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→ Highland  
Valley Co

# MINING



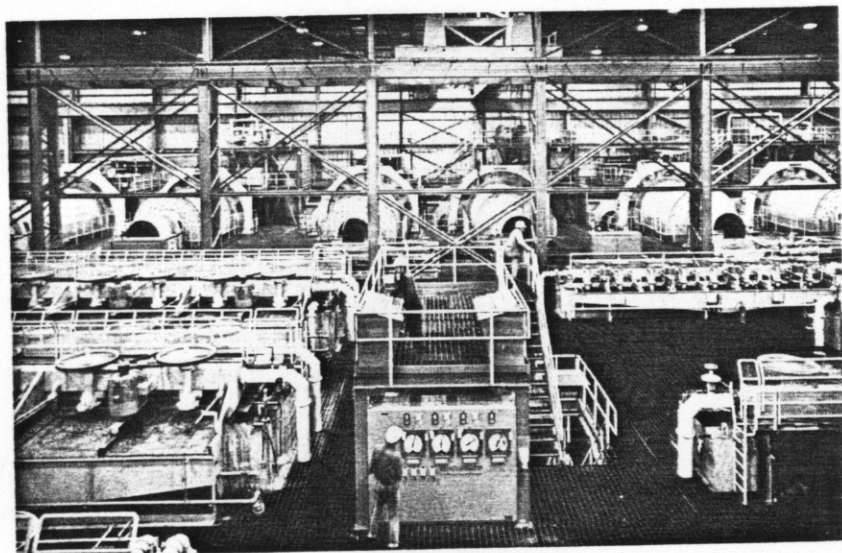
**The History of Mining in British Columbia**

**By G W TAYLOR**

1978

Many copper properties known to an earlier generation of prospectors now began to receive attention. One of the areas of early interest in the sixties was the Highland Valley, lying about 20 miles southeast of Ashcroft. From where the Bethlehem copper mine is now located a small tonnage of high-grade ore had been shipped as far back as 1915-16. Several other companies had worked the property as well, with little result. This was the state of things until the summer of 1954 when the Heustis-Reynolds-McLellan Syndicate re-staked some 100 claims. In February 1955 the mineral rights were transferred to a newly created entity: the Bethlehem Copper Corporation. This led to a new boom and the next 15 years saw the opening of ten new major copper mines in the province.

An exploration program at Bethlehem turned up an area of wide mineralization. The attention of the American Smelting & Refining Co. was attracted, to the tune of \$1,250,000 in exploratory work. For various reasons the option was dropped; Bethlehem re-possessed and pushed ahead with development. Results persuaded the Sumitomo group of companies of Japan to provide enough funding to put the property into production, and to agree to purchase all concentrates for ten years. The development of the mine and the construction of the concentrator and service



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*Interior of concentrator at Gibraltar's copper mine, with rod and ball mills in background, and flotation cells in foreground.*

buildings were completed by November 1962, with Northern Construction and J.W. Stewart as the prime contractor. This was the first major copper development in the Highland Valley and one of the first in the copper boom of the sixties.

Highland Valley became a magical name in the annals of mining in B.C. From the time of Bethlehem Copper's original surveys there has been continuous exploration in the valley which led to another great mine — **Lornex** — and several smaller ones like **Alwin**. Still awaiting development in 1976 are the 424 claims of Valley Copper, a Cominco venture and reportedly a rich property.