

IR-056-02

IR 56-2

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF MINES AND MINERALS

ITINERARY REPORT ON A TRIP TO THE RUBY DISTRICT, 1959

by

Robert H. Saunders
State Mining Engineer

March
1960

DIVISION OF
MINES AND MINERALS

APR 1 1960

J
RECEIVED
JUNEAU, ALASKA

During August 4 to 10, 1959, I made a trip to the Ruby District to acquire information pertaining to mining operations in that area. My itinerary for the trip was as follows:

- August 4 - Traveled from Fairbanks to Ruby via Wien Alaska Airlines. Traveled from Ruby to Long on foot and by car. Visited operations of the Northern Lights Mining Co. and the Long Creek Mining Co. Continued on foot to Fifth of July Creek.
- August 5 - Traveled on foot from Fifth of July Creek to Sulatna River bridge. Visited mining operation of Clarence Zaiser on Greenstone Creek.
- August 6 - Traveled on foot from Sulatna River bridge to Poorman.
- August 7 - Traveled on foot from Poorman back to Sulatna River bridge and on to Monument Creek.
- August 8 - Traveled on foot and by car from Monument Creek to Ruby.
- August 9 - At Ruby.
- August 10 - Traveled from Ruby to Fairbanks via Wien Alaska Airlines.

Northern Lights Mining Co.

The Northern Lights Mining Co, owned and operated by Pat Savage, was mining on the left limit of Long Creek about one-quarter mile above the mouth of Last Chance Gulch. The ground being mined was 20 feet deep, 4 to 5 feet being gravel and the remainder muck. The equipment used included two bulldozers, a dragline, a diesel-powered pump, a steel sluice box, monitors, and pipe. One bulldozer was used for stripping, one for pushing gravel to the wings; a nozzle washed the gravel through the boxes, and the dragline stacked tailing. Water for sluicing came from Long Creek; the pump drew water from behind a dam across the creek to feed the nozzle at the head of the

KK 56-20

boxes, and by-water came by gravity flow through a pipe from the dam. Four men, including the owner, comprised the crew. There was a man on the dragline, a man on the nozzle, and a man on each of the two bulldozers. Although there were some boulders, the operation seemed to be getting along smoothly without a sluice box tender. Boulders were allowed to accumulate in front of the wings then were rolled aside at the beginning and in the middle of each shift.

The cut being mined was about 30,000 sq ft in area, the usual size for this operation. Ordinarily, five cuts of this size are mined in a season, and the one being mined was the third for 1959.

Pat Savage reported that most of the gold recovered was coarse, that drilling results were not reliable, and therefore it was difficult to estimate the value of the ground before mining. It appeared that there might be a block of minable ground on the right limit side of the creek and another upstream from the area being mined, but this had not been proved by prospecting.

After I returned to Ruby, I learned that the Northern Lights Mining Co. had a clean-up that was smaller than had been anticipated, and that the operation had closed down. I later learned that Pat Savage plans to move his equipment to Trail Creek, 8 to 10 miles east of Long, to start a new mining operation in 1960.



Fig. 1. Northern Lights Mining Co. on Long Creek.

Long Creek Mining Co.

Robert Deacon, former owner of the Long Creek Mining Co, died Kx 56-8, 3
in June, 1959, at Long Creek. In August the company was being
managed by Walter Zappe and Mrs Walter Zappe, a niece of Robert
Deacon. In addition to the managers, there were three men working
on the property. The mining equipment included three bulldozers
and a dragline. No mining was being done, but an area on the left
limit side of Long Creek about one mile below Long was being stripped
by bulldozers, and a bedrock drain was being cleaned out with the
dragline. A large area below Long appears to have been partly
prepared for mining.

Clarence Zaiser.

Clarence Zaiser was mining on Greenstone Creek; he uses a drag-line for mining, a bulldozer for stacking tailing, and an elevated sluice box on a trestle built of timbers. The box is on a 24-inch grade. A monitor is set below the dump box and is directed toward the head of the box. A grizzly is set at an angle across the lower end of the dump box in such a manner that large boulders can be washed off by the nozzle as they are worked across the grizzly to a rock chute that carries them off the side of the trestle. Near the lower end of the sluice box, he has a device called a "water jig" set into the box. K 56-27

This water jig is actually a form of hydraulic classifier rather than a jig. An opening the full width of the sluice box and about nine feet long has been cut in the bottom of the box. Three steel-plate pyramids have been welded to the box below this opening in an inverted position. At the apex or bottom of each pyramid is a pipe tee; a lateral pipe feeds water into the device through the tee, and, below the tee, is a vertical length of pipe that serves as a chamber to catch the heavy material, which can be drained off through the bottom periodically. When sluicing is about to begin, before any water is turned into the head of the sluice box, a flow of water is started into the jig and is adjusted until it over flows moderately out the lower end of the box. The sluicing is done with a current of water flowing upward through the jig. The material recovered by the jig is mostly black sand with some fine gold and appreciable amounts of cassiterite. Although the cass-

iterite has been saved, none of it, as yet, has been marketed.

Clarence Zaiser and one employee comprise the crew at this operation. One man runs the dragline, and the other alternates between running the nozzle at the head of the box and stacking tailing with the bulldozer. During the time that I was there, mining was temporarily stopped because the bulldozer had broken down.

The ground being mined was 20 feet deep and contained many large boulders. Clarence Zaiser reported that the ground runs more than \$1 per square foot, that the gold is fine, and that recovery checks drilling results closely. The upper end of the cut being mined was at the lower end of old dredge tailings; the dredge that formerly mined here was moved to Ganes Creek. There appears to be some minable ground left on the right limit of the present cut and some downstream, but little of it has been drilled so the actual extent of minable ground is uncertain.

Clarence Zaiser reported that his brother, Leonard, had left Hidden Creek and was mining in the Cache Creek district, west of Talkeetna. Kt 65-21



Fig. 2. Elevated Sluice Box Used by Clarence Zaiser on Greenstone Creek.

Miscovich Brothers.

The Miscovich brothers did not mine during 1959 at their property on Poorman Creek. They employed Joe Farris to serve as watchman at Poorman. The camp and shop buildings are in good repair, and the airstrip is in excellent condition. The equipment on the property includes a dragline, elevated sluice box, several pumps, four D-8 tractors, a large supply of pipe, and several monitors. Joe Farris reported that the Miscovich brothers own about two miles of ground along Poorman Creek and hold about one mile of ground under lease.

Kk 56-14

Miscellaneous Information.

U. S. Geological Survey Bulletin 868-D, THE KAIYUH HILLS, ALASKA, contains on page 175 a description of a lead-silver prospect 14 miles south of Ruby on the north side of Beaver Creek. John May of Ruby has staked this prospect and is planning to do some work on it. Kx 56-22

Albert Urjana was working for the BPR in the Ruby District, and, on week ends, was doing preparatory work on placer ground on Birch Creek, tributary to Flint Creek. He was stripping muck by ground-sluicing; apparently the stripping went on during the week, and on the week ends he changed the water channels. He and Gus Uotila plan to start mining the ground in 1960. Kx 56-2

Joe Farris holds ten claims on Solomon Creek, two miles southwest of Poorman. He gave the Miscovich brothers a one-half interest in the ground for building a ditch. Apparently the ground is not minable under present economic conditions. Joe Farris stated that Flat Creek, three miles south of Poorman, has been mined out. He also stated that on Camp Creek, which drains the west side of Twin Buttes, there are good "bar prospects", that the creek has not been drilled, and that the ground is too wet to be prospected by any other method. Kx 56-16

John Galaway, a young Californian, was headquartered at Ruby and was prospecting in the surrounding area. He had made several short trips including a trip by canoe up the lower part of the Melozitna River, which is navigable for only a few miles from the Yukon. He was unable to find a suitable partner, and, having Kx 56-15

had trouble with bears on some of his trips, he was becoming reluctant to go out alone. It appeared that during the week that I was in the district, he did not leave the town of Ruby.

Formerly there was a passable road from the Sulatna River bridge to Poorman, but through lack of maintenance the road has become a rather poor tractor trail, in some places difficult to follow on foot. A good gravel road extends south from Ruby through Long to the Sulatna River; a good steel-girder bridge spans the river; but nothing leads away from the south end of the bridge. Freight for any mining operations at Poorman would now have to be hauled from the river by tractor. The distance from the bridge to Poorman is nine to eleven miles. In a discussion in September, 1959, George Miscovich stated that, although the cost of tractor freighting would add to the cost of mining at Poorman, it probably would not make the difference between being able to mine and not being able to mine. Eventually, this road probably will be rebuilt as part of a long-range program for a road between McGrath and Ruby; meanwhile, if it appears that mining might be resumed in the Poorman area, some consideration should be given to rebuilding the road so that a mine operator could benefit from the cheaper transportation thus provided.

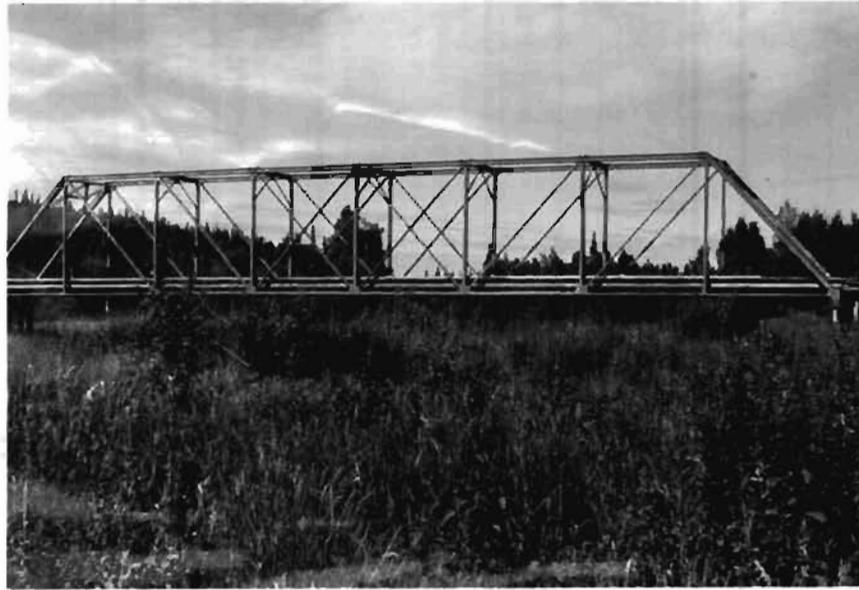


Fig. 3. Steel-girder Bridge across the Sulatna River.



Fig. 4. The "Approach" to the South End of the Bridge across the Sulatna River.