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FRANK DOWNS sweeps the bottom of McQuade Creek near with a suction dredge recently. His father's partnership and contract miners have taken 30 to 40 ounces of gold from the creek in the last year. The

miners say that what comes out of the creek, located northeast of Sweet Home, Ore., is a mere glimmer of the riches that lie deep beneath their 15 claims. (AP Laserphoto)



SAM DOWNS stands on a slope above the McQuade Creek encampment, which he hopes will eventually become a company town called Big Minerals. The 55-year-old

commercial fisherman and gold miner believes he and his partners have found the mother lode. (AP Laserphoto)

Miner sees 'monster gold strike'

SWEET HOME (AP) — If you haven't heard of Big Minerals, Ore., that's because it's a town that has yet to be born.

But Sam Downs, a 55-year-old commercial fisherman and gold miner, says Big Minerals is bound to be Oregon's newest city, just as sure as he's found Quartzville's mother lode under a small mining camp 40 miles northeast of Sweet Home.

The mining operation is the most active in the Sweet Home Ranger District, according to Forest Service officials.

That's probably because Downs and two partners claim they've discovered a monster of a gold vein "deep under the ground" near the confluence of Quartzville and McQuade creeks.

It will take a town, an electricity-generating waterwheel, a company store, log drawbridge and heavy-duty mining equipment to get it out, he says.

Downs says he's willing to live here the rest of his life to try. He already has invested four years in McQuade Creek, reading the signs of a big strike. The evidence was everywhere, Downs recalls.

There was iron oxide in McQuade Creek and huge fir and cedar trees leaning away from each other where, he says, the vein was pushed up about 700 years ago.

"The mother lode is there," he says expansively. "If it wasn't, I'd be someplace else."

Last fall, Downs said, he finally uncovered the trail in the bottom of

McQuade Creek. Using small suction dredges, Downs, his partners and contract miners took 30 to 40 ounces of gold out of the stream bed during the past year, he said.

Still, Downs says, the gold in the creek is only the smallest residue of the riches that must lie underground. "Nobody kicked it out of the sky," he exclaims. "It's down there. The devil's got it all."

He believes he found what earlier miners missed because "they didn't know how to mine. You can't know anything about it unless you live gold mining and die gold mining," he says.

Downs has two partners: Fred Smith, 68, a retired logger, who staked out some of the original claims, and Carl Utzinger, 60, who owns an excavation business in Astoria. Among them, they have placer and hardrock claims over about 80 acres, with names like the "Big Mack" and the "Sam-O."

Utzinger and others helping with the claims are working "on the come," according to Downs. They're lending their time and equipment to a cause they hope will pay handsomely.

Downs believes it will.

Though his barrel chest has slipped with the years, he claims to be vigorous enough to have spent more than a year by himself hauling boulders out of McQuade Creek following the iron oxide vein, which connotes gold.

Marv Lang, a forester with the Sweet Home Ranger District, says Big Minerals Inc. has the right to explore for gold under an 1872 mining law, as long as the work is environmentally sound.

"It's hard to leave the environment like it is and tear up the mountain," said Downs. "But we're trying." So far, the Big Minerals mining operation has met Forest Service standards, Lang said.

Up to now, it has been relatively small and self-sufficient.

Downs, his partners and his sons, Benny and Frank, have used timber cut off the mining claims to build shelters and supply shakes and shingles.

They've dammed a portion of Quartzville Creek and channeled it through a flume that eventually will spin a 7-foot waterwheel to provide electricity, they say.

They have built a suspension footbridge across Quartzville Creek and plan a 60-foot-long drawbridge to carry equipment up McQuade Creek.

As for actual mining, they want to dig a 6-foot-square, 800-foot-deep test shaft in the main camp before digging a series of tunnels to search out the gold vein.

And they plan to build a small town with a store for the miners Downs says could number 50 to 500.

Asked how the partners will finance those plans, Downs is circumspect, saying only, "It doesn't take money to do it, if you've got enough guts."

More specifically, Downs believes a mining company will do the major excavation under a contract with Big Minerals to split the profits.

Lang said Downs probably will patent their mining claims to make the land virtually private property. To patent a claim, a miner must prove there's enough gold there to make a living.

"He knows what he's doing," Lang said. "He's a pretty ingenious fellow. People don't do that level of development without finding gold."

Downs says he's a third-generation gold miner who has mined off and on all his life in places like Alaska, Nevada and Montana.

He says his grandfather discovered a rich gold mine in Arizona, but lost it to the bank in the 1930s. It's still operating today, Downs says.

"My dad learned what his dad knew, and I learned what my dad knew," he adds. "We're not guessing."

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340; again in 1973



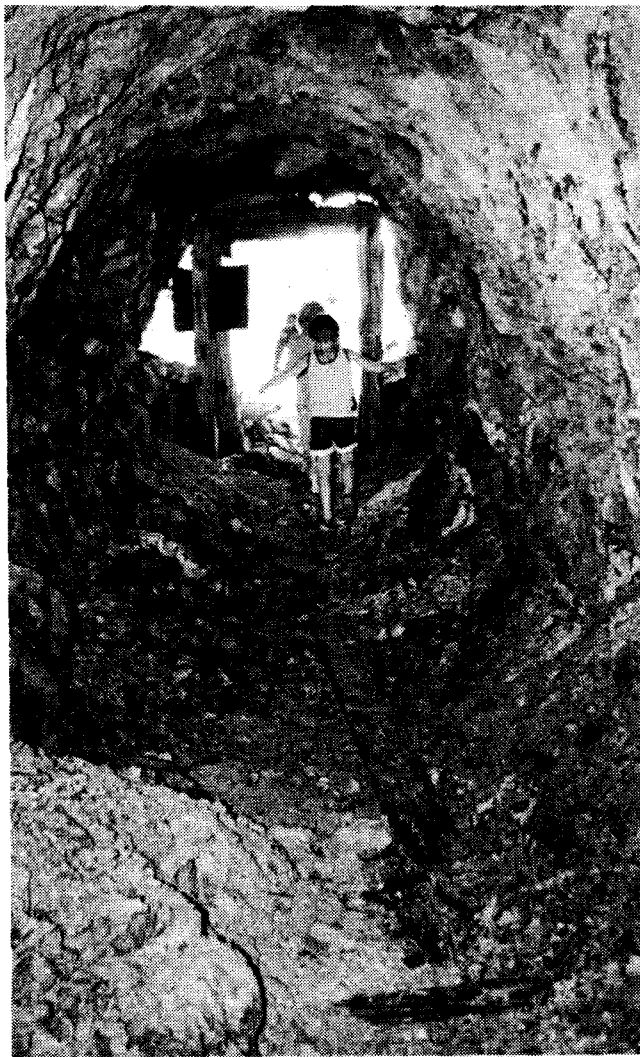
Youngsters return with parents to explore abandoned mines



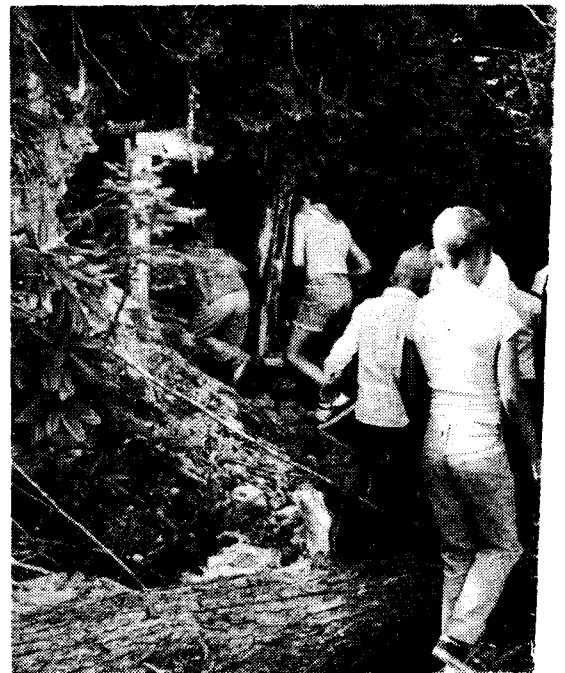
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Democrat-Gerald PEOPLE

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They came in 1840; again in 1973



Youngsters return with parents to

Albany Democrat-Herald

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Third gold rush on Quartzville Creek

By DAVID KERN
Democrat-Herald Writer

QUARTZVILLE — Slowly sifting away dirt and sand, the miner works his pan until finally the glint of metal strikes a chord with the sun and the cry "Hey Mike, gold!" resounds.

Between 15 and 20 prospectors most weekdays pan along the shores of Quartzville Creek searching for the precious metal which lured hundreds here in the 1840's and again in the 1890's. These fortune hunters, however, lack the beards and the desperate dispositions of the 19th century miners. They are Sweet Home school children taking part in the city's popular Quartzville mines day trips.

troop farther down the creek in the afternoon in hopes of finding more gold flakes which the miners secure in small glass bottles.

Price says two gold nuggets were found near the camp earlier this summer, but since the dredges combed the area occasional gold flakes are the most valuable treasures discovered.

"Look what he's got," cries seven-year-old Greg Jackson as his twin brother, Mark, shows the glint from his pan. Surrounding miners observe longingly and then are back to their panning.

After panning and watching the gold separating machine sift through earth, several miners get caught up with the environment and jump into the creek to swim

Each weekday morning, recreation director Richard Price loads up prospective miners, sack lunches in hand, and heads for the hills above Green Peter Reservoir. Price brings along a gold panning machine and several assistants.

About five old mines are inspected by groups. Panoramic views of surrounding forest land greet miners as they explore abandoned mines.

A historical marker tells how about 27 miles northeast of Sweet Home gold was discovered near Quartzville in 1848. Sixteen years later 500 claims had been filed and the town boasted about 1,000 residents. By 1871 Quartzville was a ghost town.

Fortune hunters again flocked to the town in the 1890's, but by 1902 the second rush was over.

"The kids often bring their parents back to see the mines and pan for gold," Price says. The recreation director, who is also vice-principal at Sweet Home High School, has become somewhat of an expert on the area. He knows of 40 to 50 mines in the region, he says.

"Some of these mines reflect personalities," Price says. "One miner built his cabin at the entrance of the mine to keep others out."

The children first are taken to the City of Sweet Home's site which includes buildings for storage and sleeping on the creek.

The miners then go into the hills above the creek to explore mines. The long dark shafts are negotiated single file with two of the older boys manning large flashlights. The little ones, like four-year-old Beth Stafford of Sweet Home, sometimes hold Price's hand.

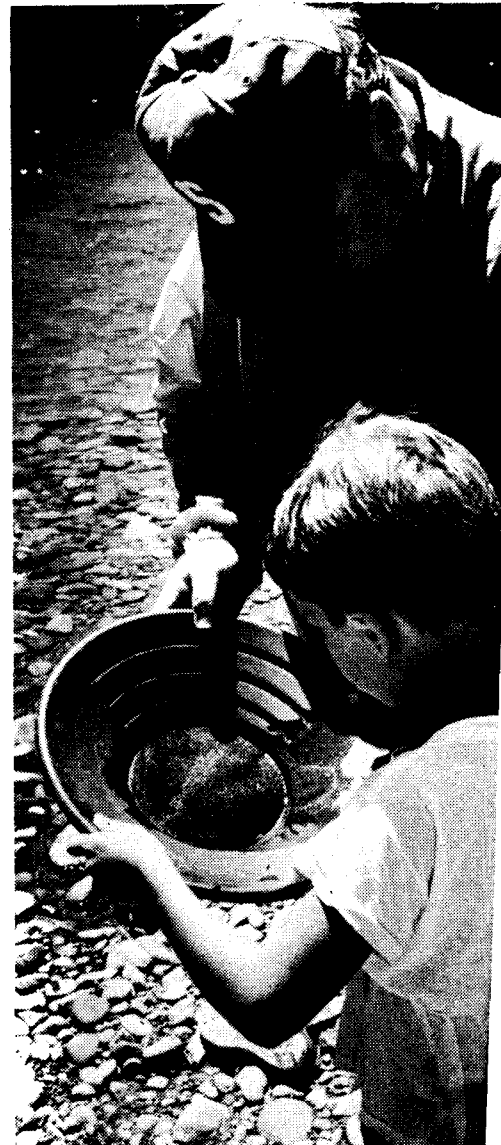
After exploring mine shafts and caved away mine entrances, the children pile into the bus which winds down through the hills and back towards camp. Just across Dry Gulch Creek, a roadside grouse looking like a forlorn hitchhiker glances at the gold hunters and scurries into the undergrowth.

Back on the creek the miners are panning, digging and shouting of their finds. Mostly black sand used in costume jewelry is found. Older miners anxious to capitalize on the skyrocketing price of gold dredged the region of the creek earlier this summer. Price takes his

hunt for crawdads or lounge on the rocks.

Price says the program will last until the end of next week. Children register at Sankey Park for the trips which last from 10 a.m. until mid-afternoon.

None of the miners have struck it rich yet, but they don't seem to brood about that when practicing the skill which caught on here more than 120 years ago.



Mark Jackson, director Price



Foresters and land experts say there is still gold in the area, though not as much as there once was . . . James Magmer

The King of the Golden River

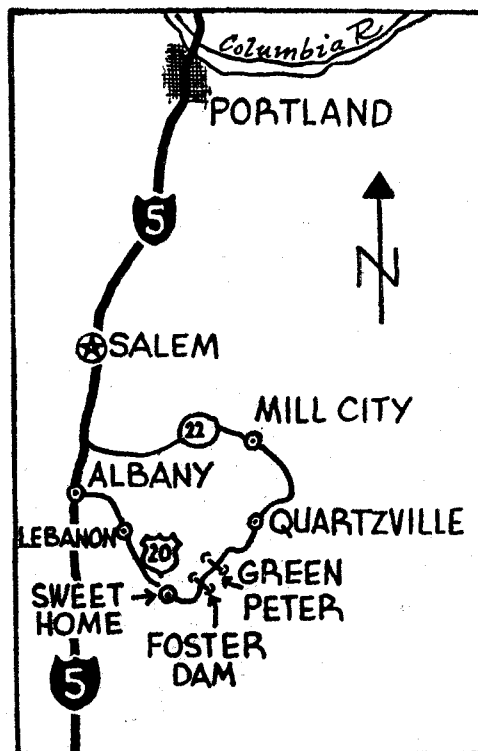
THE King of the Golden River, if Oregon holds him, holds court under the tall Douglas firs at Quartzville, the site of a vanished gold mining town.

Quartzville, literally, is only a dot on the map in the Cascade Mountains midway between Sweet Home and Mills. The town, what there was of it, disappeared long ago. Fallen trees block the road that once led from the edge of Yellowstone Creek up through Packer's Gulch to the spot where the town once stood.

Foresters and land experts say there is still gold in the area, though not as much as there once was when prospectors used spikes to dig solid veins of it out of the rocks in the bed of Yellowstone Creek.

The way to the site of Quartzville from Portland is I-5 to Albany, then off on Oregon State Highway 20 through Lebanon and Sweet Home to Foster and a sharp left turn two miles beyond Foster onto a Linn County Road. This road, rebuilt by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, crosses the middle fork of the Santiam River and runs along the north side of the reservoir behind Foster Dam up to the end of the reservoir behind Green Peter Dam.

From here the road becomes a Bureau of Land Management road, first called Quartzville Creek Road, then



From time to time prospectors still stake out claims along Quartzville Creek, Boulder Creek and Yellowstone Creek. On Saturdays it is not uncommon to see college kids with new hardware store shovels and pans washing gravel dug from the creek beds, looking for specks of gold dust.

If you want to find out what it was like to prospect for gold back when Oregon was a territory, bring along a shovel, a wide shallow pan and wash some gravel from the bottom of one of the creeks. The gold, if there be any, will settle to the bottom of the pan and remain after all the gravel has been washed off. And you might be lucky. Specks of dust and occasionally a nugget or two are found by weekend prospectors.

But this is not why the King of the Golden River, if Oregon holds him, holds court under the firs at Quartzville. He's here because the real gold at Quartzville is not cold yellow metal. It's water, clear, sparkling water that splashes and tumbles over rocks as it runs down

The magazine staff members are James Magmer, assistant editor and staff writer; Mack H. Meeds, assistant to the editor and staff writer; garden writers, Evelyn Yates, who is garden consultant, Charles H. Potter and Leonard Wiley. The Northwest Magazine TV section staff consists of Francis Murphy, The Oregonian's television editor and columnist, assisted by Miss Anne Gyllenberg.

Joseph R. Bianco, *Editor*

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Yellowstone Creek Road, changing its name as it changes creeks to follow as it makes its way down to Mills on Oregon State Highway 22.

Not far from the forest ranger's station at Yellowstone on the BLM road is a cutoff to the left that takes you to Packer's Gulch. It's a short walk up the Gulch to Quartzville.

The townsite now is just an opening in the forest, but as you stand in the silence you can imagine rows of miners' cabins. Let your imagination run a little and you can see the old store and saloon, and the grizzly miners. It will only be a moment more before you begin to feel the old excitement.

Yellowstone, Boulder and Quartzville creeks into the middle of the Santiam River.

You become aware that water here is gold when you turn off Oregon Highway 20 two miles east of Sweet Home and cross the river. Foster Dam has backed up a lake 3½ miles long that covers 1,220 acres. The lake is a boatman's paradise in the golden months of summer.

Foster Dam is nearly a mile long and 126 feet high. There is a power plant at its base which generates electricity to light homes in the area and run local industry.

From Foster Dam the Army Corps of Engineers'

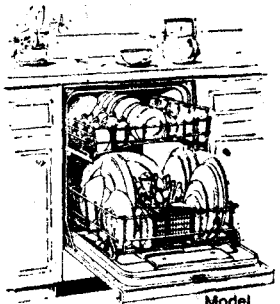
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OUR COVER

This week's cover of Northwest Magazine was designed by E. Bruce Dauner, staff artist.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Northwest Magazine encourages interested writers to submit articles for publication. All unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. We are under no obligation to return others.



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COMING:

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Family Tragedy

... Golden River

(Continued from page 2)

road follows the Santiam River to Green Peter Dam and another lake, larger than the one backed up behind Foster Dam. Green Peter Reservoir is 10 miles long, covers 3,720 acres. The dam is only 1,517 feet long, but is 380 feet high which makes it three times as high as Foster Dam. At its base is a power plant with two 40,000 kilowatts Francis type generators.

Not far beyond Green Peter Dam, the road becomes the BLM road that follows the creeks through the mountains to Mills. The creeks are so clear you can see their beds from the road. Trout fishermen fish the pools above the rapids. In deep pools, like the one below the Creek, you can see trout and sometimes steelhead and salmon.

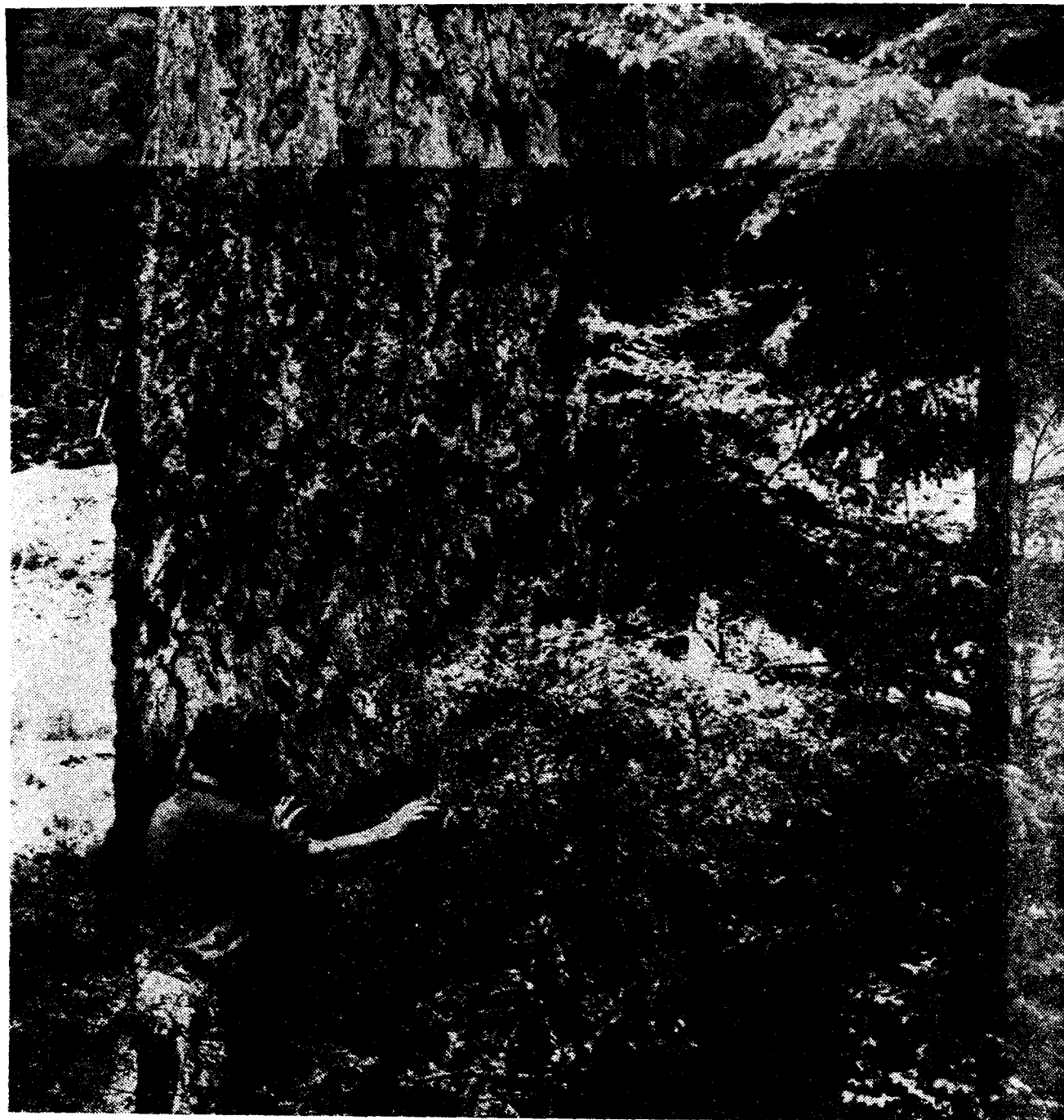
Along Quartzville Creek, BLM has camp sites and picnic tables where you can stop for lunch or pitch your tent and stay the night. These recreational areas are clean, silent and serene. They lie by the creeks, under the firs, some of which are huge and estimated to be 400 years old.

Along the road the mountains will occasionally have bald spots where BLM and private logging operations have taken place. Areas logged long ago already have new stands of Douglas fir. Spar poles stand in the center of raw brown incisions in the green forest where new logging operations are under way. Caterpillar tractors have crawled along the sides of mountains, building roads to haul the logs out. Scars, but logging is a part of Oregon's wonderful landscape.

Bear grass grows along the road and rhododendrons and you pass huge masses of columnar basalt, a volcanic rock that looks like it is made up of black loaves of ossified bread. These black rocks bring you back to the story of The King of the Golden River.

This king, as John Ruskin told his story, lived in the Alps at the source of a river which turned gold in the sunlight. In a valley below, whose soil had been turned to red dust by the West Wind, lived three brothers, Schwarz, Hans and Gluck. The king told Gluck the river in the Alps really would turn to gold if Gluck poured three drops of holy water into it at its source. If he failed to pour holy water, the King warned, Gluck would be turned into black stone.

Gluck's two older brothers, Schwarz and Hans, tried



to turn the river to gold with holy water niched from a church and were turned into black stone. Gluck, who got his holy water from a priest, gave it to a thirsty dog he met on his way up the mountain to the river's source. The dog was transformed into the King of the Gold River who told Gluck to use three drops of dew instead that glistened nearby on a leaf.

When Gluck threw the dew into the river, the river disappeared into a cave and came gushing out at the

*The mountains here are as rich with
Douglas fir as Gluck's Treasure
Valley was with alfalfa
and grain*

edge of the valley of red dust below. The valley became green and fertile, crops grew, fields became gold with grain; cattle grew fat grazing in the meadows. People named the land Treasure Valley.

The King of the Golden River must be at Quartzville. The streams are as pure as the dew drops Gluck threw into the river in the Alps. The dams at Green Peter Mountain and Foster Dam below have created lakes for fishermen and boaters and generate electric power to light homes and run factories. The mountains here are as rich with Douglas fir as Gluck's Treasure Valley was with alfalfa and grain.

The dams also control torrents from the winter rains and melting snow so the Willamette River does not flood the Willamette Valley.

From Mills, the quick way back to Portland is Oregon State Highway 22 which, before it joins I-5, passes BLM's recreation site at Fisherman's Bend on the north fork of the Santiam River. There are campsites here, picnic tables and shelters.

One of the prime attractions at Fishermen's Bend is what is believed to be the world's longest picnic table. The table top is one board, 85-feet long, cut from a huge Douglas fir.

It is quiet here along the north fork of the Santiam. But you miss the King of the Golden River. He seems to stay up in the mountains under the Douglas firs at Quartzville.

James Magner is assistant editor, Northwest Magazine, weekend traveler and occasional reader of John Ruskin. Photos, courtesy of the author.

Northwest Magazine, Sunday, June 28, 1970

Douglas fir 400 years old



Logged-over beauty