

# The Mineral Wealth of British Columbia

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## History, Production, Future and Opportunities for Prospecting and Development of Mining in the Province of British Columbia.

Like most other states of the Western Cordillera, the Province of British Columbia owes its existence to mineral discoveries. Mining has been, is, and for a long time is likely to be, its principal industry.

The Cordilleras are unique for the continuity, extent and variety of their mineral resources. In South America, Mexico and the Western States, this belt is recognized as one of the greatest mining regions of the world, particularly noted for the stores of gold, silver, copper and lead imbedded in its rugged mountains. In Canada and Alaska this belt, though for the greater part still unprospected, well maintains its reputation, and gives promise of adding as largely to the world's wealth as its developed portions in the older countries; 382,000 square miles of this region lie within the Province of British Columbia.

In southern British Columbia the various ranges that go to make up the Cordilleras are compressed, so that except for the relatively narrow interior plateau between the Coast Range and the Gold Range, the country is rugged and most of it alpine. Going northward, the ranges open out, and extensive plateaux are found between the mountain masses.

The geological history of the region has been complicated in the extreme. Various formations from pre-Cambrian to recent are widely displayed. Volcanism and mountain building have also been extensive at successive periods, from earliest to recent, furnishing the conditions favorable for mineralization.

The first discovery of mineral in British Columbia appears to have been that of lead on Kootenay Lake, made by David Douglas, a botanist. This was utilized by the Hudson's Bay Company for bullets. In 1835 the Hudson's Bay Company discovered coal on Vancouver Island, and in 1852 began working the rich Nanaimo field. In 1850 gold was found on Vancouver Island, and in 1851 on Queen Charlotte Island. But it was not until 1858, following placer gold discoveries on the Fraser River, that the "rush" commenced, and British Columbia began her career as a mining country, and, incidentally, her political existence.

In ten years, \$33,000,000.00 of placer gold had been produced, and the Cariboo district had secured its place among the great placer regions of the world. Other names which, through the pick and shovel, became household words beyond the Province, are Wild Horse, Big Bend, Telegraph Creek and Atlin.

To date, the gravels of the Province have yielded over \$73,000,000.00 in gold, mostly from individual mining.

Lode mining was naturally much later in development. Its birth followed the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and railways in the State of Washington, which gave access to the southern interior of the Province. In 1886, rich silver lead was accidentally discovered on Toad Mountain, behind the present city of Nelson, on Kootenay Lake. As a result of the prospecting subsequent upon this, discovery after discovery was recorded, and the mining districts of Ainsworth, Slocan, Rossland, etc., came into being. Production, however, had to wait upon transportation, and this in turn upon development of the prospects, so that it was not until 1893 that lode mining may be said to have commenced. Since that date the production has been noteworthy, about \$240,000,000.00 having been won. Of greater importance than the wealth produced is the way in which mining has opened up these districts to agriculture, husbandry, lumbering and other arts and industries.

The influence of mining in building up industrial centres has not been confined to the towns that have sprung up in the mining centres, but Spokane, Wash., and Coast cities owe not a little of their growth and prosperity to the wealth produced and the business created by the mines of British Columbia.

Coal mining has kept pace with and has been regulated by the general industrial development of the Province. From its small beginning in 1851, it had grown to an annual production of 100,000 tons in 1875, and has gradually increased to an annual output of between two and three million tons. The total value of the coal and coke production is about \$150,000,000.00.

The total mineral production to date, and the production for 1913, the last year for which exact figures are available, show the nature and extent of the mining industry in its present state of development.

	Total to end of 1914.	Production for 1913.
Placer gold .....	\$ 73,228,603.00	\$ 510,000.00
Lode gold .....	81,590,638.00	5,627,490.00
Silver .....	37,601,212.00	1,968,606.00
Lead .....	31,531,451.00	2,175,832.00
Copper .....	86,663,961.00	7,094,489.00
Zinc and other metals .....	2,162,112.00	324,421.00
Coal and coke .....	149,870,779.00	9,197,460.00
Building stones, brick, cement, etc. ....	23,974,184.00	3,398,100.00
Total .....	\$486,622,940.00	\$30,296,398.00

The annual mineral production runs about \$80.00 for each man, woman and child in the Province, or about three times the per capita production of Ontario, nearly twice that of California, and greater than that of the mining states of Colorado and Idaho. Undeveloped as the Province still is, the present annual production would place it up in the first division of mining states in the American Union.

Individual districts that have been producing for some years have shown ore to be present in quantity, for instance: Rossland, which probably has more ore in sight than hitherto, has produced over \$62,000,000.00 in gold and copper; Boundary district has produced nearly \$70,000,000.00, largely in copper; the Slocan has produced over \$31,000,000.00, and East Kootenay about \$21,000,000.00 in silver lead.

The present production of placer gold is largely from hydraulicing in the Atlin and Cariboo districts, but some comes from the Stikine and Laird, Quesnel and Omineca. There is also some activity in southern British Columbia, particularly in the Similkameen. Lode gold comes principally from the gold-copper ores of the Rossland mines, the copper and gold ores of the Boundary Creek district, gold ores of Sheep Creek and other camps of the Nelson district, gold ores of Hedley, Similkameen district, the copper ores of the Coast district, gold ores of Lillooet district and gold ores of Atlin.

The bulk of the silver is won from the silver-lead ores of the Slocan, Ainsworth, Nelson, Trout Lake and East Kootenay districts, but considerable amounts are secured