Brush Now Obscures Blanco Black Sand Mines, Operated For 40 Years

By Neonta Hall

Miners, considered one of the leading industries of Curry county in early pioneer years and the one industry which brought the early settlers to the west, is now carried on by only a few dedicated prospectors working singly as no large operations have prospered in northern part of the county in the past 30 years.

One of the larger pioneer mines, located two miles north of Sixes on the main 101 Highway, was the Blanco Black Sand Mines, owned and operated by the man who discovered gold in the vicinity, Cyrus Madden. In later years the mines became known as the Madden mines and the steep hill in the background as Madden Butte.

During the time the mines operated, the main highway (county road) was further west from the present state highway. Deep undergrowth has covered over what visible remains there are of the mines, which were in operation for more than 40 years.

Cyrus Madden was born in Ohio in 1832 and started for the west in 1858 after graduating from Denison University. He taught school in Kentucky, at the same time taking a law course, and was admitted to the bar in that state in 1860. In 1861 he crossed the plains, driving a mule team to San Francisco where he taught in the public schools. Prior to coming to Oregon he worked for more than three years at the Salmon River mines, then came north on a prospecting trip.

Madden knew "paydirt" when he saw it and eventually acquired around 300 acres of mining land. Being an efficient operator, he used improved methods and equipment and developed one of the most valuable mines in the county.

John Fitzhugh, U.S. deputy mineral surveyor, made a complete survey of the Blanco Black Sand Mines. The surveys and special reports were filed with county clerk, J.H. Gauntlett, on July 24, 1871.

The survey notes mentioned that timber of any size was all dead. The undergrowth of young fir, spruce, aspen, hemlock with the brush and briars is very dense making the survey extremely difficult. The surface of the claim is generally third rate soil with a very small portion being second rate.

Where the mining has been done the stratum of paying sand is about 6 feet thick on what is evidently an old ocean beach. It is covered by a body of gray sand and clay to the depth of about 12 feet. The gold is very fine and is saved by working with sluices and collecting on blankets, copper plates and riffles made by sawing boards at about 15 degrees across the grain of the wood.

The survey included a 4 mile ditch with dams and flumes. In comparison with prices then and now the following figures should be of interest.

Estimates of Cost of Ditch over 4 Miles Long
Cross section 5 foot surface, 3 foot bottom and 2 foot deep.
Earth to move, 11089 cubic yards, 12 cents, $1,330.68.
Rock, 832 cubic yards, 30 cents, $249.60.
Logs, cut and rolled out, $60.
Trees, grubbed out, $30.
Clearing ground of brush, $50.
First dam on creek, $65.
Second dam on creek, $30.
Third dam on creek, $65.
Fourth dam on creek, $50.
Small dams and flumes, $35.
Twelve waste spillers, $30.
Surveying, $300.
Total, $2345.28.
Total cost of ditch included tools, but no superintendent.
November 15, 1900
John Fitzhugh

The water supply and main dam was located on Crystal Creek. The work on the dam and the ditch were put in by hand labor. Men were paid $2.50 a day and they dug a section a day. A section was 4 feet wide and 6 feet long.

A "cook house", called the "Sour Bean cook house" was provided and Mr. and Mrs. Farrier were employed as cooks. Some of the men who worked on this project were: Earl Hale, Jack W., Jess Hale, Leonard Cox, LeArfwhite, Nickols, Biggar, Armsfield, Asher Post, Deed Fitzhugh, Andrew Parrier, John Prock, R. Haft, Charlie Hayes, Jim Cutley and Caseboll, who was a boy at the Madden mines.

Cyrus Madden married Miss Lucretia V. Kent on Oct. 2, 1872. She passed away in 1898. Madden passed away after illness at a small cabin on Crystal Creek.
Mining operations at the Blanco Black Sand Mines, operated by Cyrus Madden in northern Curry county. The first three men, left to right, are unknown. The others are Asher Post, Andrew Farrier, John Prock and Jesse Hale. (Copy of photo owned by Neva Farrier Huntley.)

Footnote:

Water, and other snow, snow course at 3720 feet on the Crater Lake highway above Union Creek resort lost 21.1 inches of water in the same period.

Moisture in the soil mantle at upper elevations is near capacity as a result of snowmelt. However, valley lands and some other low elevation areas...
in-situ leaching of uvial gold

ed stream deposits which were mined almost a century ago. However, a number of problems including significant quantities of water prevented the earlier miners and their primitive methods from fully exploiting the resource.

Today the problems are no less difficult and much of the deep lead is beneath valuable farmlands at depths of about 100 m with a cover of clay, basalt and gravels. CRA's proposed method begins with determining the position, depth and gold values within the leads. It involves crossing the leads with x or seven exploratory holes at about 5 km intervals.

Monitor wells are also drilled on the periphery of the well field to ensure the leach solution does not move outside the pattem. About 30 different chemical systems have been examined in laboratory experiments to test their gold-solving properties. The chemicals range from thiourea and thiophate to cyanide, the latter being the traditional mean of recovering gold in Victoria.

Ore used in the experiments was treated by another CRA experimental process, the Chambull method of underground hydraulic. Some of the thioress and thiophate systems have been tested field trials.

Recovering the gold in the sulfate treatment plant can be achieved in several ways. Several different methods have been tested including leaching and activated carbon gold finally recovered by either extraction (washing) or smelting.

After removal of the gold, the process solution will be pumped to the tailing field to be mined. Any eucals in the mine-out field are moved in a surface treatment plant where they are made harmless disposal, so that the quality of groundwater remains unaffected. CRA says the method can be operated safely and with long-term effects on groundwater of surface areas. It is hopeful moving to the trial mining stage in the next 12 months and regit the environmental aspects necessary legislative consents.

Bakertal's sales earnings higher on new talc use

Bakertal Inc. had net earnings of $129,352 or 4.5¢ per share for the nine months ended Nov. 30, 1982, up from $62,603 or 2.3¢ per share for the same-year-earlier period. Sales, net of commissions, rose to $963,500 from $705,104.

The company attributes the improved earnings to increased sales in September-November for a new use of talc. Sales for this 3-month period were $452,000 vs. $198,000 for the comparable period of 1981. This new application is not yet on a steady basis, but Bakertal expects that these sales will become regular in 1983. It adds that should this outlet for the talc become permanent, it will be necessary to expand the mine and mill.

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Oreg on mining project likely despite withdrawal by Noranda

CALGARY — Bakertal Mining, Inc., the 75% owned U.S. subsidiary of American Chromium, is keeping options open with respect to the future development of the company's Turner Albright gold-silver-copper-zinc deposit in southern Oregon following the surprise decision by Noranda Exploration, Inc. to drop its purchase option on the property.

"It's not often that you get a property upgraded by a major to the extent that the Turner Albright was upgraded by Noranda and then handed back... it's a bonanza for us," said John Alston, Bakertal and American Chromium president, following the disclosure of the Noranda decision.

In conversation with The Northern Miner, Mr. Alston said that drilling by Noranda during 1982 had "more than doubled reserves" to an indicated 3.8 million tons averaging 0.105 oz. gold per ton, 0.44 oz. silver per ton, 1.33% copper and 3% zinc.

The deposit, which remains open to the southwest, contains about 1.6 million tons of potential open pit material, according to Mr. Alston.

Noranda, he continued, had invested $500,000 in the Turner Albright property last year. In order to carry out the project to feasibility, Noranda would have been required to pay $US1.25 million to Bakertal by Dec. 31, 1983.

The Northern Miner gathers that the Noranda outlay on the Oregon property in 1982 far exceeded the minimum required under the option agreement. Altogether, expenditures by Bakertal and Noranda since August have exceeded $US250,000 payment to Bakertal, Noranda was committed to a minimum outlay of $US500,000 on the property last year. In order to carry the project to feasibility, Noranda would have been required to pay $US1.25 million to Bakertal by Dec. 31, 1983.

Noranda drilled 18 exploratory holes and completed trenching and sampling work on the property during 1982 to establish mineral reserves, according to Mr. Alston.

(Late in August, 1982, Noranda reported encountering a 94.3-ft. section averaging 14.6% zinc, 0.73% copper, 2.01 oz. silver per ton and 0.07 oz. gold per ton from one of 17 holes drilled on the Turner Albright property. Several other holes encountered strong gold, copper and zinc values over good widths.)

Last week, Mr. Alston said that his company is reviewing the Turner Albright situation and expects to make an announcement shortly.

"We can deal with a major on a face-to-face basis, but Bakertal itself can obtain direct financing — something we're seriously considering — and contract out the work," said Mr. Alston, adding that "we'll probably end up doing our own financing."

He indicated that several U.S. mining companies with knowledge of the property's geology have approached Bakertal since Noranda bowed out.

People

Ullstream Resources Cana Ltd. ... — A. A. El Dib is appointed vice-president and D. A. A. is appointed secretary-

Dividends

Compiled by The Northern Miner

Mines

Agnico Eagle f
Brunswick
Cambridge R.L. 10¢
Conifer

Previous Payment
5¢ Jan. 15
7¢ Dec. 15
10¢ Dec. 20

Remarks
Interim
Quarterly
Quarterly

Total 1983
156
334

Total 1982
156
334

8
-2

Rights & Warrants listed on TSE

Agassiz Resources — Warrant buys one common share for 10¢ to July 31, 1983; thereafter at $1.50 to July 31, 1984.
Albany Oil & Gas — 250 rights and $100 buy one $100 16% debenture to Jan. 31, 1983, subject to a minimum subscription of $1,000 (10,000 debentures) per subscriber.
Canusa Energy — Warrant buys one common share at $3.07 to Apr. 1, 1983.
Carnbridge Resources — Warrant buys one common share at $7.50 to Dec. 31, 1983.
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Gold on that thar beach
92-year-old mines Curry County's black sand

By MARK KIRCHMEIER
Correspondent, The Oregonian

GOLD BEACH — Beneath his red cap and wavy white hair, Cleve LeClair's eyes sparkle.

"You see this black sand?" he says, scooping up a fistful and sifting it through his lean, leathery fingers. "It's gold. Not yellow sand or fool's gold, but real gold."

"Pure gold," he declares with an upturn of his chin.

LeClair has mined "pure gold" from the black sands off the Curry County coastline for nearly 50 of his 92 years. "I've dug, shoveled and groveled for gold from Nesika Beach to Pistol River, but my favorite place," his eyes glisten, "is right here."

"Here" is a lonesome piece of black beach tucked in a cove three miles north of Gold Beach, where the Rogue River meets the Pacific. LeClair's beach has no access road, so he parks his car on a cliff overlooking the cove and sure-footedly descends a rabbit's trail down a 150-foot bluff clogged with thickets of green manzanitas and orange-barked madrone trees.

Once on the beach, LeClair sets his sluice box at the base of the cliff wall and goes to work. The operation is simple. He hoses water into the box from a creek trickling down the cliff and then dumps two brimming shovel-loads of sand into the box and instructs a visitor: "Watch."

The sand, loosened by the running water, glides down the cedar box and onto a copper plate at the bottom of the box where the black particles stick out like flecks of pepper. No gold. Not in this shovel-load. LeClair orders a companion to "get another."

He takes a dig himself and brings up a heaping shovel full of black dirt that spills over onto his hickory shirt and jeans. Leaning against the box LeClair slowly, gingerly pours the sand in. "Watch again," he says, "this time, closer."

The sand swishes down the cedar boards and swirls at the bottom of the box. He carefully stirs the sand, washing out lighter particles until specks of gold, shimmering on the copper plates, are all that remain.

"Look," he says, pointing a wrinkled finger into the box, "gold, lots of it. I could mine one-half of an ounce from this spot."

He has before. The going price is near $150 per ounce, and LeClair has sold nuggets to bankers and smelters as far away as San Francisco for that price.

On good days, like today, beach mining is a lucrative, unhurried hobby for Cleve LeClair. It wasn't always so.

"Gold mining was a necessity during hard times — the Great Depression — people were forced to mine the beaches. It was the only work they could find."

"I remember more than 40 men, all unemployed, trying to support families beach mining in Curry during the 1930s. For myself, Depression hit, I lost my job and yet had a wife and six little kids to support. The price of gold was low then, and I had to work eight hours a day digging enough to make ends meet," he says.

The end of the Depression put LeClair back into logging, and he worked until his retirement in 1978. Since then he's mined "whiskey can" and remembers days more than 40 years ago when old-timers could earn $380 a day. Now," he says, pointing to the glimmering yellow flecks in the sluice box, "I guess I'm the timer left."