

Provincial Production of Gold and Silver in 1918

Review of production of precious metals last year by Provincial Mineralogist W. Fleet Robertson in Annual Report of Minister of Mines.

The production of placer gold during the past year was worth about \$320,000 as nearly as can be ascertained; great difficulty is found in obtaining reliable figures, since the work is, in many cases, carried out by individuals or unorganized groups of men who keep no books, frequently paying wages, or for supplies, in gold-dust, which, being readily transported, is scattered, and the tax imposed thereon by law is thus evaded. This year's output shows a decrease as compared with 1916, of \$84,500.

The production of placer gold is nearly all from the Atlin and Cariboo Districts, about 96 per cent. of the total coming from these two sections.

In hydraulic placer-mining, from which about 90 per cent. of the placer gold obtained in British Columbia is derived, it has been pretty well demonstrated that the gold-output is in direct proportion to the number of days in which water is available for piping.

In the Atlin Division water conditions were normal, so far as is known, but the shortage of labour handicapped operations. So many men have left the district for active service in the war that not only were the larger companies short of labour, but also the number of individuals mining in a small way was materially less than in former years.

In the Cariboo District water conditions were not good owing to the snowfall of the previous winter, which melted off suddenly, and this was followed by a dry summer. The output for the Cariboo and Quesnel Divisions was less than in 1917.

Gold-mining in all forms has suffered by the war, due to the fact that the cost of labour and supplies has materially increased, while the price of the product remains standard; hence operating costs are higher and profits lower.

Due to the greatly enhanced market price of the base metals, such mines operating on a sliding scale of wages, regulated by the price of metals, have been paying abnormally high wages, which has drawn miners away from gold-mining, both placer and lode.

In addition to the increased cost of all supplies, etc., the war conditions have also rendered it almost impossible to obtain new equipment at any price. There has therefore been less inducement for capital to enter into new placer-mining enterprises, either hydraulic or dredging. The development of new placer enterprises in the Cariboo and Atlin fields and elsewhere in the Province can therefore hardly be expected until conditions again become normal.

Complete news has not been received from the Omineca District, where considerable work has been going on, most of which, however, was of a preparatory nature, and it is not expected that any great output was made this year, probably not more than about \$8,000 all told.

In the Liard-Stikine District the Boulder Creek Hydraulic Mining Company did not work on Thibert creek. Ball and Finn and Mitchell Bros., working in the same vicinity, made small outputs.

Different partnerships were at work on Dease creek, with success enough to at least pay wages.

This year a little gold was taken out of the Tahltan river by Indians and others working in the river-bed.

As was noted last year, two or three parties were working down the Liard river, at McDame creek, and on Rosella creek, a section that has been practically abandoned of late years.

Considerable work in connection with placer-mining was done in the Similkameen District, although the actual production was small.

Vernon District also yielded some gold from hydraulic operations in Siwash creek.

Yale Mining Division made an unusually small output, and the Fort Steele Mining Division made a smaller output than last year.

The value of the gold produced from lode-mining in the Province during the year 1918 was \$3,403,812, an increase, as compared with the previous year, of \$1,036,622, or about 43.7 per cent. It must be remembered, however, that the 1917 gold production was abnormally low, the output for the years preceding the war varying from \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000. The increase in 1918 over the preceding year is largely due to the entry into the producers' list of a new mine—the Surf Inlet property of the Belmont-Surf Inlet Mines—which made an output of about 41,600 oz. But for this added production the gold output for 1918 would have been practically the same as in 1917.

The Rossland mines, which prior to 1917 contributed annually about one-half of the output of lode-gold, made about the same production in 1918 as in the preceding year; during these two years about one-quarter the normal output was made. The mines were worked somewhat irregularly during the first six months of the year; after that development was continued and shipments were renewed, resulting in increased tonnage as compared with 1917.

The following table shows the gold productions of 1917 and 1918:—

	1917. Oz.	1918. Oz.
Boundary-Yale	60,010	55,353
Rossland	33,290	43,745
Skeena	9,805	48,016
Coast (Southern)	3,793	5,565
Lillooet	3,092	2,473
Nelson	2,521	7,155
All others	2,012	2,367
Totals.....	114,523	164,674

From the above table it will be seen that there are increases in Skeena, Rossland, Coast (Southern), and Nelson Districts, while there are decreases in the gold production from Boundary-Yale and Lillooet Districts.

The increase in the Nelson Division is due to a larger tonnage from the Yankee Girl mine, near Ymir. The production from the Nickel Plate mine, at Hedley, about 35,000 oz., was practically the same as in the previous year. The small decrease in the Boundary-Yale District as compared with 1917 is due to a smaller tonnage of copper ore carrying low gold values being treated at the Granby smelter.

The total amount of silver reduced in the Province during the year 1918 was 3,498,172 oz., valued at \$3,215,870, an increase in amount, as compared with the previous year, of 568,956 oz., and an increase in value of \$950,121, partly due to the high price of metal.

The market price of silver gradually rose during the year, the average for January being 88.702 cents an ounce, while in December it was about 101.125 cents. The average for the year was 96.77 cents, the highest that silver has been for many years back. The prospect of silver maintaining its present price of about \$1 an ounce is good, and in this respect the silver market is in marked contrast to the other metals, the future prices of which are uncertain.

The silver production of the various districts for the year has been as follows:—

Slocan and Slocan City.....	1,873,236
Skeena	416,616
Fort Steele	261,497
Ainsworth	228,699
Boundary-Yale	228,561
Nelson	136,738
Southern Coast	116,425
Windermere-Golden	91,784