

FORTY-NINE DIGGINGS (placer, mercury)

Ashland area

Location: sec. 31, T. 38 S., R. 1 E.

History: "The best known placer mine in the area is called the 'Forty-Nine Diggings'. It is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles northwest of Ashland at the north end of the ridge between Wagner and Ashland Creeks. Here the placer operations have extended at least 20 feet into an old conglomerate bedrock and the same distance into an older bedrock consisting of a series of andesitic flows, now much altered.

"Upon weathering the rock becomes lighter colored, and curving lines of iron stain surround and accentuate lenticular or spheroidal forms of more compact material. In places the andesite seems to be amygdaloidal containing cavities filled by later calcite and other material. The flows strike S. 60° W. and dip steeply westward and are overlaid by the nearly horizontal conglomerate, probably of Cretaceous age, which strikes S. 40° E. and dips about 70° N. E. This placer has not been in operation for several years.

"The following description of the Forty-nine diggings was written by Frank M. Anderson:

"The old placer mines near Phoenix, Oregon, were the property of the late E. K. Anderson, who formerly lived near Talent, Jackson County. They form a group lying about the northern end of a ridge of hills which constitute a spur of the Siskiyou Mountains. Mining has been done along the eastern and northwestern flanks of the ridge, and gold in small quantities found in all the alluvial gravels of the vicinity. From about 1860 until recent years these worked regularly for a few months during the winter and spring. Until 1895 they yielded generally from 60 to 150 ounces of gold annually, which ranged in value from \$16 to \$18 an ounce.

"The gold was generally accompanied by considerable "black sand" (magnetic iron and other dark minerals) and some grains and nuggets of cinnabar. For the most part gold was fine, ranging in size from "dust" to "flaxseed" gold, though a few nuggets of gold were found which weighed as much as 3 ounces or even more.

"Much of the gold was more or less "rusty" and would not amalgamate freely, so that after all the gold obtainable by this means was removed from the black sand it still had a value of \$5 to \$8 a ton in gold."

Winchell (14) reports cinnabar in veins in the bedrock. The vein filling is calcite, with siderite, cinnabar, and a little quartz.

Reference: Parks & Swartley, 16:95 (quoted).
Winchell, 14:124.