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Gold

MINING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

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Before the discovery of gold in British Columbia, or what afterwards became known as that province, it was a comparatively unknown country, under the control and government of the Hudson Bay Company, whose interests were bound up in the fur trade, and in that alone. In 1849, the Company's headquarters were removed from Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, to Fort Victoria, on Vancouver Island, which had been established in 1843. In 1851, James Douglas was made Governor of the Colony, vesting in his person the authority both of the Hudson Bay Company and the Colonial Government. In 1856, Vancouver Island was divided into four electoral districts, and seven members were elected. At this time the united white population of the island was about 300. After the discovery of gold on the mainland in 1857, and the consequent rush to the new country, Douglas was forced, by the increased responsibility of government caused by the conflicting interests of the fur traders and gold miners, to resign his position as head of the Hudson Bay Company, which he did in 1859. In the same year the Imperial Government re-purchased the exclusive right of the Hudson Bay Company to trade, and the Company, as a monopoly, ceased to exist on the Pacific Coast. In 1858, the Province of British Columbia was created, and Douglas became its first governor.

The discovery of gold then marks a new era in the history of the country, and though the stirring events of that time are now things of the past, still they are not without interest, for with them begin the real history of the province, which, from being a country comparatively unknown, was raised to the dignity of being one of the great gold-producing centres of the world.

People by the thousands and tens of thousands rushed to its shore, and in their search for the precious metal also discovered the capabilities of the country; so that, after the gold excitement, many settled down, and formed, so to speak, the nucleus of the future growth and prosperity of the province.

In the first part of this paper, then, I propose to give a history of the more important discoveries of gold, and the dates at which they occurred, and also a short description of the methods adopted in separating the gold from the alluvial washings in which it is found.

Before going on with the paper, I would like to state that, in the absence of actual statistics, the subject matter of this paper has been obtained from the most reliable sources available. In many cases from personal observations, and, where I had not that opportunity, from miners and others who actually worked at the places to be mentioned later on—men to whom I am greatly indebted for information, and whom I knew personally to be little given to exaggeration. Statements were verified by comparisons when possible, and different authorities who had written upon the subject were also consulted, such as Dr. Selwyn, Dr. Geo. Dawson, and other members of the Geological Survey of Canada, Baneroff's History of British Columbia, Sessional Papers and Reports of the Provincial Government, J. W. McKay, and many others; so that, though the information and figures given are not in the nature of actual statistics, still they are near approximations of these taken from the most reliable sources. I mention this because reliable information upon this subject is difficult to obtain, and were all statements accepted this would read more like fairy land than what I wish it to be: a sober history of events which have occurred in the history of British Columbia, and which there is every reason to suppose will be repeated in the near future