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by

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TRIP TO SHUNGNAK AND RUBY CREEK, JUNE 25 THROUGH JULY 3, 1958

The purpose of the trip was to determine whether the Super Pioneer Diamond Drill could be used successfully to test the quality of the jade in boulders while in place, and to visit mines and prospects in the area.

Shungnak village is about 150 air miles east of Kotzebue on the Kobuk River about 10 miles below the village of Kobuk. Its latitude is approximately 157° and its longitude approximately 66°50'. Axel Knoll, site of the Cleveland's jade claim, is about 15 miles above the junction of the Shungnak and Kobuk rivers. Shallow draft river boats with light outboard motors are used for transportation to the claims. Al Stout's placer mine on Dahl Creek is 4 miles north of Kobuk village just off the 16 mile cat trail to Ruby Creek, site of Bear Creek Mining Company's copper prospect camp.

Transportation to the villages is provided by bush planes equipped with either wheels or floats. Floats are used when the river is high; wheels are used during low water when landing on river bars is possible. There are also air fields for small planes at both Dahl Creek and at Ruby Creek camps beside the cat trail north out of Kobuk which passes Al Stout's placer mine, then continues north to Ruby Creek. Supplies are freighted in by barges only during stages of high water; therefore, the shipping season is very short and the costs high. Supplies unloaded at Kobuk are hauled over the cat trail to the camps, thus adding a further cost to the miner.

The climate is much like that of Fairbanks, with cold, long winters, a late spring break up, a short, but rather warm, dry summer and early fall and freeze up. Rivers and creeks as well as many small lakes are lined with willow, alder and an occasional straggly stand of spruce. Much of the area is covered by muskeg and tundra grasses, mosses, blueberry bushes, alder, willow; the higher slopes have stands of fairly large spruce trees. On land there are squirrels, grouse and a few rabbits as well as bear, moose and migratory caribou herds. In the rivers and lakes there are many fish grayling, trout, pike, shke and others.

I left Nome June 25 about 2:30 PM via Wein Alaska Airlines and arrived in Kotzebue at 3:30 PM. Departed for Shungnak about 9 AM the following day and arrived there at 10:55 AM via Wein's mail flight. I met Daniel Burlison who introduced me to Mr. and Mrs. Holderman, the BIA teachers, who provided me with a key to the living quarters of the school. They departed for Fairbanks a short time after I met them. Next I met George Cleveland who is postmaster and the manager of the Shungnak Jade Project; then Old Robert Cleveland who is the owner of several jade claims on the Shungnak River near Axel Knoll, and then Homer Cleveland, son of Old Robert who provided the boat and outboard motors for our trip up the Shungnak River.

Daniel Burlison, Homer Cleveland and I worked until 7 PM loading the boat with out equipment and supplies, then left Shungnak village and arrived at Robert Cleveland's Black River Fish Camp about 9 PM. We switched our 35 HP motor for a 7½ HP motor before eating supper with the Clevelands. We talked with them until about one in the morning. They asked me many questions about the staking and holding of claims. (Later I sent him Information Circulars #1 and #7). The following morning we left camp about 10 and reached Axel Knoll about 6 PM. The trip up the shallow waters of the Shungnak was made by using the outboard in deep water then pulling and dragging the boat where it was either too shallow or too full of large boulders for using the motor. We pulled the boat about as far as we rode in it. By using head nets and plenty of bug dope we managed to frustrate the horde of mosquitoes. We made camp, caught and cooked a meal of grayling and were in bed by 10 PM.

We wakened early June 26 and after a quick breakfast left camp in search of jade boulders on which to test the drill. We located several large boulders and quite a few small ones and a few nuggets of jade. The natives work their jade claims very simply; they merely search the river banks, and the shallow river bed for the boulders. After much experience jade is easily recognized by its characteristic gleam. The jade is then cached along the shore and later packed or hauled to camp and eventually to market.

Drilling the jade boulders with the diamond drill proved to be unsuccessful. Packing the drill through the shallow water and over the rough and slippery river bottom to large boulders on the river bars and banks was difficult and somewhat dangerous. The drill was hard to hold when starting to make a hole in spite of the fact that we buried logs next to the boulders in which we fastened the jack rod as the drill would slide off the top of the boulders. We drilled five holes in all, varying in depth from 2 inches to 6 inches. The drill had a tendency to bind itself in the hole between the core and the crooked hole. The bit was ruined after drilling the five holes, several diamonds had been broken out of the bit and the metal on the shank of the bit showed excessive wear due to the crooked holes that had been drilled; therefore we declared the experiment a failure and prepared to return to Shungnak.

Late in the afternoon of Thursday, June 26, it began to rain and continued to do so all night until about 9 AM. When it stopped raining we broke camp, loaded our gear and about 300 pounds of jade into the boat and drifted downstream, using poles to keep the boat in the channel, where it was too deep for the poles we used the motor and three times we had to pull the boat through shallow water over gravel bars. The downstream trip was much easier than the upstream voyage. At Black River we exchanged the 7½ HP for the 55 HP motor and went on to Shungnak in the rain.

I spent Saturday, June 28, drying out my clothes and camp gear. Paul Douglas and a nephew came by for information on staking both lode and placer claims. I was able to help them out and they told me of their proposed prospecting trip. Several years ago an old

prospector started with Paul Douglas to go up to the Noatak country to stake out gold claims on some rich ground he knew of. On the way into the Noatak the old man died and they had to return with the body. Now Paul was going to return and try to find the gold from directions he had been given by the old man. So far I have not heard whether they found the gold.

Sunday, June 29, I hired a native, Gene Lee, to take me up to Kobuk village in his boat. We left about 5 PM and arrived in Kobuk two hours later. I stopped at the general store to talk with Mr. Charles Brown, owner-operator of the only store in the village. I had a short visit with Mr. Guy Moyer, postmaster, who raised a very large garden and built a new log cabin with a well and a pitcher pump in the kitchen for fresh water the year round. He drove a sand point into the water-bearing strata and mounted the pump on the casing. The water was clear and cool and sweet to the taste. He has sent a sample in to be tested but had not received the results at the time of my visit. At any rate it should be safer than the river water used by most other families in the area.

I left Kobuk for Ruby Creek about 6 PM and arrived at Al Stout's placer mine an hour and a quarter later. After a short visit and light lunch I left with a letter for Mr. Chadwick, Geologist-in-charge at the Ruby Creek Camp of the Bear Creek Mining Company. I walked over the cat trail, then over into Ruby Creek arriving at camp about 3 AM. One of the men pointed out a bunk for the remainder of the night. Later in the morning I visited the two diamond drill rigs which were recovering almost a hundred percent of their cores at the time. The cores had quite a little chalcopyrite showing in a dolomite formation. I talked with Mr. Chadwick as he studied the drill logs. He showed me the scale model of the drill holes and strata encountered at the various depths. They have found some fossils but had not been able to compile any meaningful correlations. They had a crew out conducting several geophysical tests gathering data that might help them in the search for extensions of the ore body or the finding of new ones. They planned to spend the rest of the summer finishing the drilling and geophysical programs they had started. They closed camp August 22, 1958. 1128.5

They have put in an air field suitable for small aircraft so they can have some of the needed camp supplies flown in. Mr. Chadwick believes that they have found enough ore for a small mining venture and that in the event Bear Creek walked off and left it that some smaller outfit could mine it at a profit. In any event, he feels that a larger airfield is needed so that large aircraft could fly in supplies and equipment at a more reasonable freight rate. The cat trail out to the prospect is quite poor, for there are many places that wash out easily, and other places that become a sea of mire when subjected to much traffic. This, coupled with a short and undependable river freighting season with high freight rates makes it almost imperative that the present airfield be enlarged to accommodate larger aircraft to insure a cheaper, more dependable source of supply.

About 7 PM of the same day I started to walk back as I had promised Al Stout that I would stop for a look at his operation on my return trip. I went up the headwaters of Dahl Creek and followed down to

Stout's camp, accompanied by an Eskimo youth. It was a very rough trail until we broke out of the willows and alders onto the old asbestos mines cat trail. We followed it past Johnson's gold mine and other old workings. I saw quite a number of jade boulders and nuggets in the old tailing piles. We reached Stout's about 1 AM and I stayed the remainder of the night. After breakfast I went out to the cut where Mr. Stout was starting to set up the long tom in preparation for sluicing. Here, again, I saw a number of jade boulders stacked in with his tailings. I left his camp about 9:30 AM arriving in Kobuk about three minutes before the mail plane landed, for the flight to Shungnak, where I changed planes for Kotzebue. Dan Burlison came in with me, arriving there about 4:35 PM. Since the next plane out was the following day we stayed in Kotzebue for the night. While there I called on Mr. Francis, the U. S. Commissioner. He knew of no actual mining operations but he did give me the names of several fellows who were doing prospecting or had done assessment work in the area; Theodore Westlake, Sr. and Jack Kasanoff near Kiana as well as Ted Davis, and Clinton Brown at Shovel Creek on the upper Selawik River. We left Kotzebue about midnight for the hour and a half flight to Nome. KX 37-4

I told Burlison about the amount and possible quality of jade on Dahl Creek and suggested that he call on Mr. Stout. He did so and they have arranged a deal for the Shungnak Jade Project to buy this jade.

TRIP TO THE KOUGAROK, JULY 30 THROUGH AUGUST 6, 1958

The purpose of the trip was to visit the various placer mines operating in the Kougarok River area. The area visited is about 100 air miles north northeast of Nome. The climate is similar to that of Nome, with quite steep hills rising from the river valley as much or more than a thousand feet. Most of the hills are covered with tundra, but a few have bare rock domes. The creeks and rivers are lined with small willow. Ptarmigan and bear were the only wildlife seen; however there seemed to be many fish, mostly grayling. Salmon berries and blueberries are quite abundant.

I left Nome on Wednesday, July 30, via Mux Airways at about 10:30 AM en route for Atlas Creek landing field which is three miles north of Waldhelm's operation on Dahl Creek. Our first stop was at Quartz Creek where I met Otto Wihl near his claim. He was not mining, just straightening out some business matters, what these were he did not say. Then we flew to Atlas Creek where we were met by Mrs. George Waldhelm, Mrs. Alexander and her son. We went over to Mrs. Alexander's claim and camp. George Bodis and George Waldhelm were drilling on a bench a short distance above Mrs. Alexander's camp with an airplane drill. They weren't doing so well as they were getting only a few colors, not enough for mining. We walked on over to Waldhelm's where I spent the night. In the morning we went over to the mining cut where there was enough water to splash about two hours each day. The bedrock there was covered with a very sticky blue-black clay with slabs of schist standing in it edgewise and parallel to the direction of sluicing, making a very slow process of sluicing. The coarse gold is a rather dull bronze color. The fines are usually rubbed quite well and are very bright; however, no mercury is used in the sluices. As the Saturday plane was scheduled early, I walked back to Atlas Creek on Friday night, August 1. When the plane came in Dan Jones stepped out so I finally met him. We barely had time to speak for as quickly as the supplies were unloaded we left for Taylor Creek where the Tweet brothers are mining. We stopped at Quartz Creek where I met Mr. Snyder of the Lucky Syndicate Mining Company. After picking up freight we went on to Taylor, arriving about 10:30. I met the Tweet brothers, their father and their families, then visited both cuts where they were mining. The cut first visited was dependent on ditch water for sluicing and at the time had only enough water to splash for a couple of hours a day. The ground was quite rich for I was able to get several pans which ran 25 cents or more and one pan that went a little over a dollar. When they finished sluicing I went over to their cut on Goose Creek, here they were diverting river water into a pond and pumping water to the nozzles and sluice boxes. This cut was producing very good values also, the gold varied from a dull to nearly black color. One piece they showed to me was very black and had been almost discarded but the panner decided it was too heavy to be waste, gave it a closer examination and discovered that it was really gold. From this point on they were more careful in discarding waste from the cleanups.

Saturday, August 2, was spent visiting the ghost town of Taylor and in preparation for the trip to the head of the Kougarok with Sam Godfrey, who seems to control many of the upper Kougarok mining claims. Sunday was spent in making the trip to and from the head of the Kougarok. We looked at some of the claims and tried a few pans but did not find many colors. We loaded some drums of oil and gas, and some drill bits on the go-devil and returned. The return trip was quite difficult as we got stuck several times but managed to get back to Taylor with the full load. On Monday we visited Godfrey's claims on Henry Creek. On Tuesday Godfrey and I drove his truck from Taylor to a point above Louisa Creek where we left the truck and walked about 4 miles to the dredge owned by the Lucky Syndicate, which is working in the bed of the river digging about twelve feet below the water line. We spent three hours on the dredge, then walked another mile up river to their camp. Lucky Syndicate is in the process of moving the dredge up to North Fork, digging wherever they have found pay as determined by grill holes and then floating over the barren areas. #x44-44

On Wednesday morning Mr. Snyder and I took the cat up the hill to the road and then drove the truck to Quartz Creek to catch the mail plane for Nome. Dan Jones was aboard so we had a visit on the return flight to Nome arriving there at 10:35 AM, August 6, 1958.