

ALBERNI ORES.

Report of W. J. Sutton to the Government on the Precious Metals.

Following is the report of W. J. Sutton (assistant professor of geology and mineralogy in the Michigan school of mines) on the geological formations and the precious metals of that portion of Alberni known as the China Creek basin:

Hon. Col. Baker, Provincial Secretary and Minister of Mines, Victoria.

SIR,—In compliance with your letter of instructions dated June 27, 1895, I have the honor herewith to submit my report upon the mining section comprised within the China and Granite creek basins, Alberni district, Vancouver Island.

In taking a general survey of the country under consideration before entering into specific details, a glance at the map of Vancouver Island will show the rugged, mountainous nature of its interior. The mountains of Vancouver Island are comprised within what has been called the Vancouver range, it being the most westerly of the four great ranges or systems of mountains in British Columbia embraced within the Cordillera belt. Commencing at the most easterly, we have first the Rocky Mountains, then the Coast Range, next the Coast Range, and finally the Vancouver range, running more or less parallel in a north-westerly and south-easterly direction.

The Vancouver and Gold ranges have many features in common in their auriferous schists and altered volcanic rocks. The Gold range, being composed of a number of minor ranges, namely: Cariboo, Selkirk, Purcell and Columbia ranges, has thus far produced most of the mineral wealth of the Province of British Columbia. The Vancouver range is the north-western boundary of the continent of North America, as there is only a narrow submarine plateau extending beyond it, then a quick descent into the azure depths of the great Pacific.

Comparatively little is yet known regarding the geology of the interior of Vancouver Island, partly owing to its rugged nature and thick undergrowth, also to the limited amount of geological work thus far undertaken. The complications of structure presented can only be satisfactorily worked out by a comprehensive survey of the whole island, and therefore properly comes under the purview of the geological survey of Canada, and I would respectfully draw your attention to the needs of the province in that respect.

THE VANCOUVER RANGE

consists for the most part of an enormous series of eruptive rocks, interbedded with limestone, argillite, quartzite, etc. This great mass of volcanic material and interbedded sedimentary rocks has been grouped together and provisionally called the Vancouver series by Dr. Selwyn. The series amounts to many thousands of feet in thickness, and will most likely be found to cover not only triassic and carboniferous rocks, but even lower in the geological scale. The limestone portion alone attains a thickness of several thousand feet, and Dr. Dawson has suggested limiting the series to the triassic rocks when they shall have been distinctly separated. The whole region has suffered great disturbance, and it might be termed a region of turmoil and chaos. Volcanic outflows on an enormous scale have occurred at repeated intervals, long periods intervening, during which the interbedded sedimentary rocks accumulated. The amount of volcanic breccia and tuff is also a remarkable feature of the period, a large exposure of which may be seen along the Alberni road at Cameron lake. All this great series has undergone extensive metamorphism. The limestones have become highly crystalline, and show few fossils. The argillites have become semi-crystalline and more or less chloritic schists. The eruptives, although originally basaltic and trachytic lava flows, have undergone such alterations that we have now diabase, diorite, felsite, etc. A large proportion might be called greenstone, their greenish appearance being due to alteration products such as chlorite, vermiculite, etc. Some of these extremely altered eruptives might, from a lithological standpoint, be regarded as very low down in the geological scale.

The interior of Vancouver Island lying north of Cowichan lake and extending through to Alberni appears to be the remnant of a high, elevated plateau, the mountain peaks now remaining having an elevation of about 4,000 feet, which is about the average height of most of the principal mountains of the Island, the highest being Victoria Peak, with an elevation of 7,484 feet.

Lying unconformably on the Vancouver series is quite a large area of cretaceous rocks, forming a sort of fringe along the east coast of Vancouver Island, and embracing the coal areas of Cowichan, Nanaimo and Comox.

At the head of Alberni canal there is a basin of sedimentary strata, consisting of sandstones, conglomerates and shales, which have been referred to as the cretaceous, but from observed lithological differences I am inclined to question whether they belong to the same horizon as the coal-bearing area of the east coast. A shaft was sunk on the lake near the head of the canal about seventeen years ago, but no distinct coal seam was exposed, although the shales were highly carbonaceous. I came across outcrops of these sandstones and shales in the China Creek basin, to which I shall have occasion to refer later on. I have also seen similar sandstone and conglomerate on the border of Cowichan lake.

It is interesting to note in this connection that almost every creek and river on Vancouver Island shows at least one or two colors to the pan. Leech river, in particular, yielded considerable gold to the hardy miners of the early sixties, variously estimated from one to two hundred thousand dollars.

China creek has been worked for its

ALLUVIAL GOLD

as far back as 1862, principally by Chinamen, and has yielded about \$40,000 by the most primitive methods—the pan, shovel, rocker and sluice-box. Considerable gold has also been taken out of Gold river by the Chinese, but nothing definite can be obtained regarding its yield. The black sand along the north shore, especially at Cape Cormorant and Cape

Scott, contains considerable fine gold similar to that found along the coast of Oregon and California.

All the streams which have their sources in the auriferous belt under consideration show strong colors to the pan. I may mention the following: Cameron, Nanaimo, Nitinat, Cowichan and Franklin rivers, China, Shaw and Granite creeks. It must not be overlooked that placer gold has been deposited by a natural process of concentration by an extensive erosion of the surrounding country, and is not to be entirely depended upon as a finger index to the extent of the gold yet remaining in the hills.

Starting from the Alberni settlement, where a number of pioneers are busy clearing land in that fertile valley, China creek is reached by a good pack trail, which passes over a comparatively level valley along which a good wagon road could be easily built. The trail strikes China creek about eight miles from the Alberni settlement, opposite the Cataract hydraulic claim, and then follows the bank of China creek up to its source, the Golden Eagle basin.

Along the trail several exposures of syenite can be seen. This syenite extends over a large area, as shown on my sketch map herewith, and forms, I think, the paleozoic floor upon which the Vancouver series was laid; wherever met with, it was found to underlie all the volcanic rocks. It is a typical syenite, showing the hornblende in well defined crystals but considerably altered. It contains very little mica, and a small proportion of quartz, although quartz occurs locally in sufficient abundance to make it a hornblende granite. Syenite occurs as bedrock along nearly the entire length of China creek, from which it has derived its name through the miners regarding it as granite.

Small outliers of the sandstone previously mentioned were exposed along the trail, which no doubt originally covered the whole valley, but has since been denuded. There is a large body of sandstone commencing at Mineral Mound No. 12, and extending up to near Mineral Mound No. 15, on China creek. It is exposed along the beds of Mosquito and McLaughlin creeks, extending into the foothills, and also forms a rim around Mount Pat Pat. There is a fine exposure of these strata at a high falls on McLaughlin creek, there being a perpendicular drop of 150 feet. Here they appear to lie horizontally, but in passing around Mount Pat Pat toward the west they form a spiral, and crop out near the top of the mountain on the south side.

A GOOD EXPOSURE,

showing this twist, is on a bluff at the head of Child's creek. The most remarkable exposure of this sandstone is at its contact with the Vancouver eruptives, well exposed in the bed of China creek above Mineral Mound No. 15. Here the sandstone dips under eastward at an angle of 60 degrees, which may be explained as a complete overthrow of the strata or a reverse fault—pre-supposing that the eruptives antedate the sandstone. There is also a very much indurated at the contact, the eruptives also being very much altered. The deepest section of these sedimentary strata would amount to about 600 feet of sandstone and 400 feet of shale. No evidence of coal was anywhere seen.

The sandstone near Mineral Mound No. 12 grades into coarse conglomerate containing large boulders of syenite near its contact therewith.

Mount Pat Pat has a capping of eruptive rock, probably phonolite, which rests upon the shale above mentioned.

The gold belt on China creek lies east of this sandstone, the formation being almost a typical section of the Vancouver series, consisting of diabase, diorite, felsite, with interbedded limestone, argillite and quartzite. These eruptive rocks have undergone remarkable alteration, especially in the neighborhood of Mineral creek, where they become greenish-gray schists, only showing their eruptive origin under the microscope. The argillite, with interbedded limestone, argillite and quartzite. These eruptive rocks have undergone remarkable alteration, especially in the neighborhood of Mineral creek, where they become greenish-gray schists, only showing their eruptive origin under the microscope.

The first four claims recorded on this creek were the Alberni, Chicago, Warpsite and Victoria, the location of which was best understood by referring to the map. These claims are now under dispute, and have been staked and restaked, so that in one spot, the south-west corner of the Alberni claim, there are no less than sixteen stakes, a photograph of which I herewith enclose.

On the Alberni claim two veins of gold quartz have been exposed. The lower vein has about 2 feet of a crystalline quartz containing free gold disseminated through the quartz in fine particles, and in some places plainly visible to the naked eye. The gold is associated with small grains of blende (black jack) in a somewhat peculiar manner, so that the presence of blende is an index to the occurrence of gold. The gold shows signs of crystallization when highly magnified. The vein dips about 65 degrees to the east, with a strike of north 15 degrees east, and conformable with the bedding or foliation of the country rock, and therefore may be classed as a "segregated" vein. The upper exposure of gold-bearing quartz is a narrow vein about a foot in width, cutting across the formation about north-east. The gold occurs in the same manner as in the other vein.

The country rock of the Alberni claim, as already mentioned, is a greenish-gray schist, being an igneous rock highly metamorphosed through hydro-thermal agencies.

THE SAME ROCK FORMATION

occurs on the Chicago, Warpsite and Victoria claims, also on the claims lying north and south of these claims.

There are two quartz veins exposed on the Chicago claim, one of them lying in a line with the main Alberni ledge, and appears to be a continuation of it. It is the same width and has the same dip and strike as the Alberni vein.

The Missing Link and Champion claims, lying north of the Alberni, show several quartz outcrops. Two veins eighteen inches in width were uncovered, showing free gold plainly visible. Very

little work had been done, the veins having been only just discovered.

On the Crown claim there is a large vein of quartz 2 feet in width, cutting across the formation, exposed for about 40 feet.

On the Mountain Rose there is a quartz vein about two feet in width, also running at right angles to the formation, and exposed for about 50 feet, when a slip causing a fault was encountered, beyond which the vein has not been traced. This vein carries considerable chalcopryite disseminated through the quartz. The country rock is an argillaceous schist or slate, with the line of foliation running due north and south. This schist is well exposed on Brown creek, running across the Vancouver claim.

Beyond those I have mentioned very little work has been done on the claims in this section, so that it would be premature to form any definite conclusions regarding the permanency of the auriferous deposits. The majority of the veins are interbedded or "segregated" veins, and have the appearance of being of a somewhat lenticular character, similar to the quartz veins in the Allegheny Mountains, and a large proportion of the gold-bearing veins of California. They are good types of segregated veins, and contain the usual constituents of gold, pyrites, blende, galena and chalcopryite.

It has been advocated that veins of this description are less persistent than the massive veins, and that they are near the surface, and frequently terminate by pinching out in depth and horizontal extension; but recent mining operations have demonstrated that segregated veins may extend to great depths and be of considerable extent. They often do not differ in any way from true massive veins, except in their run parallel instead of across the strata.

The schists in the neighborhood of Mineral creek have a strike nearly north and south, and I would therefore recommend the prospector to examine carefully the country lying due north and south of this creek. I understand that some good prospects have been discovered since my return, on a creek called the Yellow stone, lying due north from Mineral creek.

Mineral Creek follows the line of bedding of an interbedded strata of calcareous material, or impure limestone, heavily studded with pyrites, the creek being confined to this bed its entire length, and the bed being a part of the neighboring rock, and therefore more easily eroded by the watercourse.

In a similar way, a number of other creeks in the neighborhood were observed following down the interbedded strata of limestone so common to that section.

GOLDEN EAGLE.

Considerable work has been done on the Golden Eagle claim, at the head of China creek, where the trail ends. Two cabins have been built about five miles apart, in what is known as the Golden Eagle basin, which is about ten acres in extent and completely surrounded by high, precipitous mountains 4000 to 5000 feet in height. I enclose some photographs showing the extremely rugged nature of this part of the country, which look like scenes in the Alps.

The basin is beautifully situated for a stamp mill or other works which might be needed in working the mines; and there is a plentiful supply of water and timber. The Golden Eagle is about half a mile from the cabin, and is reached by a gradual ascent of about 500 feet to the foot of Mount Saunders, which is covered with heavy debris from the mountain.

The quartz vein upon which the work has been done is exposed along the ridge of a "hog's back," with snowclad on either side. The ridge is covered with timber, which affords protection from the heavy snowclad that would otherwise be a constant menace.

The vein is crystalline quartz, with a large percentage of pyrites. There is also interbedded through the quartz some blende, galena, chalcopryite and arsenopyrite, making in toto about 10 per cent of sulphurates. The vein averages about three and a half feet in width, widening to seven feet and narrowing to a few inches.

The hog's back appears to be an intrusive boss of diorite which has undergone local metamorphism. At a short distance from the vein, the hornblende of the diorite has undergone alteration to mica. Immediately adjoining the vein the mica diminishes, so that it becomes a leached feldspathic rock which might be classed as a felsite. The vein has a banded structure, and has every appearance of being filled by lateral secretion and deposition, and possibly some replacement of the country rock with vein matter.

Four tunnels have been driven in on the ledge. The lowest tunnel, or No. 1, is in 44 feet, with an exposure of seven feet of solid vein matter at the entrance and three and a half feet at the breast. The strike of the vein is S. 30 deg. W., and dip about 70 deg. to the E. The vein below this tunnel appears to widen very rapidly, but cannot be followed on account of a snowslide. The next tunnel, or No. 2, is about 100 feet perpendicularly above No. 1 tunnel, and is 65 feet in length. The vein in this tunnel averages nearly three feet, being well mineralized, with well defined walls. The next tunnel, or No. 3, is about 100 feet above No. 2, and is 45 feet in length. In this tunnel the vein pinches to a few inches. No. 4 tunnel is 32 feet in length, on a small stringer.

On the upper side of the hog's back there is an exposure of gold bearing quartz very similar in character to the Alberni ledge, whether it has any connection I would not venture an opinion without further development.

A large number of claims have been recorded around the Golden Eagle, but no development work of any importance has been done upon them.

KING SOLOMON.

A good deal of work has been done on the King Solomon claim, situated on the divide at the headwaters of McQuillan creek, a branch of China creek, but I was unable to fully examine the open cut which had been made on the ledge on account of its being filled with snow. The ravine where the claim is located is between Mount Saunders and McQuillan, at an elevation of nearly 4000 feet above sea level, so that snow remains in the basin the year round. From what I was able to see, I should judge that the

vein is a narrow seam along the side of a dyke. I was informed that it was some place below.

The country rock consists of schists cut through with numerous felsite dykes, which can be plainly seen running up the mountain side. These igneous injections produce conditions favorable to the concentration of the precious metals—in fact, it has been contended that the presence of gold veins is always in conjunction with intrusive rocks, that the gold has been carried up with the outflow of these eruptive rocks. Without fully accepting this theory, it is generally believed by mining men that some eruptive action is essential to effect the necessary conditions for the concentration of metals in veins. The occurrence of auriferous deposits in conjunction with dykes is particularly exemplified throughout California, and, apart from any theory in connection therewith, we may naturally expect to find the same conditions here.

It is now well established that the metals occurring in veins in the form of ore have been deposited by the chemical solution of the ingredients from the surrounding country rock. The principal difference of opinion, over which there has lately been a warm controversy, is with regard to the stress laid upon lateral secretion or the ascension of the mineral bearing solutions from great depths.

A number of claims have also been staked off in juxtaposition to the King Solomon claim, upon which very little work has been done. The ridge on the east side of the King Solomon basin, of which Hanson heights is the summit, is very much stained with iron oxide, due to the oxidation of the sulphurates with which the whole region is heavily charged. Hanson heights is a highly crystallized felsite rock, it being the same as the summit of Mount Saunders.

On the trail, below the cabin on McQuillan creek, is a notable outcrop of jasper, or jaspilite—a name given the rock by Dr. Wadsworth. Some of this jaspilite is heavily charged with hematite, and is identical with the jaspilite occurring in association with the great iron deposits of Northern Michigan. This is the only place I found it in situ, although I met with float pieces all over the district. It may only occur as an interbedded layer similar to the quartzites at that locality. Adjoining it on the one side is a large bed of argillaceous schist, somewhat ferruginous, and on the other side crystalline rocks.

CHINA CREEK.

For a distance of about twelve miles taken up under hydraulic leases. Several companies are actively at work prospecting and developing their claims. A dam was under construction at the Cataract claim at the time of my visit, which I understand has since been completed. The company expects the water turned on in a few months.

There is a very heavy fall to China creek, and a number of canyons, making it very easy to dam and secure a head of water for hydraulic purposes. The creek at its lowest stage would give about 2000 inches of water. By careful management, so that the first outlay in bringing the water upon the ground is not too large, there is every reason to believe that the creek will yield a good return to the enterprising miners. Some of the benches show many colors to the pan. Mr. Frank McQuillan, the veteran prospector, deserves especial mention for his persevering efforts in drawing the attention of capital to the "golden" prospects, and I noticed his gold pan show like a mirror from constant use. Messrs. Jones & Garrett, proprietors of the Constance claim, have dammed China creek and cut a trench to change the channel. They have a stretch of about three-quarters of a mile of the creek-bed ready for sluicing.

Mr. London was ground-slucing on the Lulu claim, at the mouth of Mineral creek, with the view of proving up his claim; he had not made any clean-up, but had considerable of the yellow metal in sight. Messrs. Gleason & Young were sinking a shaft on Mineral creek a short distance up the stream. They are in hopes of being able to get down to bedrock and drift in on their placer claim. Some very coarse gold was obtained on this claim with surface sluicing.

Judging from the small samples I was able to see, the placer gold of China creek appears to consist of two distinct qualities. The paler gold comes from the vicinity of Mineral creek, as I did not detect any of it in panning above it. The darker gold is much more worn and smooth, and likely comes from well up the creek. In panning along the creek, I noticed quite a number of small pieces of gold with quartz adhering to them, which did not have the appearance of having travelled any distance. There are evidences all along China creek of the Chinese having skimmed the rim rock. They do not appear to have done any extensive sluicing.

ALBERNI CANAL.

In passing down Alberni canal from the sediment, carbonaceous shale can be seen exposed along the shore at the old Alberni sawmill site, lying almost horizontally. Following down the shore of the canal, about a mile south, syenite outcrops for a short distance, and is then replaced with a blackish, almost aphanitic diorite, which constitutes the body of Copper mountain. This formation extends along the shore down to a short distance below where the Esquimalt & Nanaimo railway boundary line crosses the canal, where syenite reappears and extends down to Hiwatches or Franklin river.

A good contact of this blackish, fine-grained diorite with the syenite may be seen on China creek, about midway between Mineral mounds Nos. 5 and 6, the syenite dipping under the diorite westward at an angle of about 55 degrees. There is an old tunnel half-way up Copper mountain, and facing the canal, which was run in the year 1865, following a cropping of chalcopryite, which suddenly gave out.

I may mention that numerous veins of chalcopryite have been found in the diorite of Vancouver Island, but have not been found sufficiently strong to be worked, such as: Sansone narrows, Cedar hill, Cowichan bay, Cowichan lake, etc.

At Hiwatches river there is a good trail starting from the bay below the mouth of the river and following along the foothills, up to the Star of the West

claim on Granite creek, which is a branch of Hiwatches river.

Some placer mining has been done on Granite creek by the following miners: H. McCoy, W. Poole, H. Hanson, Wm. Lindsay and G. Carnian.

Good pay in coarse gold was obtained along some of the creeks, but the creek being very rapid, and the boulders large, it was found that ground-slucing would not pay very well. Some of the benches give colors to the pan, and may prove to be sufficiently rich to pay hydraulic.

Some work has been done on the Star of the West claim, located on McCoy creek, a small tributary of Granite creek. The vein is quartz with pyrite and considerable calcite. The vein is about 5 feet in width where it has been exposed, and it may be traced a short distance along the creek with a strike of N. 50 deg. E. The country rock is syenite on both sides. A ton of rock from the Star of the West, shipped to the Tacoma smelter, gave a return of \$10.60 in gold.

The Islander claim, adjoining the Star of the West, shows an exposure of basic ore along the bed of McCoy creek which is composed of the usual combination of sulphurates.

The Nevada claim also adjoins the Star of the West, being one of those in juxtaposition.

Six miles up Granite creek from these claims a number of claims were recorded on a branch called Poole creek. The Starlight claim, located on this creek, carries free gold, which can be seen with the magnifying glass in very fine grains peppered through the rock, in a similar manner as at Mineral creek, but the associations are different. In the Starlight the gold is intimately associated with small grains of galena, instead of blende, it being the same as the Star of Mount Saunders.

The Starlight can hardly be called a vein, but is rather an ore body charged with gold by percolating waters. An exposure of about 7 feet has been blown out without any well defined walls.

THE COUNTRY ROCK appears to be a diabase that has undergone extensive alteration by the leaching process of chemical solution so prevalent in this district. The ore body consists of quartz, pyrite, galena, calcite, etc. Calcite is a common ingredient of nearly all the veins in this locality, showing that the solutions were highly charged with carbonic acid—the calcium being derived from the feldspars in the rock.

A remarkable feature of this whole region is the prevalence of feldspathic rocks with no free silica.

A large sample from the Starlight assayed \$40 to the ton in gold.

Adjoining the Starlight are the Texas and Emma claims, upon which a small amount of work has been done.

Two claims called the Tangent and Big Galena have been taken up at the headwaters of Museum creek. They show a good exposure of quartz containing chalcopryite and blende. A sample from the Tangent gave 13 ounces per ton in silver.

Two miles below Sweet Water Meadow on Granite creek, near the divide, as shown on map, five claims have been recorded on a large intrusive boss of granite upwards of 1,000 feet across. It is a fine-grained granite with numerous quartz veins, and heavily charged with sulphurates. Although the assays made have been small, still it is a remarkable mining proposition, and will justify a thorough prospecting. In one spot I came across some chalcopryite associated with molybdenite. It is interesting to note the common occurrence of molybdenite throughout British Columbia in association with copper ores; it has been found in numerous places but only in small quantities.

A good trail could easily be cut from the end of the present trail at the Star of the West claim up Granite creek to this divide, and leading over to the Nitinat river, at a small expense; it would be a great convenience to the miners and prospectors in getting in their supplies.

A most remarkable body of limestone outcrop in what I have called Limestone mountain, at the head of Hiwatches river. There is an abrupt escarpment, almost perpendicular, of not less than 1,600 feet of crystalline limestone, showing well the lines of stratification, and dipping about 15 degrees to the south. I did not succeed in obtaining any fossils except a few crinoidal stems. A similar mass of the same kind of limestone occurs on the west side of Mount Douglas, showing a good exposure on the east side of Hidden lake, there being a vertical section of about 500 feet. All these limestone are highly crystalline and more or less dolomitic. They bear a great resemblance to several other large deposits on the island, such as at Horne lake, Kennedy lake, Nootka sound and on Texada island.

In conclusion, I may state that I found it necessary to spend a large portion of my time in working up the geography and topography of the country examined. In order to do so I had to climb many precipitous bluffs of no particular geological interest, but which enabled me to obtain more accurate information regarding the location of the different claims, etc., which I have embodied in a carefully prepared map of the mining district.

I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
WILLIAM J. SUTTON.
Victoria, B.C., Sept. 12, 1895.

NOTICE is hereby given that 30 days after date I intend applying to the Honorable Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works for permission to lease a site for a fishing station, the following described land, situated on Muchalat Arm, Nootka Sound: Starting from the south west corner post marked "J. H. Langley," thence west 40 chains, thence north 10 chains, thence east 15 chains, thence south 10 chains, thence west 10 chains to place of commencement, containing in all 60 acres, more or less.

CLAYQUOT, August 15, 1895.

NOTICE is hereby given that 30 days after date I intend applying to the Honorable the Commissioner of Lands and Works, for permission to lease a site for a fishing station, the following described land, situated on Muchalat Arm, Nootka Sound, and containing in all 40 acres, more or less, viz: Commencing at a post marked "F. Jacobson's S.E. Post," on the shore of Muchalat Arm, thence north 10 chains, thence west 10 chains to the beach on Gold River, thence following the shore line in a southerly direction, look to place of commencement, including an island situate at the mouth of Gold River, and lying on the west side of the above mentioned land.

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TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 2, 3, 4 AND 5, 1895.

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