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PLACER MINING IN ALASKA II

bу

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State of Alaska / DNR
Division of Geological &
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## Final Report

#### PLACER MINING IN ALASKA II

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### PLACER MINING IN ALASKA II

Placer mining has played a key role in the economic development of Alaska, and hence in the settlement and spread of population. Figure 1 shows the distribution of gold districts, their discovery dates and production in ounces. Although a few of these districts, or camps, are noted chiefly for the production of lode gold, all lode districts have produced at least some placer gold. The widespread distribution indicates the importance of gold mining to Alaska's development.

The government agencies and institutions, and private individuals and organizations that are concerned with mineral production have recognized this and have from time to time published descriptions of placer mining, all of which are applicable to Alaska (see Selected References).

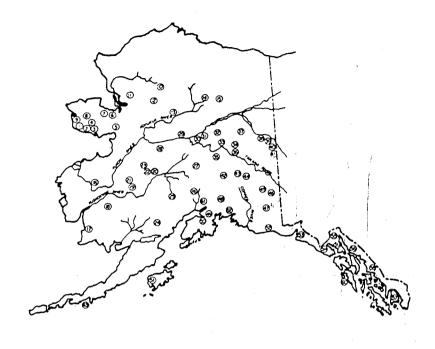
Two early works on Alaska placer mining stand out. U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 263 by C.W. Purington, Methods and Costs of Placer and Gravel Mining in Alaska, was published in 1905 and contains comprehensive and detailed descriptions oof placer mining as practiced during the early gold rushes. U.S. Bureau of Mines Bull. 259, by Norman L. Wimmler, Placer Mining Methods and Costs in Alaska, was published in 1927. This too, brought up to date the state of the art of placer mining in Alaska.

In the mid 1950's, the then School of Mines of the University of Alaska, conducted another survey of post WWII Alaska placer mining. The results were published in U.S. Bureau of Mines Information Circular 7926 by Thomas, Cook, Wolff and Kerns. This work, entitled; Methods and Costs of Operations using Hydraulic and Mechanical Excavation Equipment with Non-Floating Washing Plants, was published in 1959.

Gold mining even at that time was in a long period of economic stagnation, and there was little interest in placer mining research for another fifteen years.

With the end of government control of the gold price, the price began to move up until in real terms it is very favorable. It is obvious that gold is desired very highly and that it should be produced. Interest in placer mining has revived, and the time has again come when the state of the art should be described, perhaps as a prelude to active research and development.

During July, August and September, 1979, a team from the Mineral Industry Research Laboratory visited a number of placer mining districts that could be reached by automobile, hence at a reasonable cost for transportation. These districts yielded varying amounts of information that will be of value to the industry. The districts visited were: 1. Fairbanks, 2. Circle (Birch Creek), 3. Livengood (Tolovana), 4. Manley Hot Springs, 5.



| No   | Camp*                      | Cold Production<br>(ounces) | Date | No.        | Camp *                                   | Gold Production<br>(outles) | Discovery<br>Date |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------|------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1.   | Nome.                      | 3,606,000                   | 1898 | 29.        | Cold Hill                                | 1.200                       | 1907              |
| 2.   | Solomon                    | 251,000                     | 1899 | 30.        | Hot Springs                              | 447,900                     | 1891              |
| 3.   | Bluff                      | 90,200                      | 1899 | 31.        | Remount                                  | 86,800                      | 1882              |
| 4.   | Council                    | 588,000                     | 1898 | 32.        | Tolovana                                 | 375,000                     | 1914              |
| 5.   | Koyuk                      | 52,000                      | 1915 | 33.        | Fairbanks                                | 7,464,200                   | 1902              |
| 6.   | Fairhaven (Candle)         | 179,000                     | 1901 | 34.        | Chene (included in Fairbanks Production) |                             |                   |
| 7.   | Fairhaven (Inmachuck)      | 277,000                     | 1900 | 35         | Bonoifield                               | 45,000                      | 1903              |
| 8.   | Kougsrok                   | 150,400                     | 1900 | 36.        | Richardson                               | 95,000                      | 1905              |
| 9.   | Port Clarence              | 28,000                      | 1898 | 37.        | Circle                                   | 730,000                     | 1893              |
| 10.  | Noscak                     | 9.000                       | 1898 | 38.        |  |                             |                   |
| 11.  | Kobuk (Squirret River)     | 7,000                       | 1909 | 39.        |  |                             |                   |
| 12.  | Kobuk (Shungnak)           | 15,000                      | 1898 | 40.        | Eagle                                    | 40,200                      |                   |
| 13.  | Koyukuk (Hughes)           | 201,000                     | 1910 | 41.        | Fortymile                                | 400.000                     | 1895              |
| 14.  | Novukuk (No!an)            | 290,000                     | 1893 | 42.        | Valdez Creek                             | 37,000                      | 1886              |
| 15.  | Chandalar                  | 30,700                      | 1903 | 43.        | Deita                                    | 2,500                       | 1903              |
| 16.  | Marshall (Anvik)           | 120,000                     | 1913 | 44.        | Chisochina Chisna                        |                             |                   |
| 17.  | Goodnews Bay               | 29,700                      | 1900 | 45.        | Nabesna                                  | 141,000                     | 1898              |
| 18.  | Kuskokwim (Aniak)          | 230,600                     | 1901 | 46.        | Chisana                                  | 63,300                      | 1899              |
| 19.  | Kuskokwim (Georgetown)     | 14,500                      | 1909 | 47.        | Nizine                                   | 44,800                      | 1910              |
| 20.  | Kuskokwim (Mckinley)       | 173,500                     | 1910 | 48.        | Netchina                                 | 143,500                     | 1901              |
| 21.  | Miserad                    | 1,320,000                   | 1908 | 49.        | Girdenad                                 | 2,900                       | 1912              |
| 12.  | innoka                     | 350,000                     | 1906 | 50.        |  | 125,000                     | 1.895             |
| 3.   | Tolsoi                     | 87,200                      | 1700 | 51.        | Hope (included in Girl-<br>Kodisk        |                             | 1888              |
| 4.   | Diamos (Lake Clark)        | 1,500                       | 1902 | 51.        |  | 4,800                       | 1895              |
| 5.   | Skwening (included in Yenu |                             | 1902 | 52.<br>53. | Yakasaga                                 | 15,700                      | 1898              |
| 6.   | Yenuna (Cache Creek)       | 115.200                     | 1901 |            | Yakusas                                  | 2,500                       | 1880              |
| 7.   | Kanushna                   | 55,000                      | 1903 | 54.        | Lituye Bay                               | 1,200                       | 1894              |
| 8.   | Ruby                       | 389,100                     | 1903 | 55.        | Porcupine                                | 61,000                      | 1898              |
| .,,  | A357                       | 389,100                     | 1907 | 56.<br>57. | Junesu (Gold Reft)                       | 7,107,000                   | 1 880             |
| Data compiled from \$1.5. Contract \$ 11.5   |                            |                             |      |            | Keichikan Hyder                          | 62,000                      | 1898              |
| Data compiled from U.S. Geological Survey publications,  |                            |                             |      |            | Sumdum                                   | 15,000                      | 1869              |
| J.S. Bureau of Mines records, Alaska Division of Geological  |                            |                             |      |            | Glacier Bay                              | 11,000                      |                   |
| and Geophysical Surveys records and publications, Mineral  |                            |                             |      |            | Onchagol                                 | 770,000                     | 1871              |
| ndustry Research Laboratory research projects and other owners.)   |                            |                             |      |            | Willow Creek                             | 652,000                     | 1897              |
|  |                            |                             |      |            | Prince William Sound                     | 137,900                     | 1894              |
| Camp names are those that appear in official recording district records.  Many are also known by other names, some of which are shown in brackets. |                            |                             |      |            | Unga Island                              | 108,900                     | 1891              |

Figure 1. Distribution of gold mining districts in Alaska, their discovery dates and production in ounces

Fortymile, 6. Klondike, 7. Kantishna, 8. Yentna. The locations of these mining districts are shown in Figure 2. This field work was funded through the Mining and Mineral Resources Research Institute at the University of Alaska, and it is the purpose of this report to describe the first phase of this project.

Before beginning a visit to a district, an attempt was made to contact at least one miner, or road house keeper or anyone else who could tell miners that the team was coming. On the previous study of this kind, during the 1950's, a questionnaire was used, but during this one, no fixed format was followed. A mining student was attached to the party and it was his duty to make sketches and take notes while the other members were talking to the operator. The results of field work were thus embodied in notes, sketches, and photographs. A number of recent meetings and conferences have been devoted to placer mining, reflecting the renewed interest. It was apparent from these that the most important advances and the greatest interest deal with recovery systems. Hence field work concentrated on these.

The publication which will come out of the field work will describe operations categorized by the methods used to move the gravel and secondly by the type of washing plant. Hence there will be sections on bulldozer, dragline, loader, hydraulic, and ground-sluice mines, among others. Dredging, as was the case in the 1959 publication, will not be described. Complete and detailed descriptions will be made of the various kinds of washing plants, screens, riffles and other components.

In the various districts visited, it was evident that one operator would put into practice a new idea, and that idea would be quickly copied. For example, in the Circle district, sloping grizzlies to remove boulders are popular. In the Fortymile district, steep gradients are used, and shaking screens are evident.

With this report are included a number of typical photographs and sketches. Figures 3 and 4 show the washing plant and cut layout for a mine using a front end loader and small giant to feed the boxes (Mine No. 1). Tailing disposal is no problem at this mine. Figures 5 and 6 show two photographic views of this operation. Figures 7 and 3 show the plant and general layout for a mine using a bulldozer to feed the boxes and a dragline to stack tailings. Figures 9 and 10 show two photographic views of this mine. Figures 11 and 12 show a mine using a shaker screen to size the material going to the sluice, and Figures 13 and 14 again show two views. Figure 15 is a sketch of a mine where gravel is moved to a central hopper by scraper, then conveyed to shaker screen by belt feeder. The sized material is then fed to several occillating sluice boxes. Figures 16, 17, and 13 show three views of this plant.

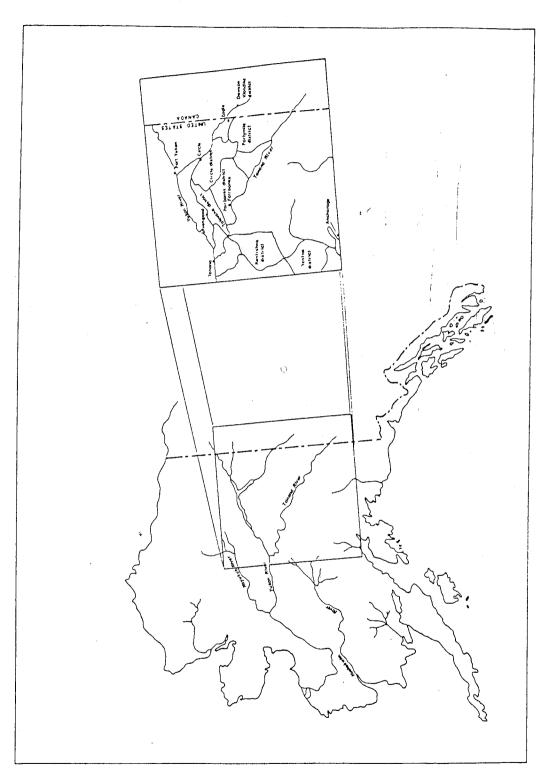


Figure 2. Location of Mining Districts visited

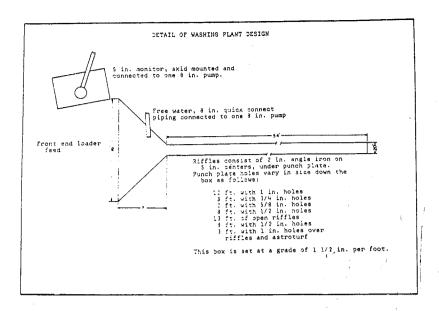


Figure 3. Washing Plant at Mine No. 1

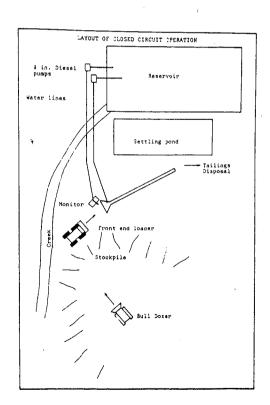


Figure 4. General Layout for Mine
No. 1



Figure 5. Washing Gravel at Mine No. 1

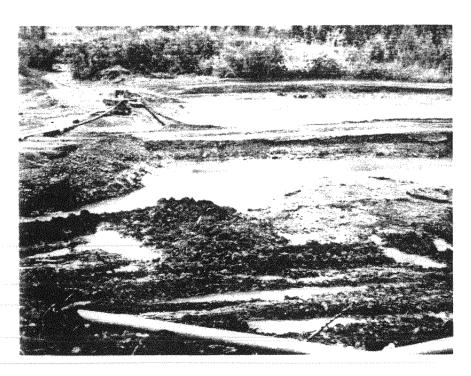


Figure 6. Return Water Reservoir at Mine No. 1

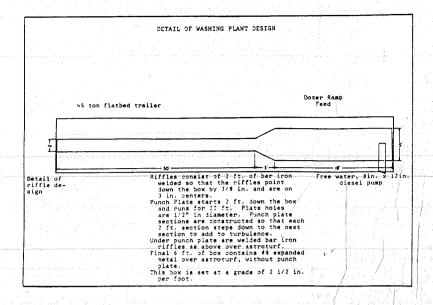


Figure 7. Washing Plant at Mine No.

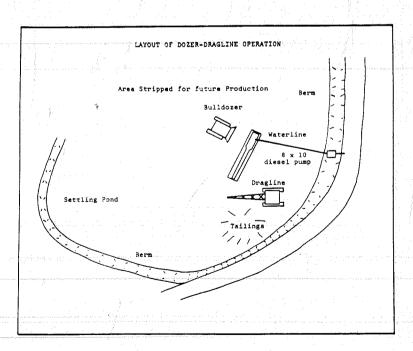


Figure 8. General Layout at Mine No. 2

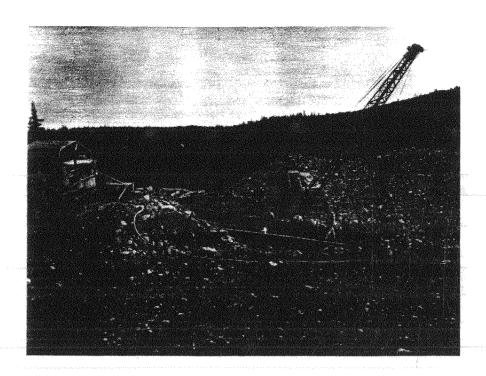


Figure 9. General View at Mine No. 2

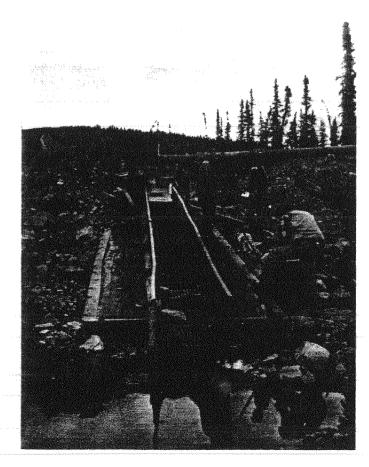


Figure 10. Washing Plant at Mine No. 2

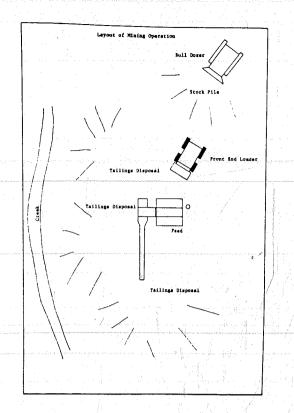


Figure 11. General Layout at Mine No. 3

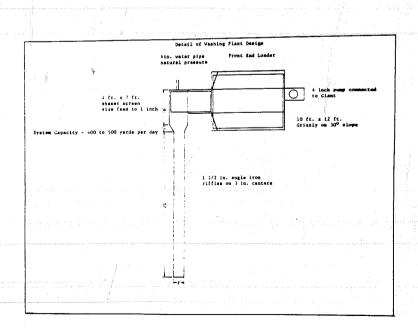


Figure 12. Washing Plant at Mine No. 3

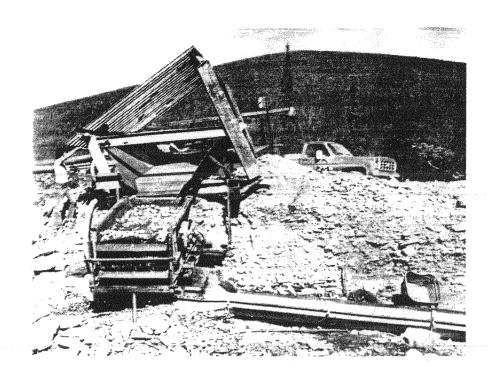


Figure 13. Grizzly-shaking Screen Plant at Mine Mo. 3

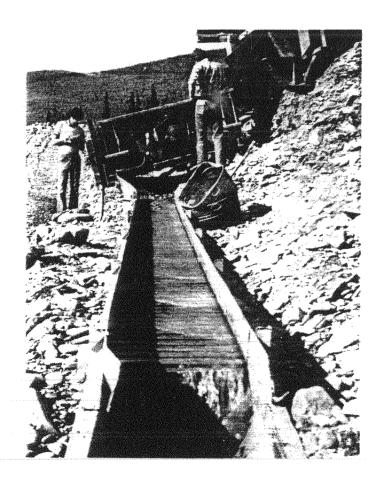


Figure 14. Sluice Box at Mine No. 3

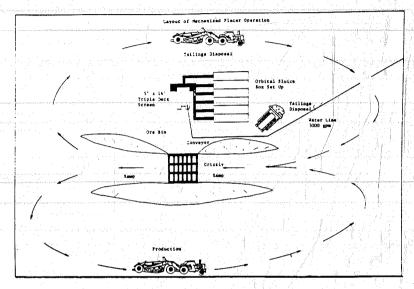


Figure 15. General Layout at Mine No. 4

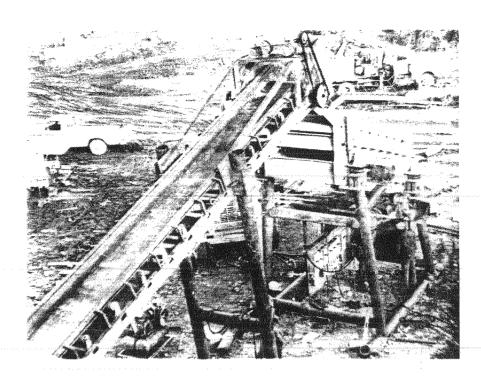


Figure 18. Washing Flant at Mine Mo. 4

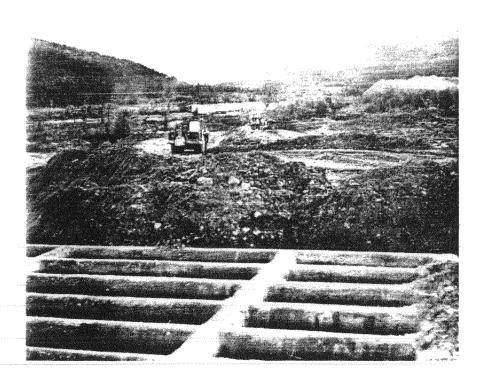


Figure 17. Scraper Moving Gravel to Hopper, Mine
No. - 14

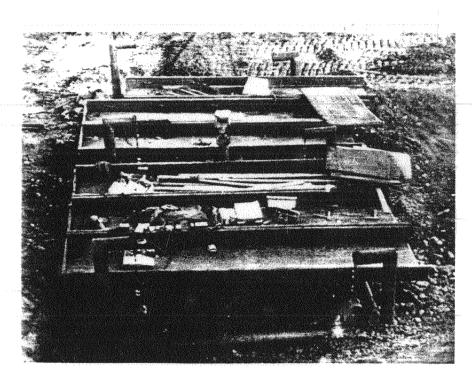


Figure 18. Cscillating Sluice at Mine No. 4

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