

How
5813p

The Days of Old and Days of Gold in British Columbia

SO many accounts have been given of the first discovery of gold in British Columbia that it is not easy to determine which of them is most to be depended upon. One of these accounts, published in 1895, is as follows:—

“The early discoveries of gold in small quantities range between the years 1850 and 1857. In 1850 specimens came from Vancouver Island and Queen Charlotte Islands. An incipient mining boom took place at Queen Charlotte Islands in 1851 and 1852. Dr. Geo. M. Dawson said that from one little pocket or seam in Gold Harbour, Moresby Island, between \$20,000 and \$75,000 was reported to have been taken. It has been stated by others that more gold was lost in the harbour in the operation of mining than was recovered. However, much or little, the ‘find’ ended there. About the same time Indians from up Skeena River brought pieces of gold to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s fort, but the several expeditions to find it in places ended in failure. In the interior, gold was found in the Natchez Pass and Similkameen as early as 1852, and in 1854 Colville Indians were known to have had nuggets in their possession.”

GOLD IN MANY PLACES.

Bancroft, in his “History of British Columbia,” says: “Years before the great excitement, all along the coast, from Fuca Strait to Skeena River, were thought and talk of gold; and when men looked for it, they generally found evidence of its presence. Concerning its discovery in the interior, various statements have been made, among them one (by Henry de Groot, an explorer, prospector, and writer, who visited British Columbia in 1858) that ‘Chief Trader McLean at Kamloop procured gold-dust from the natives of that vicinity as early as 1852,’ since which time more or less gold has been received from the natives at that and other posts, though not in sufficient quantity to awaken a suspicion in the minds of the traders that paying diggings existed in the country; and that various parties at different times prospected the banks of the Thompson between 1855—the date of the discovery of the Colville mines—and 1858.

“It was at Nicommen, on the Thompson, according to some authorities, that the first gold was found in paying quantities in British Columbia. Waddington affirms that some Canadians from Fort Colville went over to the Thompson and Bonaparte, and thence to the Fraser River above the ‘Big Falls.’ They prospected on their way, found gold almost everywhere, and concluded to tarry among the natives on the Thompson in order to try their fortune at mining. It was the report of the results obtained by these men which induced others in the season of 1857-58 to embark in mining, and, results exceeding expectations, the news spread over Puget Sound and was carried thence to San Francisco. De Groot’s version is that in the summer and autumn of 1857 a number of persons from Oregon and Washington Territories, familiar with the operations at the Colville (Washington) mines, accompanied by a sprinkling of Canadians and half-breeds, formerly in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s service at Colville, made their way to the junction of the Thompson with the Fraser. They found several rich bars in the vicinity, and worked them with good success. He also states that it was the news of their success which caused the Fraser River excitement.