

# THE WEEKLY ONTARIO

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### IS GOLD LIKELY TO BE FOUND IN THE HILLS OF HUNTINGDON?

The rumored discovery of gold in the gravel that composes the mass of Schryver's hill in the township of Huntingdon has awakened intense interest not only in that immediate locality, but all over eastern Canada and the United States. Inquiries having been received from New York and other places equally distant.

As a matter of public and economic interest, the Ontario has been endeavoring to sort out the facts from the rumors in order that we might arrive at reasonable conclusions.

We may disregard entirely the supercilious smiles of the Belleville "authorities" who have telegraphed elaborate denials of the existence of gold in this locality. These sneering sceptics are practically unacquainted with the geography of the district and know nothing whatever of its geological formation.

Belleville has always had a surfeit of superior optimists of this type who are never so happy as when they are creating distrust or laughing down enterprise.

If anyone had told these wisacres twenty years ago that this same township of Huntingdon contained the finest deposits of fluor spar and of talc in the world and that Huntingdon's mines would be supplying Mennen's and Colgate's with all the refined talcum powder used by those great corporations in the year 1920 there would have been an uncontrollable spasm of satirical mirth.

In a letter to The Toronto Daily Star, Mr. C. E. James administers a well deserved rebuke to the "wise ones" from Belleville.

"An expert in Hastings County," says Mr. James, "has had some considerable success in Hastings County. He is not familiar with the inhabitants of Belleville. If it were it would know that there is nothing good out of Belleville."

"The writer has panned gold from one gravel pit in Hastings County and if from one why not from others?"

"Hastings contains some of the largest deposits of low grade ore in North America and the true reason why these deposits have not been worked at a profit is on account of the high cost of power."

"This reason, I know, will soon be solved and the 'wise ones' from Belleville and elsewhere will be coming to these properties looking for business."

The Ontario has no desire to dwindle undue hopes or to cause anybody to believe that a new Klondike exists at the eastern extremity of the Oak Hill range.

We do not know whether gold exists there or not. We have one report, that appears authentic, and of which we will speak later on, that gold has actually been panned in the vicinity of Schryver's hill.

All that we have to say is this: we have consulted with the best mining authorities and geologists, the men who know this county like a book. We have also consulted fully the monumental work of the late Prof. E. J. Chapman, who made repeated and exhaustive investigations of the geology of northern Huntingdon and Madoc. We have the reports on this very section by Prof. Coleman of Toronto university and various other departmental publications.

After reading or hearing all this expert testimony, the most we can say is that there are many circumstances that would tend to show that the finding of gold in the hills of southern Huntingdon is not only possible but even probable. The probability is great enough to warrant careful search and investigation. It is of course very possible that the disappointment will result but that is true of thousands of other cases where attempts have been made to solve the riddles of nature or to disclose her hidden treasures. On the other hand, undreamed of wealth may be lying there waiting for the men of enterprise and courage who are willing to devote the time that is necessary to make the discovery. No matter how skilled the mining man or geologist may be he cannot be sure of what is given. It may have in store until he has made patient tests and careful analyses.

We ought, however, in all justice

and sincerity to accept the statement of the large contracting firm that has acquired holdings of several hundred acres in that vicinity that it had made no discoveries of the precious metals on the property and had been looking for none. The company was interested only in the remarkably fine deposits of gravel that are found there in masses hundreds of feet in depth.

The fact that no discoveries have been made by this company that was not making any tests to show the existence or non-existence of gold in the sands and gravels there has, of course, no value whatever in determining whether the hills contain anything more precious than building sand or gravel for concrete. The gold that is found in aquifers or gold-bearing sands and gravels is not usually in the form of large nuggets that are easily discernible to the amateur but rather in the form of minute grains and infinitesimal quantities, requiring expert panning or analyses to disclose the hidden wealth.

Before the freeze-up of the ground, last fall, and several weeks before the rumor in regard to gold discoveries was published in The Ontario, a property-holder in the neighborhood of Schryver's hill, hearing that the precious metals had been discovered in the gravel there, employed an expert mineralogist to test the sands and gravels on his own farm. We are not permitted to use the name of either party but would merely state that the former, who himself told us the story, is thoroughly reliable, while the mining expert is one of the most experienced in Central Ontario, and has been a successful mine operator.

Tests were made of the surface gravels at various points and by means of a special instrument were discovered. He also expressed the opinion that platinum might be found associated with the gold under such conditions, but was unable to detect any in the residue.

The expert had with him an instrument of a sort of improved driving-rod, that he had procured from Germany immediately prior to the war. This instrument is said to have value in detecting the presence of subterranean masses of the precious metals.

Whether this theory is borne out by fact or not we cannot say. It does not react for masses of iron as the magnet does. But on this particular farm and across several neighboring farms in a narrow line running northeast and southwest, at the very crest of the hill, the instrument reacted in a most remarkable and emphatic manner. The mineralogist expressed the opinion that there was a ledge of rich, mineral-bearing rock extending in the directions indicated, below the surface of the great ridge.

The Ontario would regard the existence of mineralized rock at this point as very exceptional or doubtful. There may be upward extending crests of the mineral-bearing Laurentian rocks that project themselves through the Trenton limestone that composes the underlying strata below the soil at the bases of the hills. At several points in Prince Edward and in southern Hastings, Lennox Addington and Frontenac, Laurentian ledges do occasionally appear as upward projections through the heavy superimposed strata of Trenton limestone that covers all of southern Hastings as far north as the 10th concession of Huntingdon.

Schryver's hill and the westward extending Oak Hill ridges are composed of boulders, gravel, sand, and boulder clay. They are what geologists term "moraine" in character. That is to say they are made up of the crushed rock and other debris brought down from the north by the southern movement of Arctic glacial ice many thousands of years ago.

Some of the wells sunk by farmers on the plateau above Schryver's hill extend to considerable depths but we have never heard of any well-digger striking bed-rock in his excavations. As we remarked before, the mineral-bearing Laurentian rock may be there but its existence is open to question. There may, however, be masses of mineral there to produce the reaction spoken of in the recording instrument.

Before the great southern movement of the ice took place, all the southern part of Huntingdon was probably a level limestone plain with an overlying soil of humus of greater or less depth. The gravel hills were carried there and left at what must have been for several thousand years the southern limit of the ice body. They occupy about the same relation to the pre-existing limestone plain as a load of gravel that has been dumped by a carter on a level lawn bears to the lawn.

Mr. J. Walter Evans, of Belleville, is one of the most expert geologists and mineralogists of Canada. To a thorough academic and theoretical knowledge of the subject, he has added years of the most painstaking investigation in the fine laboratory at his home he is continuously experimenting, testing and analyzing. The mineral specimens gathered from wide areas he knows as intimately as a teacher knows the individuals in his class or as an experienced woodsman knows the various species of forest trees.

Mr. Evans has recently tested several samples of the sand brought to him by parties who own property in the vicinity of Schryver's hill. In his analyses Mr. Evans has informed The Ontario that he has made the important discovery that these sands are ferruginous or iron-bearing. He further states that placer gold is usually found associated with ferruginous gravel or iron sand. His assays however, did not reveal any gold beyond the usual minute quantity that is generally found in glacial gravel.

Asked by The Ontario as to the possibility of platinum being found in the same locality, Mr. Evans stated as far as he was aware no platinum had yet been recognized in Hastings county. He had himself, however, found small grains of platinum in the rocks around Sudbury. This he believed, was the only section in Ontario where discoveries of this precious metal had been found.

The present price of gold is about \$35 an ounce, while platinum is much more valuable and is selling around \$110 an ounce.

The Ontario has also interviewed Mr. Brent, manager of the Eldorado Mining and Milling Company, and asked his opinion as to the possibilities of finding gold in the hills of southern Huntingdon.

Mr. Brent is one of the most experienced authorities in gold mining in Ontario. He is well acquainted with gold production both from placer and rock deposits and is a graduate of the Ontario School of Practical Science, Toronto. He was for some time in charge of the laboratories in connection with the great McIntyre gold properties at the Porcupine.

Mr. Brent is a strong believer in the possibility of the existence of gold in the gravel hills of southern Huntingdon. Color is lent to the speculation by the fact of there being hundreds of known mother lodes immediately to the north in Elzevir, Madoc, Tudor, Marmora, and Belmont. The precious metal has been found in numerous places as free gold, as at the well known Richardson mine, at the old Gattling mine, and at Cordova and in the less easily distinguishable form of arsenical pyrites or mispickel ore, as at Deloro and many other points in the townships just mentioned. That the glaciers should have carried much of this gold along with the rock debris in their southern course is by no means a ridiculous theory. Indeed, Mr. Brent, stated this glacial gravel would be very exceptional if it did not contain gold. It was quite the usual thing to find it there in small amount, but rarely in sufficient quantity to pay for the working. Gold was generally found in the gravels of Ontario anywhere east of the Manitoba boundary. He had offered to wager that he could pan gold from the ballast at any given mile for 400 miles along the C.P.R. track east of Winnipeg.

Mr. Brent further stated that where the gold in placer mining was found in paying quantities it was usually where the action of running water had had an opportunity to carry off the lighter sand and gravel particles while the heavier gold would sink and collect in quantities where it could be easily and profitably panned.

It may be added in passing that there are many places about Schryver's hill, Mount Zion or Pancake Hill and the moraine hills of that

district where larger and smaller streams have been occupying their courses and carrying along their sands debris to lower levels from any given elevation of history.

It may be added too that the great valley immediately to the west of Schryver's hill was, for a long time after the formation of the hills, occupied by an arm or bay extending inland from Lake Ontario and deep enough to reach nearly to the top of that hill. This great lake, much larger and deeper than the present Lake Ontario is known to geologists as Lake Iroquois. Of this lake we will speak more fully later.

Prof. A. P. Coleman, head of the department of geology at Toronto University expressed some opinions on the rumored gold discoveries in an interview published in The Toronto Star. He speaks somewhat cautiously in reference to the matter. Prof. Coleman it may be added is somewhat familiar with the locality as he once visited Schryver's hill in an effort to map out the ancient shape of Lake Iroquois. He did not, however, make any tests of the mineral contents of the gravels along the route. As a very high and practical authority on geology, his views are worthy of attention. He is thus reported in The Star.

"Gold in Hastings County? Why, certainly, gold in Toronto for that matter. It has been panned on Toronto Island," said Prof. A. P. Coleman. "You can get a color of gold in almost any Ontario gravel—if," he added, smiling, "you are patient enough. But not in quantities to make it worth while."

"Then is it possible that gold has been discovered in gravel pits near Belleville, as indicated in despatches?" he was asked. "Possible, yes," he replied. "But I wouldn't like to invest unless I saw for myself. They may have got a color of gold, and of course it is possible that they have got more. Their pits are probably of the old Iroquois Lake shore, the same as Toronto is south of the hill."

"And if they got gold there—it might also be found in the gravel of Toronto?"

"Oh, certainly, though there is this to say for Hastings County, that bedrock gold deposits have been found there, near Madoc, while the Toronto is far from any such discovery however, the gravel formation is the same."

"Is there anything else besides gold which they might have found in Hastings, that they are buying up so much land?" "Flourite, for instance, which has already been shipped from Hastings County for use as a flux at the British Furnaces."

"They would not find that in gravel," said Prof. Coleman. "Gold is about the only thing they might find in economic quantities. But isn't it possible that humdrum, unromantic gravel is what they are after? Toronto's supply is very badly depleted, and, with building going on at the present rate, cannot last very long."

The Iroquois Lake, on whose shore the Hastings pits are located and on whose shore the most of Toronto also lies, was probably drained about 16,000 years ago—"of course, that's just my estimate," said Prof. Coleman. "The gravel bars, which we have as a result, may have been begun about 25,000 years ago."

And now a few words about the geology of Huntingdon township for the benefit of those of our readers who have not had an opportunity to investigate this most fascinating of sciences or who are unacquainted with the locality where the precious metals are said to exist.

The traveller on the main highway leading from Belleville to Madoc will notice as he begins to descend the slope that leads down the southern shore of Moira lake that he passes over a bed of grey limestone rock. A few feet farther on he will notice, here and there projecting upward through the thin covering of soil crags and escarpments of an entirely different rock, pink in color and much harder, in structure and heavier than the limestone. The pink rock is commonly called "granite" but, being stratified, it is not true granite but is geologically known as gneiss. The strata of the limestone are almost perfectly horizontal in direction while the strata of the gneissoid rocks are generally highly tilted and in some places almost perpendicular.

This great ledge or bed of limestone enters Ontario, from the State of New York, a little to the north of

Trenton, but from Trenton Falls, New York, where this particular species of limestone was first described and given that name by American geologists.

The geology of southern Huntingdon and of southern Hastings is therefore very simple. It consists, as previously stated in this article, of a great limestone plain, upon which the glaciers, in their southward march, dumped mounds and immense hills of loose gravel and boulders.

The pink rocks at the south side of Moira lake may also be traced without difficulty through Tweed and on to the north of Kingston and to the St. Lawrence, where they cross and form that paradise of beauty, known as the Thousand Islands, and to the eastward the picturesque Adirondacks. To the northwest it accompanies the limestone ledge to Georgian Bay, and forms the scenic wonders of the Muskoka lakes and the Thirty Thousand Islands.

The pink rocks mark the southern limit of the great Laurentian geological area of Canada that occupies

more than one-half of the total land surface of the Dominion. Beginning in Ontario, eastern and northern Manitoba and the country all around James' and Hudson's bays and north to the Arctic Ocean.

It was the first of the rock formations to emerge from beneath the ocean, we are told, and its rocks are the oldest of the stratified series.

Aside from the igneous, or fire-formed rocks, the Laurentian series about Madoc are the oldest on the earth's surface. They were there millions of years probably before the limestone ledges were formed, that we see along the banks of the Moira.

And yet the Trenton limestone, belonging to the lower Silurian period, is itself an exceedingly ancient formation, and millions of years old. In geology we reckon, not by years, but by epochs or ages.

As contrasted with the Trenton formation, the Laurentian is, geologically speaking, extremely varied and complicated. Madoc township alone

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