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JAN 15 1948  
B. D. STEWART  
Commissioner of Mines.

TERRITORY OF ALASKA  
DEPARTMENT OF MINES  
COLLEGE, ALASKA

January 7, 1948

Mr. B.D. Stewart, Commissioner of Mines  
Territorial Department of Mines  
P.O. Box 2811  
Juneau, Alaska

Gold Placers of Firth River  
Yukon Territory, Canada

Dear Mr. Stewart:

Enclosed is a short report on the Gold Placers of the Firth River, Yukon Territory, Canada. The information and descriptions contained in the report were obtained from Mr. Lon Philpott, a prospector from the Firth River, currently in Fairbanks purchasing supplies and equipment which will be shipped to the Firth River when he returns there in the next few days.

Mr. Philpott does not claim to be an experienced prospector nor does he profess to know anything about geology. The report has been pieced together from information that he was able to give to me. The attached sketches crudely picture how the deposits occur. These sketches were made primarily from a word description and some human interest photographs.

Last summer Mr. Philpott made a trip up the Firth River and crossed the boarder into Alaska. He seemed quite impressed with what he found there but would not volunteer any information. He said that he would not return to the Alaska side of the boarder until the land was opened to public entry. However, he intends to go as soon as he can aquire mining claims that would not be contested by the U.S. Government.

It is hoped that the enclosed report will supplement, in a small way, the information that you now have on the Firth River in the Juneau Office.

Yours very truly,

  
Bruce I. Thomas

Encl.

1948

GOLD PLACERS OF THE FIRTH RIVER  
YUKON TERRITORY CANADA\*

NOTED  
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G. D. STEWART

The gold placer strike on the Firth River is reported to be in the region of the Richardson and British Mountains, Yukon Territory, Canada, approximately thirty miles from the Alaska - Yukon Territory Boundary, and approximately thirty miles from the shore of the Beauford Sea. Gold has been found over an area approximately thirty miles in length extending upstream from where the Firth River leaves the Richardson Mountains and enters the Arctic Coastal plain into the British Mountains to the south. The Firth River, in this area, is entrenched forty to one hundred feet in the bedrock of the old valley floor forming a canyon, averaging approximately one hundred fifty feet in width, with almost vertical walls. The river is quite turbulent along its course through this canyon, and during summer months cannot be forded nor is it safe to travel on with small boat or canoe. During the summer the area is traversed on foot, by staying on one side of the river or the other, along the old valley floor or on the hillside slopes. During the winter dog teams travel over the river ice. At the present time prospectors and miners are entering the area from Aklavik, on the Mackenzie River, and from Herschel on Herschel Island. Royal Canadian Police are stationed at both these small communities.

The old valley floor, in which the Firth River is now entrenched, is several hundred to several thousand feet wide. The alluvium is four to eight feet deep along the top of the canyon which forms the banks of the present stream. Considerable coarse slide rock is found, in places,

\* Compiled from information furnished by Lon Philpott, prospector from Firth River, during a conversation with Bruce I. Thomas of the Territorial Department of Mines, Fairbanks, Alaska

near the margins of the valley walls at and near the hillside slopes. The gravel is medium size, permanently frozen, and covered with a thin veneer of muck and tundra. Placer gold has been found on bedrock near the edge and along the top of the present canyon. The gold is reported to be about the size of small rice grains, with occasional pieces about the size and shape of flakes of oat meal. It is bright in color and appears to have a fineness of about 900. The gravel near bedrock, where gold is found, contains a small amount of clay or sediment, but the upper gravels are quite clean.

Gold has been panned from the bars along the present river course. The confinement of the river, in its narrow entrenched course, precludes access to the bars except during very low stages of water.

Placer claims are being staked along both sides of the Firth River. The claims extend from the top of the canyon rim to the toe of the hillside slopes.

Some timber is found along the Firth Valley near the northern section of the present known gold belt. This timber is suitable for fuel and the construction of small log cabins. At the present time there are several cabins along this section of the river that were built many years ago.

At various places along the top of the rim of the canyon an occasional old sluice box is found. These sluice boxes are made from whipsawed lumber and also from boards hewed by hand. The evidence of old whipsaw pits are also found. It has been reported that two eskimos, from Herschel Island, used some of these old sluice boxes during the summer of 1947 for sluicing gravel mined from the rim of the canyon. The boxes were set near the edge of water and the gravel packed to them in five gallon buckets down the steep canyon slope. Approximately \$10.00 worth of gold a day was recovered by this method.

The following sketches were made by Bruce Thomas from a word description as given by Lon Philpott and should not be construed as a true picture of any given location. They only illustrate the nature and occurrence of the placer deposits as described to the author.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bruce I. Thomas", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce I. Thomas  
Associate Mining Engineer  
Territorial Department of Mines

Y P O S

Gravel 4'-8'  
Deep

Gold Panned  
from Bars

Gravel  
Bar

Firth River

Firth River is entrenched 40'-100'  
in bedrock & claims are  
being staked on benches  
on both sides of stream.

(Litho)

Y P O S

Claims Staked

Gold panned near  
rim

Claims Staked

Gravel 4'-8' deep

Gravel 4'-8' deep

Firth River  
entrenched  
40'-100' in bed-  
rock

Cross-Section Firth River

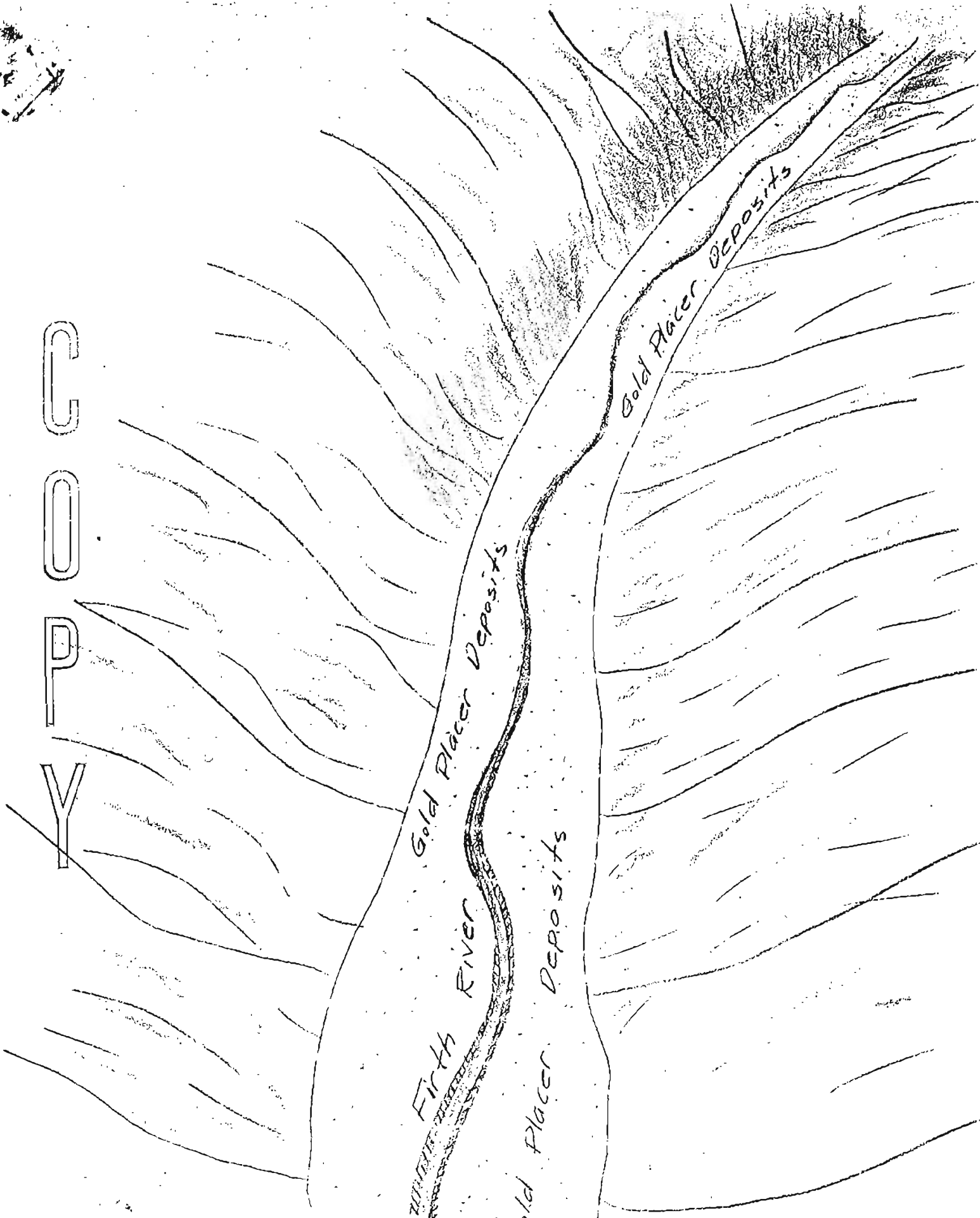
COPY

Firth RIVER

Gold Placer Deposits

Gold Placer Deposits

Gold Placer Deposits



*[Handwritten signature or initials]*

12/26/47

NOTED

15 1948

12/26/47

JESSIE

### Firth River Gold Claims Staked 30 Miles Along Stream

The number of claims staked on Firth River had increased from around 50 in the summer to more than 200 in November with more prospectors heading for the area by plane and dog team, according to a report brought out to Edmonton by Nels Leland, Aklavik prospector of 20 years' standing, and reprinted in the Dawson Weekly News.

Placer findings along the Firth River, 180 miles northwest of Aklavik, have developed to the extent that scores of Canadians have made a late season rush to the area and have staked claims for over 30 miles along both sides of the river.

Leland reported that samples of the gold reaching Aklavik have the whole population excited and even waitresses from the restaurants are trying to get to the claim sites.

"There seems to be plenty of gold there," Mr. Leland said. "I have seen nuggets the size of peas and in some places several dollars worth of gold dust can be panned in one swish of a frying pan."

Ill health forced Mr. Leland to leave Aklavik at the start of the rush, but he has staked claims by proxy and received first hand reports of the progress of the area before he left Aklavik.

The list of northern prospectors drawn to the shores of the Firth river by the find reads like a "Who's Who of the North West Territories."

Among those on the discovery claim are Poole Field, gold hunter in the north since the rush of '98 to the Yukon; Jack Mulholland, a wide-ranging prospector who has found gold in the famous Nahanula valley; Alex Stefan-sson; and Nazar Zinceruk, who has been along the Mackenzie, Nahanni and Arctic coast for 15 years.

About half of the claims have been staked by Eskimos from Aklavik and the surrounding area.

The Firth empties into the Arctic Ocean and the main area is about four days' travel from the mouth of the river.

Prospectors have been reaching the claims by boat along the Arctic coast from Aklavik, reported Mr. Leland, but with the arrival of winter they are flying in by the one small plane stationed at Aklavik, or are starting overland by dog team. The plane, carrying only one passenger, is going steadily during daylight hours taking in men.

Mr. Leland is hoping the field will mean the rich end of the gold trail that has led men over the northern wastes for years.

### Firth River Prospector Here For Supplies

Lon Philpott, who says he is the only American holding ground in the Firth River area, where the new gold strike has been made, arrived in Fairbanks this week, coming here by way of dog team to Barter Island, and plane from there.

Philpott, who owns 32 claims in the area came in to get supplies, which he intends to fly from here by charter plane.

"I'll never have to listen for the whistle again," is the way he expressed his faith in achieving a fortune from the new strike.

Philpott, who served with the armed forces during World War II first heard of the possibilities of the area from an old prospector, Dan McKinnon, while he was working for the Arctic Contractors at the Barrow project.

Becoming interested in the strike, he went over to investigate for himself, with the result that he is confident that he has made his fortune.



### Seward Mayor Gets Damages For Libel

Mayor Clarence P. Keating of Seward was awarded \$2,100 damages from H. Everett Hoy recently in a libel suit heard in the Third District Court.

Keating sued Hoy for \$20,000 after the American Legion post at Seward of which Hoy was commander printed an advertisement stating that Keating was not a veteran of the armed forces. Keating produced in court a discharge paper showing he was in the army in Hawaii from 1931 to 1934.

The advertisement appeared in both Anchorage and Seward papers at the time Keating was running for the legislature.

### POSITION IN ARIZONA

Dr. Zola Fineman, agronomist at the Matanuska Experiment Station for the last two years, is leaving shortly for Arizona where he has accepted a position with the University of Arizona. His term of service with the Experiment Station expires December 31.



### PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Corner Cushman and 7th.  
N. Harry Champlin, Minister  
Sunday

- 10:00 a.m.—Sunday School.
- 10:00 a.m.—Tava Clubs.
- 10:00 a.m.—Men of the Church' Class
- 11:00 a.m.—Morning Worship.
- 11:00 a.m.—Nursery.
- 3:00 p.m.—Eskimo Service and Sunday School.
- 4:30 p.m.—Junior High Club.

### Lutheran Junior Choir Broadcasts

The Junior Choir of the Lutheran Church broadcast a 15-minute program of Christmas carols over KFAR Tuesday evening at 8:30. Mrs. J. A. Luthro directs the group, which ranges in ages from 8 to 14 years. Pastor Luthro announced the broadcast.

The roster of choir members includes Milton Benschhoff, Robert and Ronald Bliven, Jo Ann Boyd, Irene Bruland, David Branholt, Gary Butcher, Pearl Brasker, Colleen Clay, Al Dorsh, Karen Grill, Rodney Langlo, Fred Lewis, Jean Lee, Kenneth Schuff, Opal Schuff, Lynn Stolen, Jean Take, Terry Thomas, Diane Van Scoy, Eddie and Richard Wagner.

New surplices, provided for the group by the Ladies' Aid, were worn for the first time at the Sunday School Christmas program last Sunday evening.

The choir practices each Thursday afternoon at 3:45, and sings occasionally at the morning worship at the Lutheran Church.

### PLANTS IMPORTED FROM NORWAY

Rasmus O. Urdahl of Kodiak recently received gooseberry bushes and currant cuttings from his childhood home near Bergen, Norway, for planting on his homestead on Mission Road. He plans to experiment with the plants to see how they grow in Alaska.

- 11:00 a.m.—Morning Worship.
- 7:00 p.m.—Christ Ambassadors.
- 8:00 p.m.—Evangelistic Service. Wednesday
- 9:30 a.m.—Listen to "Sermons in Song" over KFAR.
- 7:45 p.m.—Midweek Service. Friday
- 7:45 p.m.—Singspiration.

### PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF GOD of NENANA

Sunday School—2 p.m. Classes for all ages.  
Evening Service—7:30 p.m.  
Mid Week Service—Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.