

# BLUE BUCKET LEGEND HAD A PART IN FIRST GOLD FIND IN COUNTY

The first wagon train to enter Oregon was in the summer of 1843, crossing the great plains and passing through what is now known as the great state of Idaho, at that time known as a part of the Oregon country. This marked the beginning of the Oregon immigration.

It was, however, in the summer of 1845, that some 200 families were induced to try a short cut to the Willamette valley. Those attempting to make their way over the proposed short cut, left the main trail of "emigrants"

at a point probably in the vicinity of the present city of Ontario. A Dr. Elijah White, who had been connected with the Whitman mission was, probably, the principal party in inducing them to make the ill-starred venture. Steven H. L. Meek, was the guide, a brother of Joe Meek, the noted trapper and first U. S. marshal for Oregon.

The country through which they attempted to pass, was to follow up the Malheur river and to cross westward through the central part of Oregon to and

over the Cascade mountains to the Willamette valley. Much of the country traversed was found arid, with a great shortage of water; game was scarce, and there was much suffering and hardships, even greater than was common to the emigrant trains of the times. Cholera broke out and there was a heavy loss of life. At some place, not made clear in history, but probably either on Crooked river or the Deschutes, Meek left the train and made his way to The Dalles, where he succeeded in getting some provisions and a pack train which went out to meet the starving immigrants, and the survivors were taken on to The Dalles later to make their way on to Oregon City and become citizens of Oregon.

The part played by this company of hardy pioneers of Oregon of interest in connection with the discovery of gold in Oregon, is that at one campsite after leaving the Malheur river at a spring or small creek, one of the party picked up a number of yellow "pebbles," which were taken along with them to their home in the Willamette valley.

It was in this pioneer home several years later that some miners from California who stopped at the pioneer home saw the "yellow pebbles" and recognized them as gold nuggets. When questioned as to where the gold was found, the story of the ill-fated trip through central Oregon was told, and the statement made that "we could have picked up enough to fill that blue bucket."

This became the foundation of the legend of the "Blue Bucket Diggins" which have been sought and hunted for ever since, but never found. Granting the truth of the Blue Bucket story and there is no reason to doubt it, it will be seen that the first discovery of gold was made before the metal was found in California and the great gold rush to that state was underway.

It was in 1861 that the Blue Bucket story was responsible for making the first real discovery of gold in Eastern Oregon. A party of prospectors was made up at Portland and with a man named Adams as guide, set out to find the "Blue Bucket" mine. Adams declared he could find the mine, but after spending weeks in wandering over the country, it became evident to the others that Adams was lost and that the search would be fruitless. There were threats of killing Adams, but cooler council prevailed and he was expelled from the party and turned loose to make his way through the desolate land as best he could.

Four members of the party separated from the main body of prospectors and made their way northward, toward the Old Oregon Trail, and with a view of making their way to Walla Walla, then the nearest settlement. These men were Henry Griffin, Dave Littlefield, Stafford and Schriver. They camped on the head of Elk creek, about 14 miles west of Baker, in October, 1861. At this camp Griffin panned the first gold recognized as "pay dirt." In a few days enough gold was panned out, about \$150, to buy grub for the winter. Two of the men made their way to Walla Walla, where they used the gold to buy the provisions. They returned to their companions after great hardships on the trail in the winter snows.

It was the following spring that the great gold rush started to Auburn. The gold used to buy supplies in Walla Walla and the stories of the rich find started this rush.

It was the following year, 1862, that Auburn became a thriving city, reaching a population of 5000, and was possibly for a time the largest town in the state. It was made the county seat of Baker county, before there was a City of Baker.

Today Auburn has joined the ghost cities and even the site of its location is so bedimmed that a person needs to know his geography to find the location.

*Baker  
News  
June 23, 1939*

## BIG ASSAYS REPORTED

Assays of gold are reported from the Blue Bucket mine run as high as \$172 a ton. This mine is located out from Dale in the Desolation creek country. About three years ago it was discovered by Bart Crisman and Charlie Curl. It was taken over by a Spokane corporation and considerable development work was done. There was some very rich ore taken out at the time of discovery.

*Canada etc*  
*Desolation creek*  
*Spokane*

### A Bucket of Nuggets

Rock from the Blue Bucket mine, in Baker county, Oregon, has recently assayed \$172 in gold per ton. The mine is located several miles south of Dale. The mine is believed to be the famed Blue Bucket mine discovered by pioneer emigrants when two children brought into camp a blue bucket full with gold nuggets. Following the finding of the nuggets, the emigrants were never able to locate the mine. There is no confirmation of the report that the original mine has finally been found.

*Pollard*

*July 3, 1931*

Mining & Contract. Review May 31 1938

The **Blue Bucket Mining Co.**, Spokane, Washington, is preparing to resume operations at the **Blue Bucket** gold mine reached by way of **Dale**. **E. H. Shaw**, Spokane, is president.

Calif. Mining Journal July 1937

Blue Bucket Mine—On Desolation Creek, reports their new Gibson mill is running smoothly and showing good results in the recovery of gold from the ore. The mine was discovered last summer and sold to a company organized in Spokane.

## Blue Bucket Has Promising Showing

The Blue Bucket Mining company's new lower tunnel is reported to be about 65 feet from the large vein opened up last summer on the surface by a series of trenches and open cuts. The surface ore was found to assay from \$1.50 up to \$170 per ton in gold, but was broken up and the new tunnel was started to cut the vein deeper in a more solid formation. It is believed that the erosion from this ore body accounts for the gold found in the overburden on a large part of the Yellow Queen claim of the property. Surface workings indicate the ore body may be 50 feet wide.

The offices of the company are in Spokane. The property is in the Desolation creek area in northern Grant county.

*Blue Bucket Mining Company—*

A new lower tunnel at the Blue Bucket Mining company property near Desolation Creek in Grant County is reported as nearing the vein for which it is headed. R. H. Russell, West 827 25th Avenue, Spokane, Washington, is president of

Dec. 1939

the Blue Bucket Mining Company. The discovery of the Blue Bucket mine was made by a prospector named W. C. Curl five or six years ago. Surface ore was found assaying from \$1.50 to \$179 per ton in gold. Surface cuts and prospecting show a vein reported to be 50 feet wide.

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*Blue Bucket Mining Company—C.*

W. Curl of Baker, has been at the Blue Bucket mine in Grant county since February prospecting the ground and doing development work. He reports he has been successful in uncovering two strong veins on the Yellow Queen claim of the group, both showing strong free gold values. The veins are four and five feet wide. Mr. Curl was the original discoverer of the Blue Bucket group. Dale, Oregon, is the nearest postoffice of the mine.

ONE July 31

Bulldozer exploration work and shaft sinking are proposed by the Blue Bucket Mining Company which holds the Blue Bucket group of 27 claims and mill and power sites on Desolation Creek in Grant County near Ukiah, Oregon. R. H. Russell, West 827 Twenty-fifth Avenue, Spokane, Washington, is president and general manager. Max J. Dunn of Hope, Idaho, is consulting engineer. Three men are employed.

TH 1/2/40

Renewed development efforts are being made by the Blue Bucket Mining Company, R. H. Russell, West 827 Twenty-fifth Avenue, Spokane, Washington, president, to locate ore in the Blue Bucket mine on Desolation Creek in Grant County near Ukiah, Oregon. Max Dunn of Hope, Idaho, is consulting and managing engineer and Franz Heartburg of Dale, Oregon, is superintendent. Funds are said to be provided by a private syndicate of stockholders of North Dakota.

TH 1/2/40

A lower tunnel is being driven by the Blue Bucket Mining Company in its property on Desolation Creek in Grant County, Oregon. R. H. Russell, West 827 Twenty-fifth Avenue, Spokane, Washington, is president and Franz Heartburg of Dale, Oregon, is manager.

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