

Early History.

Early in the sixties the placer mines on Wild Horse, Findlay, and other creeks in East Kootenay, having been discovered, resulting in the rush there of miners, and the constant demand for supplies, as there was no means of communication between the coast and this district, except through the United States, with vexatious delays at the Customs, Mr. E. Dewdney, now the Hon. the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, was instructed to survey and construct a trail entirely within British territory, through the southern part of the Province, as a passage to the north had been proved to be not feasible. In 1865 this trail, since known as the Dewdney Trail, was finished, and in its course it passed about one mile south of the present town of Rossland on its way down Trail Creek to the Columbia River. Hence a means of ingress was given to this region, and indications show that early prospectors were attracted to the iron-stained cappings that have now attained such importance and value, as a 5-foot hole on the Le Roi, and other openings testify, but the low grade surface rock discouraged them, while the means of getting such ore to smelting centres seemed quite out of reach. However, in 1889, Joseph Bourjouis located the first claim, the Lily May, near the Dewdney Trail, which in 1890 was recorded by J. Bordaun. In this year J. Bourjouis located the Centre Star and the War Eagle, while the Virginia and Idaho were staked by J. Morris, his partner. They also discovered the Le Roi but forbidden by law to stake more than one claim on the same vein, this piece of ground became the property of Mr. E. S. Topping by his simply paying the expense of recording.

In November, 1890, Mr. Topping met at Colville two Spokane attorneys, Mr. George Foster and Col. Wm. Redpath, showed them samples of Le Roi ore, and offered to sell one-half interest in the claim for \$30,000. These gentlemen became interested in this property, went to Mr. Oliver Durant, a gentleman of long mining experience in the west, in whose judgment they had full confidence, and he, also impressed with the ore, finally secured a working bond on $\frac{1}{10}$ of the property for 6 months, with the proviso that during that time he should spend \$3,000 on the claim. Although he knew good mining men had condemned the ore deposits of this region as of altogether too low a grade, Mr. Durant came up at once, examined the claim, taking from a shallow cut 16 feet long across solid sulphides careful samples that returned as high as \$60 in gold, at the same time visiting the Enterprise, Centre Star, Idaho, Virginia, War Eagle, and Josie. Satisfied with the showings, E. J. Kelly was left in charge of the sinking of a shaft, from which during the winter weekly samples were forwarded, with great difficulty, to Marcus, Wash., by trail down Trail Creek and the Columbia, samples that assayed from traces of gold up to \$472. In the spring of 1891, after many vicissitudes, 10 tons of picked, pure sulphide ore from the bottom of the 35-foot shaft, where the vein was fully 9 feet wide, were packed out to the Columbia and shipped to the Colorado smelting works at Butte, when the excellent return of \$84.40 per ton was given as the value of the ore, or 3 ounces of silver per ton, 5.21 per cent. copper, and about 4 ounces of gold. The bond was then taken up, and in the course of time the remaining $\frac{1}{10}$ were sold by Mr. Topping to some of the present owners. The Le Roi Gold Mining Company was then formed, and about 70,000 shares of the treasury stock sold at a small figure.

For over a year Mr. Durant had charge of the work, contending with many obstacles, insisting on the continuance of development as he pertinaciously believed in the ultimate conversion of this prospect into a valuable mine, but finally he decided to sell out his interest to the others, and with Mr. A. Tarbet bought the Centre Star and Idaho, upon which nearly 900 feet of work were done at a cost of \$25,000, work that was the main support of this little camp. But the need of roads was pressing, no advance could possibly be made, and again through the efforts of Mr. Durant, a trail and then a road were built up the East Fork of Sheep Creek from Northport by the business people of that place, and Captain Fitzstubbbs, Gold Commissioner for West Kootenay, ordering the construction of a road up Trail Creek from the Columbia, the conditions of the camp were at once made much more favourable. With the coming of the financial crisis of 1893, Mr. Durant, whose unceasing and determined efforts had overcome many difficulties and disappointments, and demonstrated that the properties he had so faithfully worked at, were good, was forced to suspend operations until 1895, when he resumed work on the Centre Star, now organized into a stock company.

In the winter of 1893-94, the Le Roi that had shut down upon the expenditure of the proceeds from the sale of the treasury stock, was able to ship by sleighs over the Trail Creek road, the ore that had accumulated upon the dump, and this netting a good profit, active mining operations were begun, and the fast increasing ore shipments, as detailed elsewhere, bringing handsome returns to those who had pluckily stuck to this claim, the Le Roi was