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A History of the Bralorne and Pioneer Mines

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BRALORNE PIONEER GOLD MINES LTD.



Bralorne

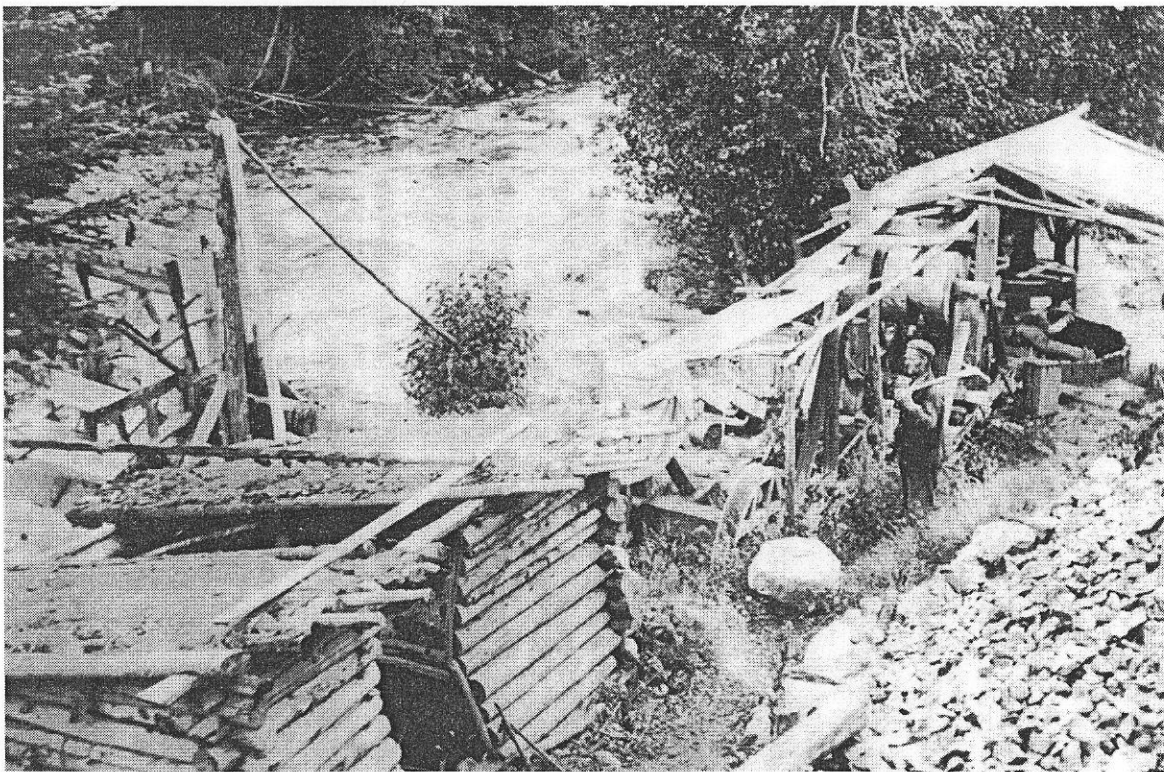
From home of the greatest gold mines in the nation...to ghost town: Bralorne's career was one of feast and famine.

Miners first became interested in the Bridge River Valley in 1858, as the tidal wave of argonauts swept ever northward and up the Fraser River. During the winter of 1859-60 an estimated 10,000 fortune seekers paused at Lillooet to pan and sluice their way along the rivers and creeks of the region. In 1865 Andrew T. Jamieson and a government-sponsored party completed a two-month inspection tour of "that section of country lying between the Chilcoaten and Bridge Rivers" and reported that they had found paying quantities of gold in various locations on the headwaters of the Bridge River.

The second, more promising discovery was made on Cadwallader Creek, named after a member of the party who knew the region and who had suggested to Jamieson that better prospects would be found on the South Fork.

After hacking their way through a jungle of brush and windfalls, and crossing a series of rain-swollen streams, they reached the area indicated by Cadwallader. "...By the time we got to the place w(h)ere we intended to operate," penned Jamieson, "it was almost time to turn round and go back. However having found a place that satisfied me would pay, and in order to test it as thoroughly as circumstances would permit, I had a couple of sluice-boxes made and set the men to work to wash as much of the dirt as possible in the short time that we had at our disposal. In the meantime, I, in company with Cadwallader visited various other branches of the same stream, finding gold, more of (sic) less, wherever it was tried...

"On our return to camp I found that the amount of work done did not exceed one half day's work for one man with the proper facilities, the men having had to throw the dirt from the one to the other in order to reach the boxes, and as there were only two boxes used, a great deal of the gold must necessarily have been lost; yet notwithstanding all this, nine dollars (\$9) of coarse gold was washed out, taken entirely from about three feet in depth of the top



Fred Kinder's "one-man mine," on Cadwallader Creek, which eventually became part of the Bralorne holdings. The water-powered arrastra shown here was the first mill in the district. Primitive though it was, it was a considerable improvement over Kinder's mail-order stamp mill.

gravel. The bedrock at this point was hard and smooth, and consequently but little was found on it. At other places, however, in the same vicinity where the rock is soft, as much as three bits (37¹/₂c.) to the pan has been found”

Thirty-two years after, prospector Harry Atwood, who had been grubstaked by Lillooet hotelkeeper William Allen, made a strike on Cadwallader Creek; he named it the Pioneer after Allen's hotel.

Some years ago, the late A.W.A. Phair, son of the well-known Lillooet mining recorder, and himself a veteran prospector, recounted how F.H. Kinder came to own one-half interest in the Pioneer property: “Fred Kinder... was quite a joker. He made Allen a proposition—he said he would put a quartz mill on the Pioneer for a half interest. Allen pictured a mill like that just put on the Anderson Lake Mine. A ten stamp. Papers were signed. The mill arrived, which looked like a large coffee mill. It was a mill probably used by an assayer (sic).”

A more prosaic version of this story relates that, because everything had to be packed into the mountains on horseback, the stamp-mill, which had been ordered from California, had to be small. It was, in fact, so small that, upon its arrival in Lillooet, it had caused considerable amusement among local mining men. Unloaded in the main street, before Allen's Pioneer Hotel, its delivery was witnessed by most of the citizenry.

“The driver threw off package after package,” J. Edward Norcross, who heard the story from Arthur Noel, wrote half a century ago, “but no mill appeared. He assured Kinder, however, that it was somewhere in the wagon. At last it was reached and, as one bystander observed when the general laughter had subsided, it was just big enough to make a good-sized coffee grinder.”

Kinder, who seems to have been as astonished as Allen, decided that he had to at least give his \$125 investment a try and packed it in to the Pioneer. Upon finding that it could crush only 100 pounds of rock a day, he operated an arrastra, the first water-powered drag-stone mill in Canada, for a decade. Fortunately the ore from the Pioneer was so free-milling that, despite the high percentage of gold lost in the tailings, he was able to make a living. (His original mill was eventually placed on display behind the Bralorne office.)

Arthur Noel built the arrastra in return for half the net returns. By this arrangement he and Kinder (Allen having bowed out) each averaged 10 dollars a day—a hard way to earn a living as they had to pack ore from the adit to the mill on their backs. When the partnership ended Kinder continued to work alone for several years—still carrying the ore to the arrastra.

In 1911 Peter and Andrew Ferguson, Arthur Noel, Adolphus Williams and Frank Holten bought the property for \$26,000. Subsequently Noel and Holten sold their shares to the others and, in 1915, Pioneer Gold Mines Limited was incorporated. Between 1914-17 the partners built a small mill and power plant and produced about \$135,000 in bullion.

During the next two years the property was examined by numerous companies and turned down. In 1920 a mining corporation obtained the option on the property for \$100,000, only to lose it when they were unable to obtain an extension on the first payment. The following year a Vancouver syndicate headed by A.H. Wallbridge and A.E. Bull bought controlling interest; within two years they, too, after investing a further \$50,000 “in a most sportsmanlike manner,” suspended operations.

The man responsible for the Pioneer's dramatic turn-about from white elephant to—literally—gold mine, was mining engineer David M. Sloan. At the request of Wallbridge and Bull he examined the mine. Convinced that the troubled property, which had failed to enter production after more than a quarter of a century of exploration, would yield a profit, he tried to interest a prominent mining investor. This financier's associates examined the Pioneer and advised against it. Undaunted, Sloan assumed Wallbridge's and Bull's option and tried to raise a small amount of operating capital. For all of his efforts he and his partners managed to raise only \$4,000, and Sloan sold one-half of his 50 per cent interest to J.I. Babe; between them they obtained a further \$4,000. Cautiously seeded, this money proved to be the winning difference and the Pioneer Mine at last entered production. In 1928, after Babe sold out to Colonel V. Spencer, Pioneer Gold Mines of British Columbia was incorporated.

That same year the first school in Pioneer Townsite and a post office were opened, and the first marriage was performed. 1930 saw the construction of more houses, No. 2 bunk-house, a store and machine shop. In 1933 a two-storey, 80x50-foot recreation hall was built, and offered employees their choice of restaurant, barber-shop, poolroom, library, dressing-rooms, theater, and 4,000-square-foot dance-floor on the upper storey. Four years later the Bank of Toronto opened a branch in Pioneer, Pat Boyle manager. That summer the camp experienced considerable excitement when an attempt was made to rob the refinery. The following summer, Pioneer was plunged into mourning by the death of General Manager David Sloan in a plane crash.

Earlier, the mine had experienced its first strike, which lasted almost three weeks, and the Bank of Toronto had been robbed. H.T. James, Sloan's successor, was further promoted to managing director in the summer of 1936 after General Duff Stuart died in an automobile accident. By the end of the year a hospital, church and more homes had been built, and the skating rink enlarged.

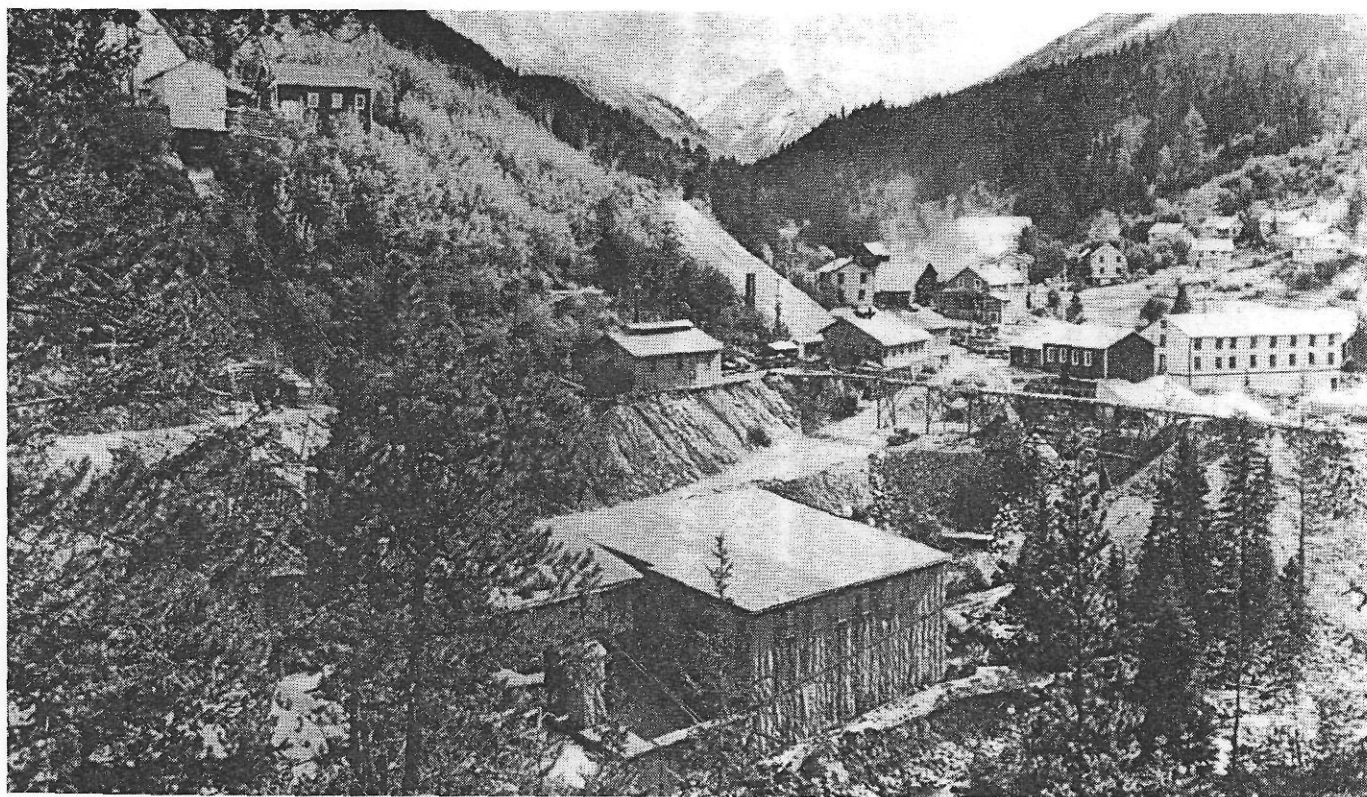
In 1940 the mine was struck for five months; in 1942 the Bank of Toronto was robbed a second time, the lone bandit escaping with \$2,000 after tying up Manager E. Rush. Search parties and a tracking dog followed him south, toward the P.E. Mine, but the credit for his capture went to a Pacific Great Eastern Railway crew who picked him up while he was walking along the tracks.

Other significant events occurred over the years, as chronicled by Emma de Hullu in *Bridge River Gold*:

- 1946 A four-month strike was called off by Local 693 International Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.
- 1947 Methane gas caused an explosion in the P.E. Mine.
- 1949 The Pioneer hospital was closed.
- 1950 Heavy rains created mudslides which closed valley roads for 10 days, supplies having to be air-lifted to Bralorne by helicopter. In June flooding at Minto washed out the Gun Creek bridge, isolating the upper end of the valley for three weeks.
- 1959 Bralorne and Pioneer were merged as Bralorne Mines Limited.
- 1960 The historic Pioneer Mine ceased production.



In 1932 an almost destitute Andrew Ferguson, who, with his brother Peter and others had bought the Pioneer from Fred Kinder, sued Pioneer Gold Mines. He charged that, "From January 1921 to July 1924, the defendants, being in full control fraudulently conspired to refrain from mining and producing gold so as to bankrupt the company." Pioneer Gold Mines, which had sold out in 1928 for \$1½ million, had never paid him the agreed upon asking price of \$50,000, he said. Ferguson, after losing the first suit, carried his case to the Appeal Court of British Columbia, which ruled that the defendants were guilty of a deliberate breach of faith. However, because Ferguson



The historic Pioneer Mine. Gold was first discovered in the Bridge River region in 1858 but it was shortly before the turn of the century that the first gold mine entered production. The Pioneer owed its eventual success to David Sloan.

had not sought to set aside the 1924 sale, the defendants were not held liable. The Privy Council in London subsequently dismissed the suit on the technicality that Ferguson was not the proper party to bring the action, but allowed a new trial. A settlement, details of which were never revealed, was finally reached in 1937, while the latest action was before the British Columbia courts.

An unnamed lawyer who became involved in the case told the Vancouver Province that Ferguson gained little from his legal battling. “When I knew him during the case, he was a little man, meek and mild. The life had been squeezed out of him. He was not bitter, though there had been a battle and he hadn’t won it. It was the 1924 option and sale to the new company that squeezed out the original shareholders.”

Ferguson, who had once owned three fine homes in New Westminster, became a recluse in a tiny upstairs suite in Kerrisdale, and died at the age of 81. In the summer of 1934, midway through his fight in the courts, it was reported that the Pioneer Mine had yielded well over \$1 million dollars in profits in a six-month period.



In 1897 William Young, Nat Coughlan and John Williams packed mining equipment into the Bridge River Valley from Lilloet, by canoe and pack horse.

“... Taking their stuff up Seton Lake by canoe they loaded it on horses at the Mission and followed the trail over the mountain, being a dozen years too soon for the wagon road... Reaching the Bridge River ...the prospectors transferred their impedimenta to canoes and swam their horses across, repeating this 30 miles farther upstream at the Forks.

“It had been rough going all the way,” this early account continues, “but it became rougher still when they ascended the South Fork to the Hurley and the Hurley to Cadwallader Creek, breaking trail along rugged precipices and through heavy brush...”

Their hard work and determination paid off with the staking of three claims: the Lorne, Golden King and Marquis. These and 49 others were destined to form the 1,200-acre holdings of Bralorne Gold Mines, adjoining the Pioneer. The richest of these was the Lorne. Until 1900 the owners of the many claims worked independently; at the turn of the century, however, they united and dispatched a representative to Victoria in search of financing. The result was a syndicate and the installation of a small stamp-mill—so small, that the miners soon reverted to the water-powered arrastra with which they were able to recover 60 per cent of the free-milling gold.

During the years 1900-16 the principal owner of the Lorne Mine was William Sloan, who had made his fortune in the Klondike and who ultimately became a member of the provincial legislative assembly and minister of mines in two governments. In 1916 Sloan had the mine surveyed by engineers, their verdict was unfavorable and the Lorne passed to Arthur Noel who, for a time, had been Fred Kinder’s partner in the Pioneer: “Noel put in a five-stamp mill with 750-pound stamps and built a 1500-foot pipe line to obtain power to work it. He used the mill until it wore out when he again had recourse to the primitive arrastra. Nevertheless, during the 12 years he operated the Lorne he took out \$160,000 in gold.”

For all of Noel’s tunneling and drifting, however, the Lorne did not become a producer until the Stobie, Furlong Company bought it and neighboring properties for \$300,000 and organized Lorne Gold Mines Limited. They invested heavily and, under the enthusiastic direction of Manager H.C. Wilmot, drove a half-mile-long tunnel into the mountainside in search of the King vein. This tunnel became noted for the fact it was as straight as an arrow, Wilmot, throughout its excavation, having refused to be tempted by promising off-shoots; at the 1,400-foot mark one could still see daylight at the portal.

On the surface a sawmill, power and machinery shops, a 40-man bunk-house, a two-storey mess-hall, (with office and storeroom on the ground floor), cottages and stable—the beginning of Lorne Camp—had been completed.

In 1930—with a million dollars in ore in sight—the Stobie Furlong organization encountered financial difficulties and had to retrench. Work ground to a halt. Most of those employed at the mine stayed on in Lorne, sure that the mine would re-open. Most were sustained initially, by provincial road construction projects in the area. The following year, Balco Development and Investment Company headed by Austin Taylor, George Kidd, W.W. Boultsbee and Neil McQueen, acquired the property and merged the name of their syndicate with that of the mine—Bralorne.

On March 1, 1932 Bralorne Mines Limited poured its first ingot weighing 393 ounces and worth more than \$6,000, and paid its first dividend. Over the next 15-odd years the company paid its shareholders more than \$14 million; as early as 1943 it could claim to have paid *nearly one-sixth of all the dividends earned by all the lode gold mining companies in the province since 1897.*

Ore reserves in 1945 were estimated to be in excess of one million tons, averaging slightly better than half an ounce of gold to the ton. This was quite a record, even for a mine which had been termed the greatest lode operation in the world. In 1948 its value on the stock market was listed at \$5 million.

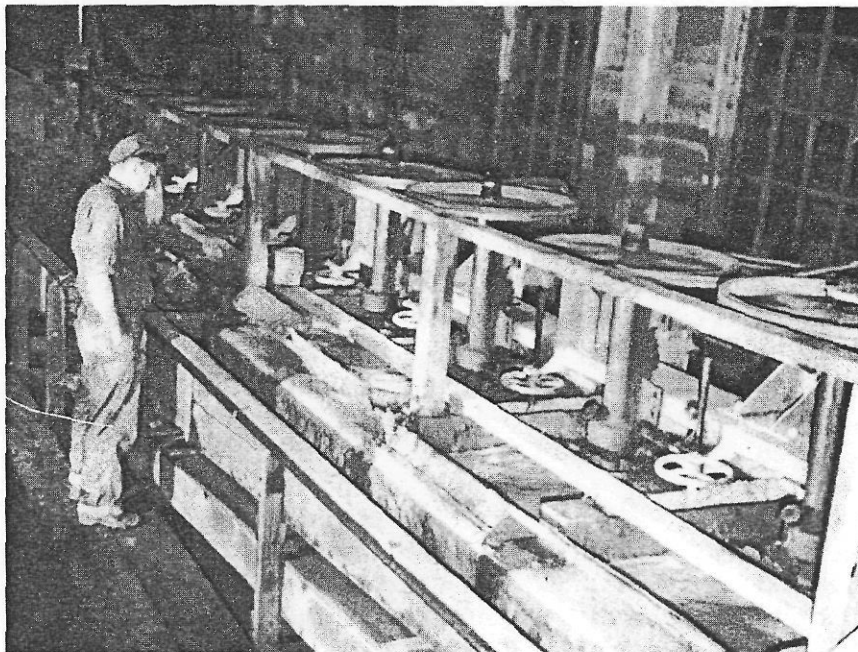
(Over the years the mines of the Bridge River Valley yielded \$200 million and employed 10,000 miners.)

Finally in 1971, Bralorne—the “last producing gold mine in British Columbia”—was closed down after its owners, Bralorne Can-Fer Resources Limited, found that they could not continue to operate profitably with gold



(Above) A miner at work with a diamond-drill at Bralorne, 1938. At the time of its closure the Bralorne Mine extended 100 miles underground.

(Below) Inside the Bralorne mill, 1938.



pegged at \$35 an ounce. Bralorne had won a reprieve the year before when the federal government approved the short-term Gold Mining Assistance Act to keep marginally profitable operations such as Bralorne in operation. The subsidy amounted to \$10 for each ounce of gold produced.

But it was not enough to save Bralorne which, in 40 years, had produced four million ounces of gold, paid \$145 million and yielded \$32 million in dividends. By 1971 the mine was a mile in, a mile deep and its working spread in a subterranean maze for 100 miles.

“The value of gold pegged at \$35 an ounce. . . hasn’t changed, while costs have spiralled,” Manager Ed Hall explained. “We have managed to keep alive by modernizing, by changing to lower cost methods, but we’ve come to the point where no more can be done.

“We have been gradually cutting back on production for the past four years and are now actually down to about one-third. On the bottom level there is some spectacular ore, but there are not enough working places in the mine with that grade of ore.

“To keep operating we would have to have a tremendously rich ore body. We would have to develop more ore and this would mean sinking another shaft at great expense. There is no way we could get our money back.

“The bottom of the mine is about 2,000 feet below sea level. Our main adit goes in about 3,400 feet. Going deeper would be very costly. Rock pressure is tremendous at the bottom. Rock temperature is about 130 degrees, one of the hottest mines in Canada. So our ventilation system is running at the limits of capacity.”

Upon news of Bralorne’s impending closure and the destruction of its buildings, the Gold Dust Twins Settlement Society, a co-operative composed of two dozen persons interested in seeing the community saved as a “model community of craftsmen and environmentalists,” attempted to find government financing to buy the 1,400-acre townsite. They hoped to rehabilitate Bralorne’s 175 remaining residences, commercial and administrative buildings, and community recreational facilities, but were turned down by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Bralorne’s saviors came in the form of the Whiting brothers of Vancouver, whose Marmot Enterprises bought the townsite, lock, stock and tennis court, in 1972. They immediately had the town’s dormant electricity, telephone, water and one of three sewer systems hooked up, and proceeded to renovate many of the houses. The Whitings’ idea was to develop Bralorne as a year-round recreational resort, and to sell the houses and commercial buildings to families and retired couples who wanted to “get away from it all.” One of their first priorities had been to have the four separate townsites sub-divided into individual lots—unnecessary when they were part of a company operation.

When the Whiting brothers assumed ownership of the property, No. 1 Townsite comprised 33 homes, a swimming pool, a tennis court, a gymnasium, a theater, a four-unit apartment block, a hydro-electric building, a post office and the former Bralorne mining administration building; No. 2 consisted of 55 homes, a hospital, a clinic, two service stations, three school buildings and a transformer station; Bradian Townsite had 12 homes, the old Pioneer Mill and waterfront property.

Earlier, most of the mine shafts had been dynamited or sealed by concrete, and the mine buildings burned down.

In 1973, as the price of gold soared to a record high, Bralorne Resources considered re-opening the mines. After an expensive survey of the remaining ore reserves it was decided that enactment of the Mineral Royalties Act by the New Democratic provincial government made the resumption of operations uneconomical.

Five years later, independent businessmen discussed leasing the main Bralorne shaft to grow mushrooms, the abandoned mine offering the two prime requisites of mushroom farming: heat and humidity.

Today the historic community of Bralorne offers residents and visitors almost every form of outdoor recreation, in summer and winter. And, more than a century after prospectors first examined the gold-bearing gravels of Cadwallader Creek, rock hounds and amateur prospectors continue to search for overlooked wealth. In 1969 Harry Street discovered a four-ton boulder of nephrite jade valued at \$50,000.

LORNE CAMP

Situated two and a half miles from the Pioneer, Lorne Camp started as a rough and ready frontier settlement. In 1948, in a series of articles in the Bridge River-Lillooet News, Clara Lambert recalled her arrival in Lorne, with husband Dick, 17 years before. At that time the camp consisted of a cluster of homes, including two log houses. One was occupied by Mrs. Arthur Noel, whose husband had worked on the first Lorne tunnel, and the mine cook-house, which had been built in 1912. Charlie Hayward and his wife lived in the old store and what was called the community room for the boys.

The cook-house was run by Harry Kerr and wife, whose food was the best, it being “Pop” Wilmot’s policy that if men were fed well they would remain. Across the creek, some of the miners lived in one-room shacks built of powder boxes, with pine boughs for mattresses. The Lamberts made themselves comfortable by building their own home with salvaged lumber and furnishing it with improvised and borrowed furniture. Others followed their example: “Tar-paper shacks went up all around us. Everyone was so enthusiastic and eager to work together, so we all became a big happy family... Tar-paper shacks being finished, our outside plumbing decorated the backyards like great cathedral domes”

Other early residents of Lorne were the Hutchinsons, Mr. and Mrs. Bert Ashby, the J. Muirs, Doug Cameron, the Buntains, Mr. and Mrs. Curly Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Swartz, the Ted Chenoweths, the Van Smiths, Mr. and Mrs. Neil McQueen and the J. McIsaacs.

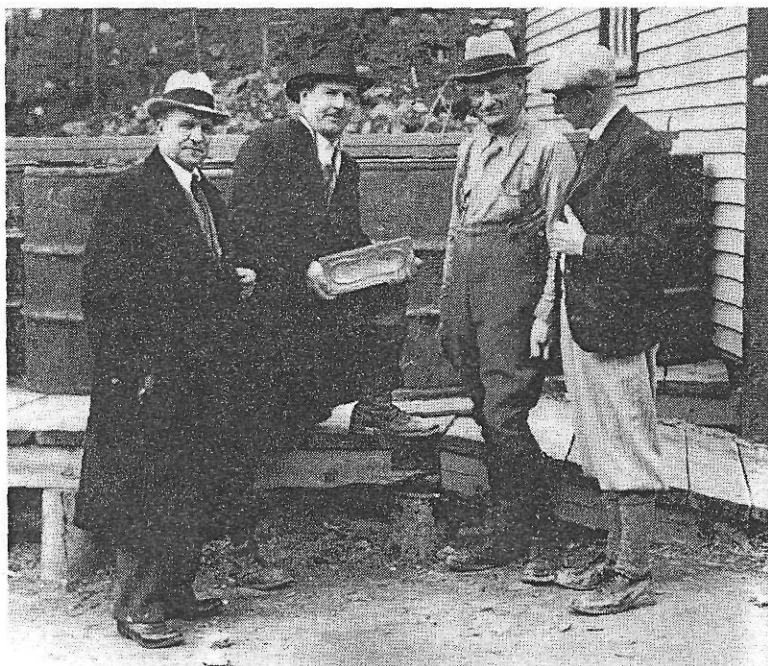
In the evening the cook-house, on the top floor where No. 2 bunk-house was later situated, doubled as community hall: “In the centre of the room stood an old oil drum for a stove. On Saturday nights we would all get together for a few good old square dances. The orchestra consisted of four instruments—violin, played by Van Smith; traps, by Jack Williams, who beat a mean drum; and sax, by McCandlish, who could make Benny Goodman blush. Ohmer, my girl friend, used a wicked bow on her violin, which made the bumble-bee take flight in shame”

Pop Wilmot was succeeded by Richard Bosustow as manager, and Fred Grey assumed the position of mill superintendent. That Christmas Bosustow arranged for “everyone to have Christmas dinner in the cook-house,” recounted Mrs. Lambert. “Families with children were seated along one side, the single men along the other. The tables were beautifully decorated. Turkey, potatoes mashed in gobs of butter and cream, peas, sprouts, mixed fruits, candy, nuts, etc., were served, and Big Mike stood at the door, grinning with pleasure as all enjoyed his grand dinner.

“After our capacities were filled, speeches were in order. The Democrats promoted their tongues while we gulped it in as an appetizer for the future in this valley of milk and honey. The speakers grinned from ear to ear, feeling light-headed and swaying after such a good repast. The children had the floor for an hour, playing games and singing carols while Mrs. Jack Williams accompanied them on her piano. As this drew to a close the orchestra tuned up and we all danced until the wee small hours.

“Although it was lovely while it lasted, going home to start the fires was quite the reverse; still it had to be done or we might all freeze in our beds. I shiver now, looking back, and wonder how we stood it in those tar-paper shacks. But we did, and liked it. Surprisingly, there was no sickness, outside of a few head colds.”

The camp’s medical needs were attended to by Dr. Don King, who delivered the first baby born in Bralorne to Mr. and Mrs. Johnnie Muir. After Ada Russell, the first nurse, returned to Lillooet, Mrs. King, a beautiful redhead known as Torchy, assumed her place, by which time the company had built a hospital.



A gold brick from Bralorne Mines. The first ingot, weighing 393 ounces and worth more than \$6,000, was poured on March 1, 1932.

Further signs of prosperity were the construction of a British Columbia Telephone Company office, next door to the Lamberts; a large apartment house; several new homes, including that of Manager Bosustow, with its massive granite fireplace and landscaped gardens; and a church. The two-storey building containing the cook-house also accommodated the school, company store, Doctor King's office and the main company office. However, as the camp continued to grow, a larger store was built across the road, as well as a new school and more homes. After fire destroyed the hospital and office, in May 1934, these were replaced by larger facilities.

The fire had erupted while Mrs. King and the nurse were cleaning clothes with gasoline. Although every available man answered the call, the hoses were frozen and nothing could be done to save the building. In the excitement, recounted Mrs. Lambert, "the one patient was forgotten. Paddy Scanlon, who had been struck by a car driven by Mrs. Kimball, had been in the hospital for a couple of weeks. All at once someone remembered poor Paddy. He was taken out on a stretcher through the back window"

Fire also broke out in the cook-house after the cook left a smouldering cigarette butt in the pocket of his apron at quitting time. Although the fire threatened the store, the Lambert home, two bunk-houses, the bank and offices, damage was confined to that caused by smoke and water.

Death first struck Bralorne in the spring of 1931 when an old miner developed pneumonia and passed away in his room. He was interred beside the Bradian road.

Bralorne experienced near-disaster of an entirely opposite nature one winter, when heavy rains transformed the streets into canals of muddy water and created an almost fatal landslide. "The cookhouse bell had rung for breakfast and men were running across from their rooms for a warm meal when all at once there as a loud rumble as though the mountain side were coming down on top of us," Mrs Lambert wrote. "Uncle Frank jumped out of bed and wakened Dick and I called, 'Get up quick, the hill at the back of the cookhouse is coming down.'

"I jumped out of bed to see it still rolling, and in its path it took the dining room with it and a large tree had passed through in its bed of sand and water, settling in the middle of the road. Tables and benches were upturned everywhere."

The residents of Bralorne took this latest emergency in their stride. No one had been hurt and what was left of the camp's dining room was used until it could be rebuilt.

The entire town experienced sorrow when Manager Bosustow died in Chicago, where he had gone to seek medical attention. His wife had predeceased him after only a few years of marriage "The oldtimers," noted Mrs. Lambert, "always said when Bosustow left he took the camp with him. He was a prince and will linger in the memory of all those who worked with him."

Bralorne suffered further grief when several of its sons failed to return from military service after the Second World War. The war also saw the departure of Doctor King, who had volunteered for active duty. Almost every resident attended his farewell party. Among the decorations created by Slim Saunderson was a large stork, bearing a baby and a sign, "Brought three hundred babies into the camp and never lost a father." Jackie Muir, the first baby born in camp, presented Doctor and Mrs. King with a silver tea service in honor of their decade of service. At the party's end the miners hoisted King to their shoulders and paraded around the hall.

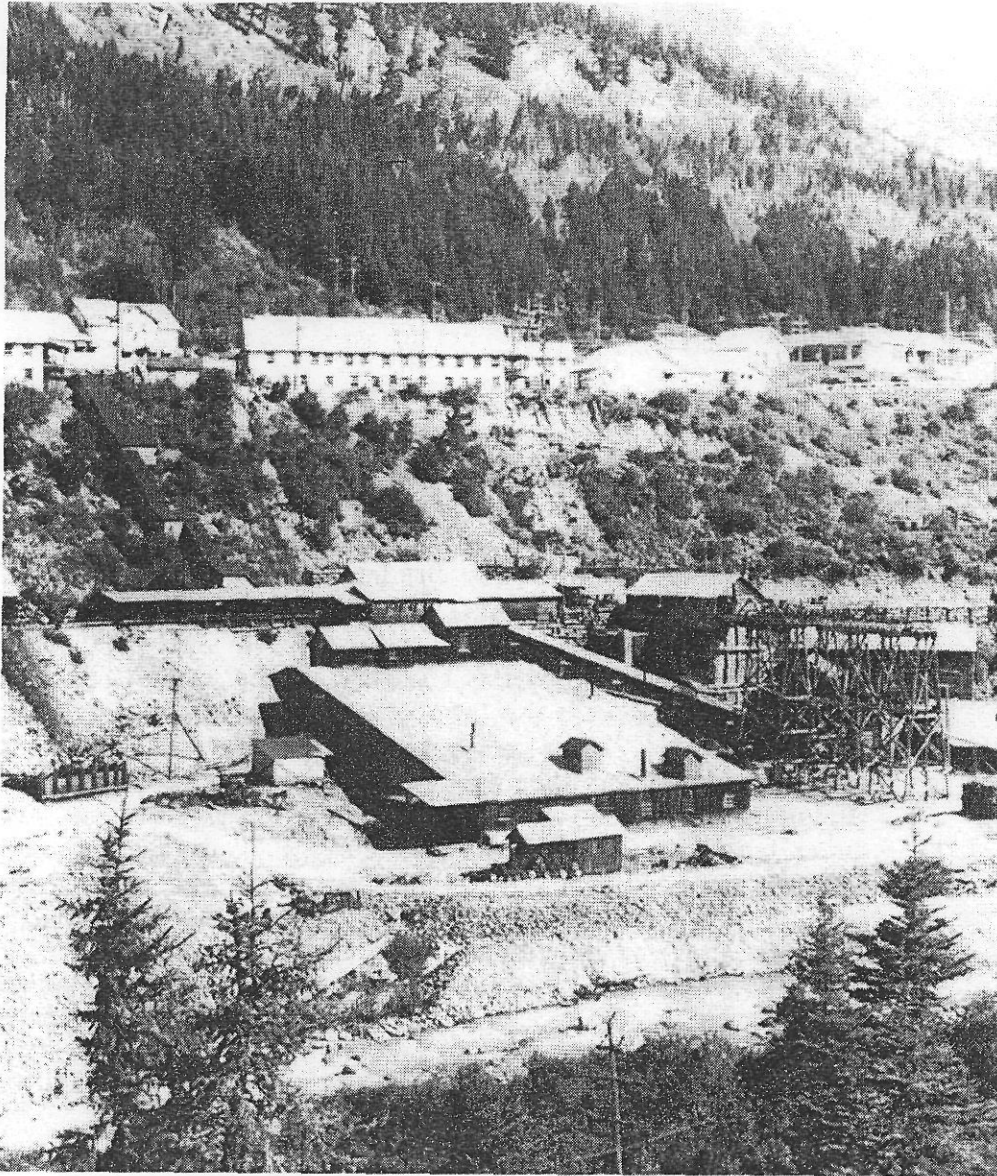
He was succeeded by Doctor Brown, who came out of retirement in Vancouver to see to the needs of Bralorne residents.

Others left Bralorne under unhappier circumstances, as the mine was very dry and miners risked silicosis: "I have seen many men leave on pension . . ." Mrs. Lambert recalled in 1948, "and some die in Tranquille (sanitarium). Few know before coming here what to expect, but what is a miner going to do? Possibly years of mining get in their blood. Wages are good. Living is high"

Over all, Bralorne suffered few accidents or fatalities. One young miner was buried under tons of rubble when part of the level in which he was working collapsed. Only the fact that a timber came down on top of him in such a way that it protected his head and created an air pocket saved his life. But his nerves were shattered and he was unable to work underground again.

Another young miner was not given a second chance. Pinned up to the buttocks when some timbers gave away, he panicked and begged his workmate to kill him to end his pain. Doctor Brown gave him a needle as the debris that trapped him was cleared away. The miners soon had him freed, but he just lowered his head and died.

During Doctor King's tenure a young miner found a stick of dynamite that had not detonated and thinking it to be a dud, stuck it in his hip pocket. Moments later, as he returned to his post on the ore train, the dynamite exploded, almost cutting him in half but not killing him outright. He lived just long enough to ask for a cigarette.



Bralorne Mines shortly before the mine was closed, the buildings burned down, the portals sealed by dynamite and concrete.

In 1954 three miners died in three separate mishaps; the following year Bralorne experienced three more fatalities.

The residents of Bralorne also had their good times, its citizens competing with those of Pioneer in the curling rink for the annual championship. With its winter sports and beautiful lakes in the summer, Mrs. Lambert termed Bralorne “the Switzerland of the Rockies—unexcelled.”

In September 1937 Bralorne enjoyed distinguished guests in the form of Mr. and Mrs. Joe E. Brown, the popular Hollywood comedian and his wife being conducted on a tour of the mine by President Austin Taylor and his wife. The visit prompted a holiday for the children, complete with puppet show in the cook-house, and entertainment and a dance for the adults in the evening.

But, even in this friendly oasis, there were disputes. In 1935 the miners struck for the first time. Despite the fact that police were dispatched to Bridge River on call there was no violence and the strike lasted only two weeks; most of the miners whiled away the time by playing horseshoes and partying in the bunk-houses.

In October 1939 the miners voted 316-131 to strike for better wages and working conditions; the five-month dispute was marked, near the end, by a sit-down demonstration in the mine by 24 men. After Premier T.D. “Duff” Pattullo ordered them evicted by police, the union advised its members to seek reinstatement with the company.

The strike of 1946 did not end as quickly or as happily. During the five-month-long shut-down some of the miners found employment in other, smaller mines in the valley.

By 1950 the combined population of Bralorne's No. 1 and No. 2 Townsites, the privately-owned suburbs of Honeymoon Hollow and Coconut Grove, Pioneer and Bradian was 1,700, of whom 530 were company employees. At its peak Bralorne had 3,000 residents.

BRADIAN

Among the mining properties absorbed by the Lorne Gold Mines Company in 1928 were the Coronation workings and the Ida May claim to the east. These later became a Bralorne subsidiary under the name of Bradian, then again consolidated under the crown of Bralorne; the Bradian Mine became the Empire level when both mines were connected underground. By 1950 Bradian's original townsite had been increased by the construction of 30 modern six-room homes and 12-men bunk-houses, where employees enjoyed the latest in amenities—private rooms and a lounge.

Twenty years after, as directors of Bralorne Can-Fer Resources Limited weighed the fate of Bralorne, a Vancouver Sun reporter visited the dying community. Of Bradian Townsite's 80-odd homes, only 12 families remained; the rest of the houses that originally had formed "one of the prettiest towns ever created" stood empty, forlorn, with their broken windows, fallen fences and knee-high lawns.

"It makes me sad coming up here," said contract miner Herb Schwenk, who had lived in Bradian before his growing family had necessitated a move to a larger house in Bralorne's main residential area. He concluded with a sigh: "Everyone's more or less reluctant to leave but when the mine closes down you have to. It used to be a beautiful place to be—we got good money and it was steady. Of course we had to work like hell to get it. I've given them (the company) the best I have and they've treated me well. But I've made up my mind if I ever do leave here I won't come back. It's too saddening."

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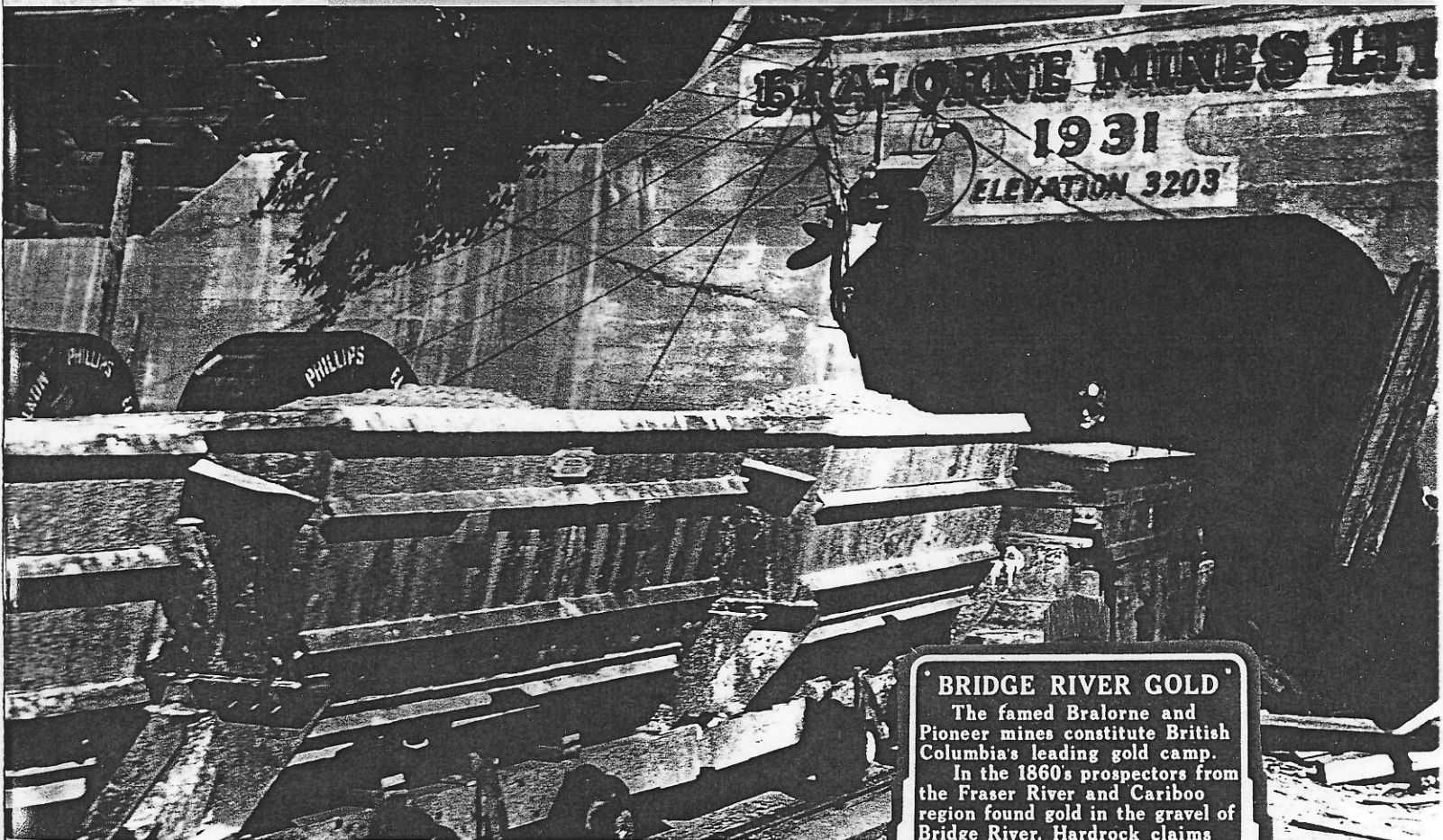
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1995 ANNUAL REPORT

Forging a **New Era** at Western
Canada's Richest Gold Mine



BRIDGE RIVER GOLD

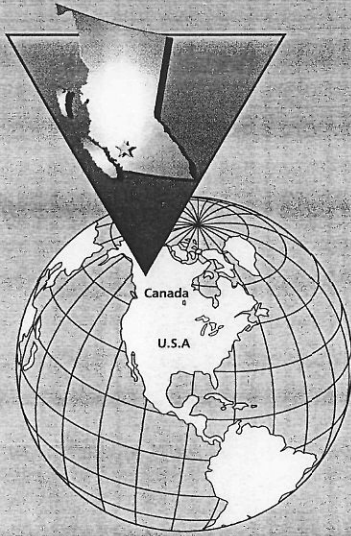
The famed Bralorne and Pioneer mines constitute British Columbia's leading gold camp.

In the 1860's prospectors from the Fraser River and Cariboo region found gold in the gravel of Bridge River. Hardrock claims were staked in the 1890's.

More than a \$100,000,000 in gold has come from the rich ore of these mines since 1932.

DEPARTMENT OF
RECREATION & CONSERVATION





Background

Old timers who worked at Bralorne-Pioneer during its heyday still talk excitedly about finding clumps of gold as big as a man's fist. Ore grades, which averaged more than half-an-ounce per ton, were sometimes measured in many ounces per ton. Pioneer was considered one of the world's richest gold mines. In 1935, it operated at 550 tons per day with an average grade of one ounce per ton.

Although low gold prices forced the operation to close in 1971, considerable ore remained. Additionally, a number of gold veins had terminated at fault lines and the extensions of these veins had not been located.

Following attempts to re-open the mine—first by E & B Explorations in the early 1980s and then Corona Corp. in the late 1980s—International Avino Mines acquired 100% interest in 1991. International Avino had located several of the missing vein extensions on key properties that adjoined the Bralorne claims. These added considerably to the reserve potential and provided the catalyst for further exploration and development.

In 1993, Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines negotiated an option to earn a 50% interest in the entire Bralorne project.

Achievements 1995

- Initial public offering raised C\$900,000 and the Company began trading on the Vancouver Stock Exchange in late 1994.
- With joint venture partner International Avino Mines Ltd., completed the Mine Development Certificate process.
- Received Mine Development Certificate in March of 1995
- Began installation of plant and equipment for an initial 150 ton per day operation.
- Made significant progress in securing additional environmental and land use permits.
- Raised more than C\$2.6 million in equity and debenture financings.
- Completed earn-in option with International Avino Mines in November of 1995.

Objectives 1996

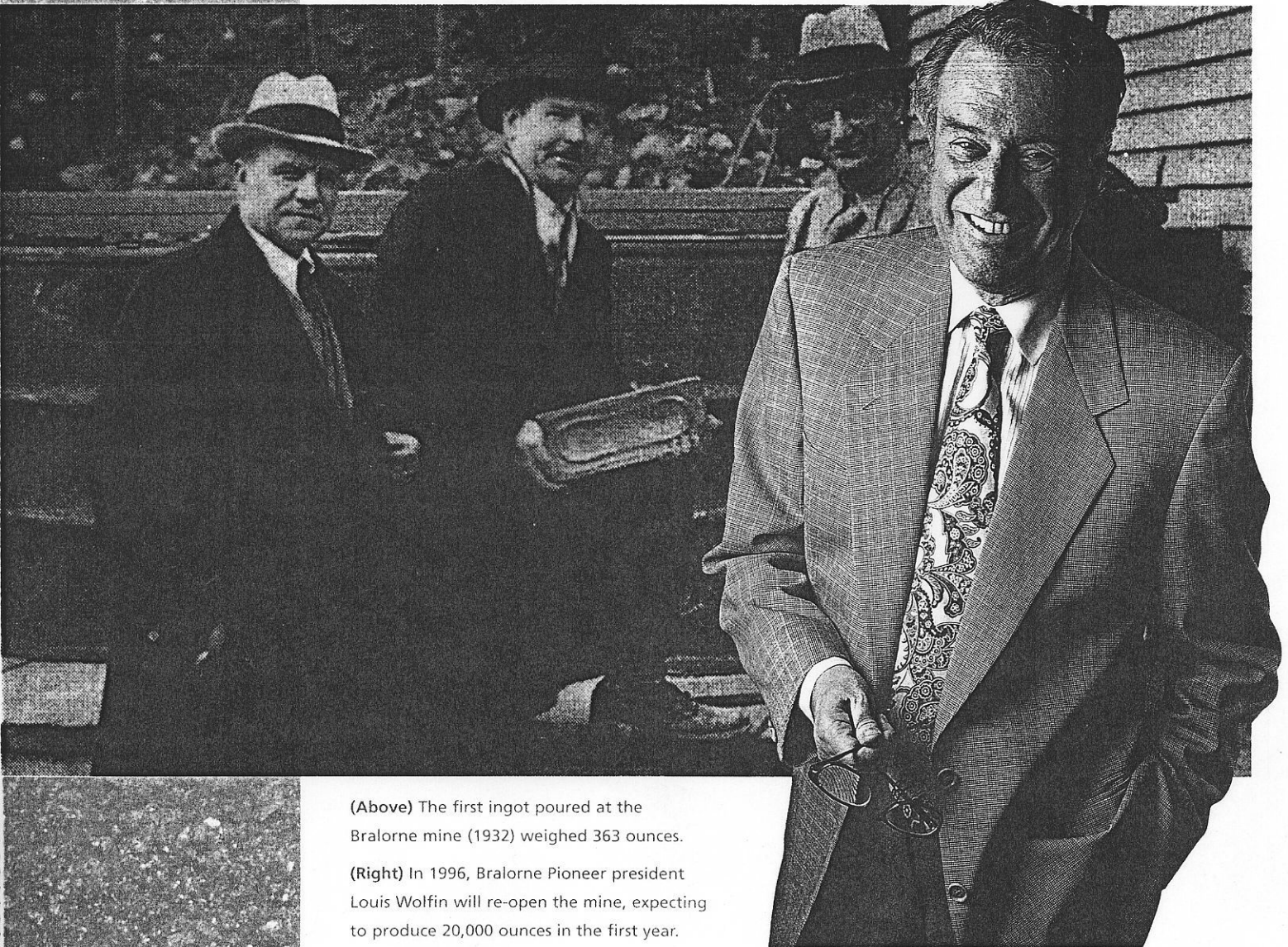
- Begin initial production phase at Bralorne-Pioneer at a rate of 150 tons per day.
- Complete start-up phase, begin gradual increase toward full production of 450 tons per day.
- Continue development of gold reserves and expand development of new discovery areas located during the last several years.

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**A Remarkable Record
of Gold Discoveries**

To Our Shareholders

I am pleased to present the first annual report for Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines Ltd. Our initial year as a public company was marked by a number of significant accomplishments, all focused toward bringing Western Canada's richest gold mine back into production after 25 years. We completed an arduous permitting process, successfully funded the Company's initial plan of operations and, most importantly, continued the remarkable record of gold discoveries that have provided the catalyst to re-open the historic Bralorne-Pioneer gold mine.



(Above) The first ingot poured at the Bralorne mine (1932) weighed 363 ounces.

(Right) In 1996, Bralorne Pioneer president Louis Wolfen will re-open the mine, expecting to produce 20,000 ounces in the first year.

Improvements in exploration technology—combined with some commendable prospecting work by our field staff—allowed us to find unknown extensions of major gold veins mined during Bralorne-Pioneer's heyday. These are rich finds, with some ore zones averaging more than one ounce of gold per ton. Perhaps most exciting is the fact that we are now finding completely new gold systems that extend onto ground never explored by the original miners. These discoveries offer vast potential for new ore and may expand the life of the mine for many years to come.

While these accomplishments certainly underscore our hard work and commitment during the year, they actually represent the culmination of many years spent persistently prospecting and exploring the entire Bralorne mineral region. The decision to proceed with acquisition of the Bralorne-Pioneer mine resulted from a wealth of data and knowledge about the area acquired by management over the past 30 years. Our discoveries on adjoining and nearby claims indicated long-term expansion potential, while exhaustive study of the area's geology and history provided the confidence to explore the expansion potential of the existing Bralorne and Pioneer gold workings.

The results of our efforts have been most gratifying. Not only have we identified a large, mineable resource within the known Bralorne-Pioneer vein system, we may have unlocked secrets of this enormous gold system that will promise a new era of mining and prosperity well into the next century.

Combining data from our research with extensive information from previous mine operators, we submitted an application for a Mine Development Certificate to the British Columbia Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources in 1994. On March 15,

1995, the Ministry and British Columbia Premier Mike Harcourt announced they had granted a Mine Development Certificate to develop and re-open the Bralorne gold mine. The certificate allows Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines, along with 50% joint venture partner International Avino Mines, to immediately complete development and final permitting to re-open the mine.

Our long history in the area has also provided the credibility to attract a substantial level of exploration and development funding. Private placement funding during the year allowed us to raise more than C\$2.6 million, while our initial public offering raised C\$900,000.

The mine's existing infrastructure allows us to develop the mine for significantly less money than a comparable operation built "from the ground up," and also to complete the job in much less time. We will begin production from previous underground workings that have required only a minimum of rehabilitation.

While the known block of mineable ore is expected to provide significant initial production, we are most excited about the exploration potential from at least three new zones discovered over the past several years. As well, a key portion of the area between the Bralorne and Pioneer mines remains unexplored and offers considerable development potential.

Outlook

We will continue development of the mine, with initial start-up expected mid 1996. At the same time, we will further explore the zones discovered to date and continue our search for new gold zones. We look forward to a very exciting year.

I am happy for this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all our personnel for a remarkable first year. Particular recognition must go to Director William (Bill) Glasier for his dedication in managing the Mine Development Certificate application. Without his commitment to a very complicated and often frustrating process, we would be well behind our present level of progress.



*Mr. Louis Wolfen
President*

We may have unlocked secrets of this enormous gold system that will promise a new era of mining and prosperity well into the next century.

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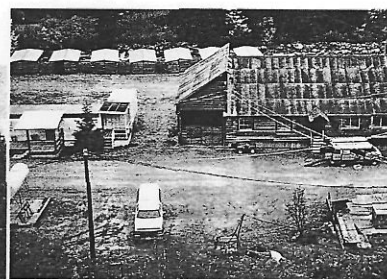
**First year production
is forecast at up to
20,000 ounces**

A New Era Begins

The initial mining and milling operation will produce up to 20,000 ounces of gold in the first year. As designed, the gold recovery and milling plant will have an ultimate capacity of 450 to 500 tons of ore per day and increase gradually toward full capacity as the underground mine development proceeds.

Mineable reserves in the "readily available" category are 476,835 tons grading 0.31 oz/ton gold, all situated above the 800 level. These calculations exclude significant new

discoveries made by Bralorne Pioneer and International Avino since 1992, particularly in the Peter Zone. Further geological evaluation points to an additional five years of ore in other areas. In addition, potential reserves adding up to at least ten years of production have been outlined. The mill, as permitted, will have standard recovery by jigs and tables followed by flotation—a much cleaner method which eliminates the potentially hazardous use of cyanide and mercury while maintaining recoveries of about 94%.



Construction of new mill facility is proceeding on schedule

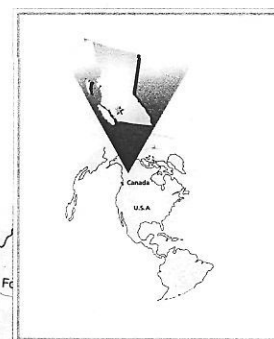
The gravity concentrate will be furnaced and poured into dore bars on the property with flotation concentrate shipped to a Northwest smelter for final processing. Capital costs to production are projected at C\$6.4 million. Production is expected to begin in mid 1996.

The mill will begin tune-up in early 1996. Present efforts are focused on mill construction and rehabilitation.

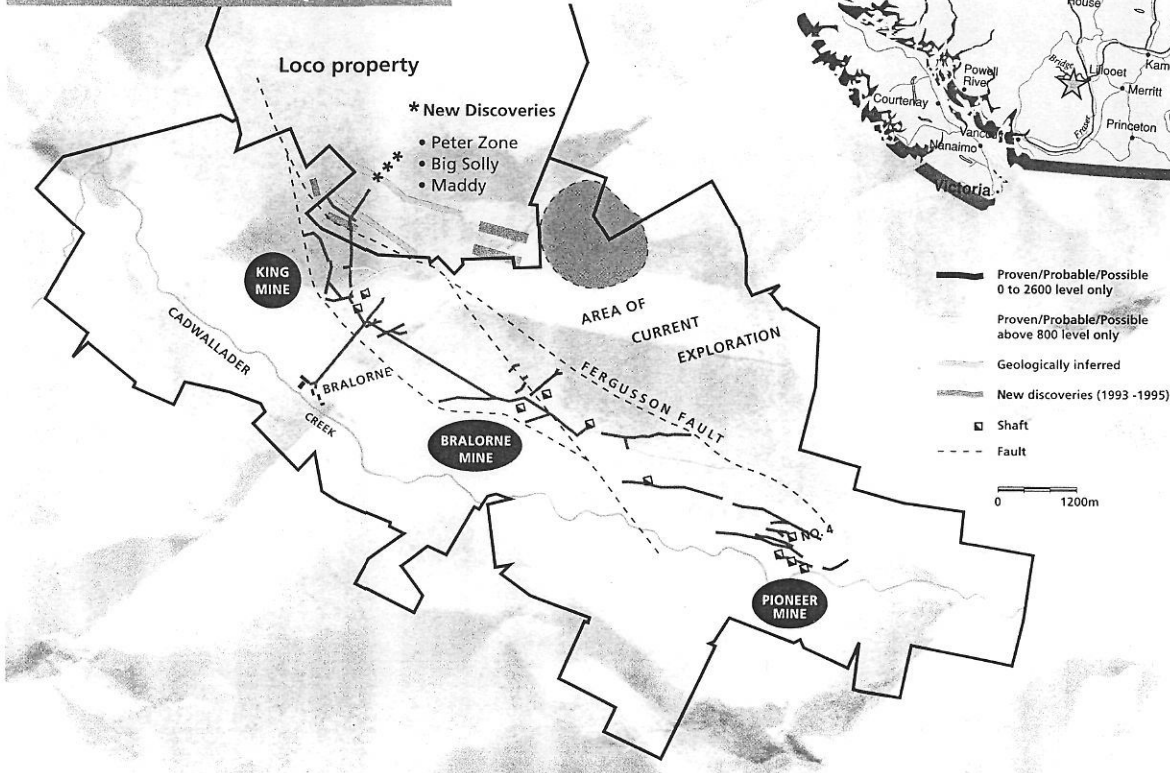
Initial production will come from the formerly producing Taylor, 51 and 51B veins where exploration in recent years has outlined the largest and most accessible block of reserves. The nearby Countless vein holds approximately 120,000 tons of drill indicated reserves grading 0.5 oz/ton gold.

Based on a US\$350 per ounce gold price, production of 360 tons per day (260 mining days per year) and 95%

recovery, the mine should provide projected net income of US\$2.7 million during the first year. As production builds to 50,000 ounces over the next few years—and with gold prices remaining stable our future looks very bright.



Bralorne Site Map



100 Years -
A Brief History of the Bralorne Mine

1896 First claims of the Bralorne staked downstream from where the Pioneer mine is eventually established.

1928 New owners take over Pioneer Gold Mines, improved mill opens at 100 tons per day.

1931 Mr. Austin Taylor and associates acquire Bralorne property and finance construction of a 100 tpd mill.

1932 First gold brick, weighing 363 ounces (worth some \$138,000 at today's gold prices), poured at Bralorne mine.

1971 Low gold prices force shut-down of entire operation.

1982 E & B Exploration Inc. presents application to re-open Bralorne mine. Economics and reserves deemed unfavorable at that time.

1990 Avino Mines & Resources (now International Avino Mines Ltd.) discovers significant gold mineralization on adjoining Loco property.

1991 International Avino Mines acquires 100% interest in entire Bralorne operation from Corona Corp., et al.

1993 International Avino continues to discover significant new gold zones in areas not previously explored along the Fergusson fault.

1993 Bralorne Pioneer and International Avino Mines begin joint venture exploration and development of the Bralorne-Pioneer mine and adjoining ground

1995 International Avino and Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines obtain Mine Development Certificate from British Columbia Ministry of Mines.

1995 The joint venture continues to make major gold discoveries in the Peter zone.

1996 The joint venture purchases existing mill facility, begins plant construction. Mine start-up expected mid year.



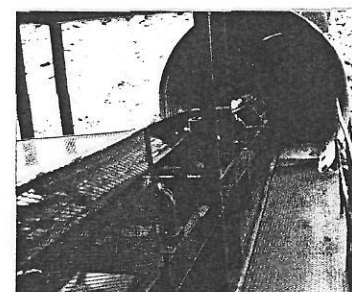
Pouring one of the first gold bricks.



Pioneer mine, 1930s



Plant construction began in 1996.



The mill will eventually process 450 tons per day.