Taylor - in shirt sleeves  
about 1899

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Photographed by  
Shaw H. G. Sayle  
Woodville, Oregon





Hydraulic Mining late 1800's





Hydraulic mining on Sykes Creek  
Jack Brownsworth and  
Joe Mansfield.





Hydraulic Mining - Boots Creek, Or.  
Right Fork.





Lewis mine on Graves Creek.  
Harry Taylor on left. 1898



Rollin Taylor Collection  
#94

Lewis Mine, Grave Creek

About 1898

Harry Taylor  
on left



Hydrolic Mining 1899 Pleasant Creek



W.D. Moore piping, Dick Oden, Mrs. Gwings,  
Mrs. Jerusha Moore, Hazel Moore, Rose Moore  
and Skip the dog.



W.D. Moore - piping  
Dick Adin.

Mrs A wings

Mrs Jerusha Moore

Hazel Moore

Rose Moore

Shep the dog.

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Hydraulic Mining late 1800 ?