

miles from Forty Mile, is a big creek of which the bars have been worked, and paid as high as from three to four ounces per day (seventeen dollars to the ounce) to the rocker, a very good pay indeed for bars. But on the creek itself only one bench claim has been worked, which paid but six dollars per day. The ditch, however, was not large enough, and there was not water enough there to ground-slucice in good shape. As yet no winter diggings have been struck. One creek below the cañon of Seventy Mile Creek had been worked last summer which paid twenty-five dollars to the man per day.

American Creek, which is fifty miles below Forty Mile, on the south bank of the Yukon, has twenty claims staked out, and very good ground has been struck. Claims, in fact, sold as high as three and four thousand dollars. Coarse gold is found, and some big prospects have been struck; but the ground is good only in spots, and the claims do not last as evenly as they do in other places. The claims are being worked, and as the creek is a large one, about thirty miles long, there is a great deal of ground that is not taken up or prospected. This is a good creek for winter digging; and as the grade is good and water plentiful, the summer work can be carried on very readily.

The best placer claims in Alaska found before Bonanza and El Dorado were at Circle City. This town was built up in a few months, and last August, at the date of the strike which has now been made famous by the reports from the Klondike, was a large, flourishing town of over a thousand inhabitants. It stands to-day almost deserted,—in fact, it may be said to be entirely deserted during the summer months,—on account of the enormous finds farther up the river on Bonanza and El Dorado creeks. The main creek in the diggings at Circle City is called Birch Creek, and the gold is found upon its branches. The diggings are located about sixty miles from Circle City, and are reached by a very difficult trail.

On Mastodon Creek, near Circle City, in the spring of 1893, a discovery was made, and the stampede began. Claims were taken up on Mammoth, Miller, Independence, Porcupine, Deadwood, Hoggum, and Harrison creeks. All of them were thriving. The claims were averaging from ten to forty dollars per day to the man, and over. Wages were reckoned at ten dollars per day, and some men were working as many as twenty men; but when the large stories were told of the Bonanza

and El Dorado, all hands and the cook dropped work and put out for the new diggings.

Circle City is close to the boundary between the British Northwest Territory and Alaska. As I have said, this was the boom town in August, 1896, and the mines about there, and also at Forty Mile, were paying well, and saloons and dance-halls, giving signs of mining prosperity, were wide open. The games of faro and stud poker never closed. If the whisky gave out, there was «Hoochanoo»—a deadly intoxicant distilled from black molasses or sawdust sugar, as the yellowest of the yellow is called, boiled in kerosene oil cans, and distilled on a rude worm. Here came such men as «Swiftwater Bill,» «Salt-water Jack,» «Big Dick,» «Squaw-tamer,» «Jimmy the Pirate,» «Big Aleck,» «Skookum Jim,» «Jimmy the Tough,» «Pete the Pig» and «Buckskin Miller,» «Nigger Jim,» and many others. There was also «Old Maiden,» who always packed forty or fifty pounds of newspapers along with him over the roughest country, «'case they 's handy ter refer ter whin ye gits inter a' argymint.» «Shoemaker Brown» was another frontier character. He sold his claim on Forty Mile for one hundred and twenty dollars and a Winchester rifle. The man who bought it washed out four ounces (sixty-eight dollars) in one day, and wanted to know why Brown sold such a claim as that for so little. «Oh,» said Brown, «they 's gittin' too thick for me round here.» This was in 1887, and there were then only sixty-five men in the whole country.

The only society or order in this whole country is the Order of Yukon Pioneers, which was started in 1890, and is composed of men who had been in the country prior to 1887; but later the qualifications were extended to make eligible men who had come into the country as late as 1892. They have two lodges, one at Circle City and one at Forty Mile, and meetings are held every Thursday night. The society also has established a lodge at Dawson City, but the organization is not yet perfected. The total membership is about one hundred and forty-five. The badge or insignia is a pin with the device of a golden rule and wreath, and the letters «O. O. Y. P.» The society levies on its members for sick benefits, care of widows, and for the sending out of the country of any of the members who become broken down by the life, and is one of the most powerful influences for good order in the country.

It was a great night at Circle City when the gold watch and chain bearing the insignia