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Granite City



Blakeburn



Copper Mountain

A century ago this city rivalled Victoria, Vancouver, and New Westminster in prosperity and stature, if not in size. Today, little remains of the Similkameen mining camp. It was gold that lured people to this smooth-rocked creek flowing into the Tulameen River, but when the gold ran out so did the people. When miners left, the gold camp dwindled. But for a cluster of vandalized ruins, the boomtown is no more.



White Gold

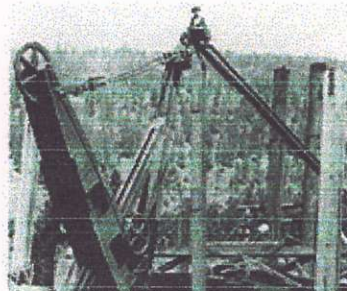
Although little remains of Granite City, treasure hunters continue to come; not in search of gold, but of platinum. Those in the "know" are after a missing cache of the precious white gold which today, with its yellow cousin has soared to an all-time high value.

During the first months of its reign, the more successful of Granite Creek's prospectors had paid a price for the gold they recovered. The gold was within easy reach, but time and again, they found that their pans and sluice boxes were littered with a tiny, silvery-white substance which, but for its colour resembled gold, and, because of its weight refused to separate easily. This meant they had to extract the substance by hand. Yellow was the colour of the day, white was generally thrown away.

Late in November 1885 the colonists mentioned this phenomenon: "...There is associated with the gold on Granite Creek a very hard, heavy and whitish metal, which is probably platinum or iridium, perhaps a mixture of both. There are no means of testing it here, but Dr. G.M. Dawson, assistant director of the Geological Survey of Canada, has kindly offered to take it to Ottawa for examination in the laboratory there, after which it will be forwarded to London for exhibition at the Colonial and Indian Exposition to be held next year...."

Although most prospectors discarded the metal (one contemporary source states that "many hundreds of pounds...were dumped out and covered up by...tailings..") Three business men gambled the laboratory tests by the dominion government. They bought many pounds at \$0.50 a pound, that would confirm that it was indeed platinum.

As far as is known a Scandinavian prospector named Johansen was the first to treat the white mineral with respect:



legend indicates that he amassed 25 pounds of platinum while working his claim. However for reason unknown, he is said to have buried the intriguing but worthless ore in a bucket near his cabin. Then he followed his fortune to new diggings, never to return. During the fire of 1907 Johanssen's cabin was among those consumed.

The platinum's identity and value, of course, did become known to the miners of Granite City and in following years sacks of the mineral were shipped to the jewelry markets of California, New York, and London.

Platinum was also known as white iron, and had been found in various quantities in the Similkameen and Tulameen rivers. Between 1887 and 1892 Canada's total production of platinum came from streambeds of the Similkameen and was valued at a third of one million dollars. According to the Geological Survey of Canada, "the platiniferous region of the upper Similkameen and Tulameen is the most important as yet discovered in North America."



This modern day prospector displays his treasures.
Many nuggets were found in Granite Creek.

So if you like looking for treasure come try your luck in Princeton's downtown gold reserve or in one of the many local creeks. Visit the local Tourist Information Center where the friendly staff would be glad to assist you in finding Granite City or suggesting a gold panning location.

