

Production of Gold in British Columbia in 1917

Reduction in output due to large number of Miners going to front—While other metals have advanced in price gold remains the same—Increase in cost of supplies and equipment renders gold mining less profitable—Annual Report of Minister of Mines, 1917.

Placer Gold.

The production of placer gold during the past year was worth about \$496,000 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 95 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-dust is in direct proportion to the number of days in which water was available for pipping.

In the Atlin Division water conditions were normal, so far as is known, but the shortage of labor handicapped operations. So many men have left the district for active service in the war that not only were the larger companies short of labor, 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 good in the early part of the season owing to the heavy snowfall of the previous winter, which melted off gradually. This was followed by a dry summer, with some compensation by reason of heavy fall rains. The output for the Cariboo and Quesnel Divisions was a little less than in 1916.

Gold mining in all forms has suffered by the war, due to the fact that the cost of labor 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 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 the world war is over.

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 \$12,000 all told.

In the Liard-Stikine District the Boulder Creek Hydraulic Mining Company did not have a successful season on Thibert creek, as in the fall a slide carried away the flume, thus preventing the fall clean-up. Ball and Finn and Mitchell Bros., working in the same vicinity, made small outputs.

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

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

It is to be noted this year that 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. About \$1,700 worth of crude platinum was recovered and has been included in the placer output.

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

Yale Mining Division made an unusually small output, considering the very low water in the rivers exposed the bars.

The Fore Steel Mining Division made a smaller output than last year.

Gold from Lode Mining.

The value of the gold produced from lode mining in the province during the year 1917 was \$2,367,190, a decrease, as compared with the previous year, of \$2,220,144, or about 48.4 per cent. This smaller production of lode gold is due to decreased tonnages of ore mined in the Rossland and Boundary Districts and to slightly lower values in the gold contents of the Boundary ore.

The decreased tonnages in both these camps, which together produced last year about 93 per cent. of the total lode-gold output of the province, was partly due to a shortage of coke for smelting, owing to labor troubles at the coal mines.

In the Rossland camp labor troubles at the smelter and the shutting down of the mines for nearly half the year, reduced the output of this camp from nearly 130,000 oz. in 1916 to 33,290 oz. in 1917, or about 25 per cent. of the camp's normal output.

Nelson Division also made a much smaller output than in the previous year owing to no production having been made from the Sheep Creek camp.

A considerable increase from the Skeena District is recorded, which is accounted for by the initial production from the Surf Inlet mine of the Belmont Canadian Mines, Limited, and the increased tonnage of ore carrying low gold values treated at the Anyox smelter of the Granby Consolidated Company. The first production from the Surf Inlet mine since its acquisition by the present owning company is interesting and important, an output of about 3,000 oz. of gold being made, the result of four months' operation. The property is equipped with a 250-ton mill, which commenced milling in August. A considerable gold production in the future from this property seems assured.

It is encouraging to note an increased output from Lillooet District, which produced 3,092 oz., as compared with 31 oz. in 1915, and 2,625 oz. in 1916.

The only large stamp mill in operation in the province is the Nickel Plate mine at Hedley, in the Osoyoos Mining Division, which this past year milled 71,207 tons of ore having a value of over \$740,000. There are smaller stamp mills operating at the Queen, Perrier, Granite and other mines in the Nelson Division; and, in addition, there are stamp mills at the Jewel mine, Greenwood; Coronation, Pioneer and Lorne mines, Lillooet; and the Engineer mine, Atlin, which operated during the year.

The following are the values of the gold product of the three most important camps: Rossland, \$688,104; Boundary, \$1,210,104; and Skeena, \$202,669. This year about 65 per cent. of the gold production of the province was obtained from the smelting of copper-bearing ores, the remainder mainly from stamp milling.

The Boundary-Yale District shows a decrease of 16,220 oz. as compared with 1916. The Granby Company's mines show a decrease of about 14,500 oz. and the British Columbia Copper Company a decrease of about 2,200 oz. as compared with 1916. The Union also shows a decrease. The Carmi did not operate and little was done by Dividend-Lakeview.

There was a reduction of about 1,586 oz. in the Nelson District, due mainly to the Queen, on Sheep creek, not hav-