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

ITINERARY REPORT ON A TRIP TO THE FLAT AND OPHIR DISTRICTS, 1959

by

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During September 11 to 19, 1959, I made a trip to the Flat and Ophir districts to acquire information pertaining to mining operations in those areas. My itinerary for the trip was as follows:

- Sept 11 - From Fairbanks to McGrath via Northern Consolidated Airlines.
- Sept 12 - From McGrath to Yankee Creek via Alaska Airlines; by truck from Yankee Creek to Ganes Creek.
- Sept 13 - Visited dredging operation of Minalaska, Inc, on Ganes Creek. With M. W. Jasper traveled by truck to Yankee Creek and visited mining operation of Rosander and Reed. M. W. Jasper left for McGrath in the evening.
- Sept 14 - By truck visited the mining operations of Michael O'Carroll on Spruce Creek, Gus Uotila on Ophir Creek, Little Creek Mining Co on Little Creek, and Hjalmar Lindquist on Bedrock Creek. Returned to Yankee Creek.
- Sept 15 - By truck from Yankee Creek to Takotna; from Takotna to McGrath via Alaska Airlines.
- Sept 16 - From McGrath to Flat via Alaska Airlines; visited Fullerton's mining operation on Flat Creek.
- Sept 17 - On foot from Flat to Agoff's mining operation on Prince Creek; returned to Flat by truck.
- Sept 18 - Visited mining operations of the Otter Dredging Co and the Miscovich brothers on Otter Creek.
- Sept 19 - Traveled from Flat to McGrath to Anchorage to Fairbanks via Alaska Airlines.

Minalaska, Inc.

Minalaska, Inc, under the management of Warren Magnuson, has leased <sup>KK 64-27</sup> the property and equipment formerly operated by the Ophir Mining Co on Ganes Creek. The dredge actually is being used for prospecting; it has been moved down the valley beside mined-out ground, digging only for flotation part of the way but taking an occasional test cut to bedrock and mining where pay was found. Martin Jasper was at the camp when



Fig. 1. Dredge operated by Minalaska, Inc. on upper Ganes Creek.



Fig. 2. Inoperative dredge on lower Ganes Creek.

I arrived; he was completing an evaluation of the ground that had been dredged during the summer. Apparently Magnuson is seeking investment capital to finance the venture. The Fairbanks News-Miner of April 9, 1960, carried an article stating that Minalaska, Inc. had been forbidden to operate in the State of Illinois because of securities law violations.

Rosander and Reed.

Toivu Rosander is managing the mining operation of Rosander and Reed on Yankee Creek. Two bulldozers are used for mining and stripping; a monitor is used to wash the gravel through the boxes; and a dragline stacks the tailing. Steel sluiceboxes 42 inches wide are set on a grade of 18 to 20 inches per 12 ft of length. The pay goes as much as 4 to 6 feet into bedrock. The ground being mined lies beside ground that has been dredged. The gold is coarse, and drilling results are not reliable. Prospecting is not carried on far ahead of the mining, but there may be a large reserve of minable ground. Four or five men comprise the crew. Ordinarily, slightly more than 100,000 sq ft of bedrock is mined per season. At the time of my visit, mining was not in progress because the dragline was shut down for repair of a broken gantry.

Kx 73-17836

Victor Hill.

Mr. and Mrs. Victor Hill, long-time residents of the area, were doing assessment work on their claims on lower Spruce Creek. Mr. Hill occasionally does some hand-mining on Victor Gulch.

Kx 64-16

Michael O'Carroll.

Michael O'Carroll worked for Northern Lights Mining Co on Long Creek

in the Ruby District until that operation closed down in mid-August. He then moved to Spruce Creek and mined a cut about 20,000 sq ft in area. The ground being mined is 1-3/4 miles from the mouth of the creek on the right limit side beside ground that was mined by Hugh Matheson, Sr. The total depth of ground is 23 ft, and, of that, 8 to 10 ft is muck. O'Carroll owns the mining equipment and leases the ground. He hired one employee (Fred Dementieff). A D-8 tractor is used for mining; a monitor is used at the head of the boxes; and a dragline is used for stacking tailing. The gold is fine, and the pay gravel is characterized by conspicuous iron staining. After one cut had been mined, most of the equipment was prepared for winter storage, and the bulldozer was used to strip muck from the area to be mined next season.

Kx 64-26

Gus Uotila.

Gus Uotila was mining on Ophir Creek 4 to 5 miles from the mouth of the creek on the right limit side of the valley floor. He uses a bulldozer for mining, a monitor at the head of the boxes, and a dragline for stacking tailing. Ordinarily, he mines 140,000 to 150,000 sq ft of bedrock per year. The distribution of gold is spotty; both fine gold and coarse gold are present. The ground mined in 1959 was quite low-grade, and Gus plans to move his equipment to Birch Creek in the Ruby District in 1960.

Kx 64-31

Little Creek Mining Co.

The Little Creek Mining Co, owned and operated by Ivor Carlson, is mining on the right limit of Little Creek at the upper end of an area that has been dredged. The ground being mined is 40 ft deep and is all

Kx 64-34

frozen gravel except for numerous small ice wedges or seams. A bulldozer is used for mining, a dragline for stacking tailing, and a monitor is used at the head of the boxes. Steel sluiceboxes are on a grade of 15 to 17 inches per 12 ft of length. Early in the season, a cut was mined farther downstream where a single drill hole had indicated good pay, but very little gold was recovered. Two months were spent in mining that cut, so the production for the season was unusually small.

#### Hjalmar Lindquist.

Hjalmar Lindquist mines on the upper part of Bedrock Creek. He uses a TD-14 tractor for mining and for stacking tailing, and he uses a monitor for washing gravel through the boxes. At the site of the present cut, the depth of pay gravel is 3 to 4 feet, and the muck and overburden are 7 to 8 feet deep. Lindquist expects to finish mining near the head of the creek in 1959, then he will move 3 to 4 miles downstream, where he has prospected ground that will last about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. Still farther downstream there is additional ground that has not been prospected.

Kx 64-19

Bedrock on the divide between Little Creek and Bedrock Creek is slate in which there are numerous narrow, light-colored dikes.

#### Flat Creek Placers.

Flat Creek Placers, on Flat Creek, is owned and operated by John and Richard Fullerton. The site of the mining operation is at the upper end of dredged ground (mined by the North American Dredging Co) on the right limit side of the creek. A dragline with  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -cu-yd bucket is used for mining and stripping. A 42-inch, elevated sluicebox is

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Fig. 3. Flat Creek Placers dragline. Cut being mined in foreground and sluicibox to left of dragline.



Fig. 4. Side view of sluicibox. Note fuel storage tank in background. Flat Creek Placers.



Fig. 5. Elevated sluiceway, Flat Creek Placers.

mounted on a rubber-tired truck. The truck was built from a dragline base, and it serves as a turntable on which the trestle and sluiceway can be rotated horizontally by a hand-cranked winch or by a tractor. Coco matting is used in the bottom of the sluiceway under expanded metal lath, and above the lath there are punched steel plates. The arrangement is essentially the same as that used by the Chandalar Mining Co at Big Creek, Chandalar District.

Water for sluicing is pumped and recirculated, and the unit used for



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Fig. 6. Turntable base for sluiceway trestle, Flat Creek Placers.

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Fig. 7. Nozzle arrangement in dump box at head of sluiceway, Flat Creek Placers.

pumping has been built for maximum portability. The pump and diesel engine are mounted on top of a steel pump box, which in turn is mounted on skids. The unit can be pulled by tractor to a new location and a dam can be bulldozed around it in a matter of minutes.

The entire mining operation can be handled by two men, one on the dragline and one on the D-8 tractor. Occasionally the tractor is used in the cut to assist the dragline; it is also sometimes used for pushing tailing, and it is used to move the pump unit and the sluicibox in making new set-ups. The dragline is large enough so that it can dig bedrock, and it can mine a large cut without having a bulldozer push gravel to it as is usually done where a smaller dragline is used for mining.

While I was watching the operation, the dragline was dumping a bucket (3 to 3½ cu yds) every 45 seconds, and the owners reported that they averaged more than 200 cu yds per hour including time spent moving. None of the ground presently being mined is frozen.

During the summer of 1959, Richard Fullerton worked on an exploration contract on a cinnabar prospect for the U. S. Bureau of Mines, and John Fullerton with one employee ran the mining operation. The Fullerton brothers still have two bulldozers and a 2-cu-yd-bucket dragline at Colorado Creek, but they have no definite plans for resuming operations there.

#### Miscovich Brothers.

George, John, and Andrew Miscovich mined in 1959 on the lower part of Otter Creek. They use a 1½-cu-yd dragline for mining, and they also have a backhoe in the cut to aid the dragline in digging out corners. The gravel is dumped into a hopper and is carried by conveyor belt to the

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Fig. 8. Maslovich Brothers mining operation on Otter Creek.



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Fig. 9. Nozzle arrangement in dump box at head of sluiceway, Miscovich Brothers.

sluiceway. The conveyor unit is 85 ft long and is at a 17-degree angle. It is mounted on rubber-tired wheels so that the lower end can be moved as the dragline moves. The steel sluiceway is on a trestle on rubber-tired wheels, and the riffles are the same as those used by Flat Creek Placers. One bulldozer is used for stripping and another for stacking tailing. Six men comprise the crew. The ground being mined was dredged, but the dredge did not take enough bedrock to get all the pay.

#### Otter Dredging Co.

The Otter Dredging Co, owned and operated by John Ogriz and Arnold Kobler, is mining on Otter Creek about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile upstream from the Miscovich K473-27

brothers operation. The  $3\frac{1}{2}$ -cu-yd-bucket dredge is powered by a diesel engine, and power is transmitted throughout the dredge by belts, pulleys, and shafts. The dredge has a trommel but no stacker; the coarse tailing is carried away by a flume. As in the case of the Miscovich operation, the ground being mined has been dredged before, but not enough bedrock was mined in the first dredging. The crew numbers seven men.

#### Prince Creek Mining Co.

The Prince Creek Mining Co, under the management of S. E. Agoff, is mining on Prince Creek, tributary to Bonanza Creek. Two D-8 tractors are used for mining, one full time and one part time. The one used only part time for mining is fitted with a two-drum Hyster unit that is used to pull a scraper for stacking tailing. A monitor is used at the head of the sluicibox. The upper part of the sluicibox has Hungarian riffles and the lower part has expanded metal lath and matting under punched steel plates. K 119-3

The left limit side of the creek is being mined at present. The gravel is about 8 feet deep, and the muck is 8 to 10 feet deep. Monitors are used for stripping muck. The bulldozers strip the upper half of the gravel, which is barren. The sluicibox concentrate contains large amounts of cinnabar. There is a large volume of gravel upstream from the present cut and in the left limit tributaries to Prince Creek that may be minable, but it has not been prospected.

#### Miscellaneous Information.

There were four mining operations in the Innoko and Iditarod districts that were not visited. Joseph Degnan was reported to be mining with a K 64-7

bulldozer on Mastodon Creek about 25 airline miles northwest of Epir.

Strandberg Mines, Inc. mined as usual on Colorado Creek, and it was reported that only enough ground remained for one more season of mining.

Rosander and Gates mined on Bear Creek, tributary to Graham Creek, tributary to Colorado Creek. This operation is managed by "Tex" Gates

and apparently is financed by Toivu Rosander. Jules Stuver and his brother, Joe, were reported to be mining on Moore Creek between Flat and McGrath.

On the ridge between Flat Creek and Chicken Creek, small-scale placer mining has been carried on almost to the top of the ridge. The placer deposits on the ridge are considered to be residual deposits



Fig. 10. Claim stakes at 25-ft intervals at the head of Flat Creek. ~~Staking~~ Staking of lode claims over placer claims by the Alaska-Canadian Mining and Exploration Co. Ltd.

formed by the weathering of a monzonite intrusion in which there are numerous narrow, gold-bearing, quartz veins. This is the area in K173-57 which the Alaska-Canadian Mining and Exploration Co, Ltd, blanketed pre-existing placer claims with 50-ft-wide lode claims. According to a recent news release, the company plans to spend \$125,000 on the property in 1960.

The dredge on Flat Creek owned by the North American Dredging Co is idle, and it was reported to be for sale. Kx 73-9

Most of the freight into the Innoko District goes by truck from Sterling Landing below McGrath on the Kuskokwim River; the length of truck haul is about 45 miles. There is also a good gravel road from Ophir to Takotna. Freighting into the Iditarod District is a more difficult problem. For the 1959 season, the Fullertons had their fuel-oil and other supplies brought in before the Spring break-up by a "flying boxcar" that landed on a temporary winter-time strip built by levelling the snow with bulldozers. They intend to have supplies brought in the same way in the future.