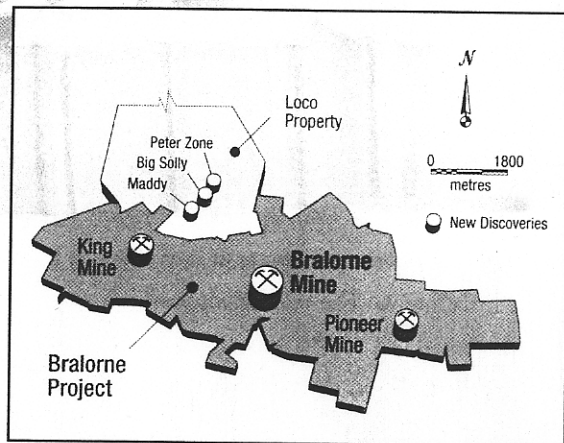


100 Years of Gold

by Julie Domvile



Bralorne's 30-man camp.

Over the past 100 years the Bralorne and Pioneer gold properties have produced more than 4.1 million ounces of gold. Major production at these properties began during the Great Depression and continued on through the Second World War. Even at the height of the depression these mines provided hundreds of jobs and supported a town with 10,000 residents. The current owner, Bralorne-Pioneer Gold Mines Ltd. and International Avino Mines Ltd. believe history (excluding the wars and depression) will repeat itself.

The original claims were staked in 1897 along Cadwallader Creek, in the Bridge River Valley, B.C., and for the first 20 years production was small scale. Then, in 1916, new owners of the Pioneer claims sank the first incline shaft, stuck in their thumbs and pulled out golden plums worth

\$135,000 — and the mine moved onto the map. Discoveries of rich veins led to the creation of the Bralorne mine in 1932. The Pioneer mine at one time was considered one of the richest gold mines in the North America and the combined operations, separated by just 2,000 feet, became the largest in Canada. Their glory days were snuffed out when the low gold prices of 1971 forced both mines to shut down. Since then, two attempts have been made to revive the old workhorse but to no avail. The sleeping giant has just been waiting for the kiss of life.

International Avino holds the adjoining Loco property which features the promising Peter and Milchuk veins. The Peter sits northeast of the Fergusson fault. International Avino was given permission to use the old workings of the Bralorne mine to access the 1,100-foot depth of the Peter.

The results from that exploration confirmed the strength of the Peter vein, at that depth. The Peter zone shows characteristic Bralorne-type veins and is believed to be an extension of the Bralorne vein. Drifting on the upper adit of the Peter vein encountered 215 feet grading 0.38 oz/tonne Au over a 3.4-foot average width, including a 105-foot section grading 0.611 oz/tonne Au, according to a company report. These results were the fundamental reason Louis Wolfin, president of both companies, decided to give that kiss of life to the old Bralorne mine and re-open it. In 1991, Avino (now International Avino) acquired 100 per cent interest in the entire Bralorne operation.

Initial production will come from the formerly producing Bralorne 51 vein area where the largest block of reserves lies. Close at hand is the Countless vein which holds approximately 120,000 tons of drill indicated reserves grading 0.5 oz/tonne Au. Mineable reserves in the proven/possible category above the main haulage tunnel (the 800 level) are approximately 476,835 tons grading 0.31 oz/ton of gold over an average width of 4.7 feet. New discoveries (particularly in the Peter Zone) made by Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines and International Avino since 1992 are not included in these calculations.

The permitting process was started by a previous owner and has shaved about two years off the waiting period. In 1995, Premier Mike Harcourt granted a Mine Development Certificate to International Avino and their 50 per cent joint venture partner, Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines. As things stand, the targeted date for start-up is 1996. Getting the mill up and running is the focus right now. Production will be 150 tpd with potential to increase to 450 tpd. The yield is expected to be 25,000 to 30,000 ounces in the first year then increasing as underground developments proceed. The mill uses the gravity and flotation system. The gravity concentrate will be furnaced on the property and the flotation concentrate shipped to a smelter for pro-

cessing. Recovery rates in the past have averaged 96 per cent. The flotation/gravity system essentially maintains the same recovery rates (expected to average about 94 per cent) without the potentially hazardous use of cyanide and mercury. The capital costs to production are calculated at between \$5 million and \$7 million. The old mine will once again infuse the economy of the neighbouring communities and should provide about 100 jobs.

"We're in a beautiful situation here," says Jim Baylis, Investor Relations, Bralorne Pioneer Gold Mines. "We've got a mill building and camp. We've got all the records dating back from when the mine started so we have a very good handle on the metallurgy, the ore, the character of the rock, and the early exploration efforts. Some of them fit right in with what we are thinking now. A real wealth of information. In mining, history can repeat itself."

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