M.G. Johnson 1972
USGS Bull 1356

(61)

2470 0016

Item 16

19. Placer: Island Mountain district (Gold Creek)

Location: Alluvial basin north of Island Mountain, in the unnamed mountains between the Owyhee River and the Bruneau River. T. 44 N., R. 55-56 E.

Topographic maps: Mount Velma 15-minute quadrangle

Geologic maps: Coash, ~~J. R.,~~ 1967, ~~Geology~~ Geologic map of the Mount Velma quadrangle, Elko County, Nevada: ~~Nevada Bur. Mines Bull. 68,~~ (~~plate 1~~), scale 1:62,500

Access: From Elko, 66 miles north on State Highway 11 and 43 to the Wild Horse Reservoir; from there a dirt road leads east paralleling Penrod Creek about 4 miles to Island Mountain and vicinity.

Extent: Placers occur in the alluvial basin on the north side of Island Mountain (N½ sec. 18, T. 44 N., R. 56 E.) and along Gold Creek, Hammond Canyon, and Coleman Canyon which drain south into the basin (N½ T. 44 N., R. 55 and 56 E.). Most of the placer mining was concentrated in the shallow gravels of the alluvial basin which is about 1½ miles east-west and 1 mile north-south. The gravels were worked to an average depth of 7 feet, and much coarse gold, including nuggets valued at $50, was recovered.

Production: The Island Mountain placers were discovered in 1873 by Emanuel Penrod, C. Rouselle, and W. Newton; Penrod and a few other miners worked the gravels with primitive methods for about 20 years before outside capital became interested in the area. Penrod's claims occupied most of the alluvial basin. The early production is estimated at about $800,000, and those who worked the area reportedly recovered as much as $1 in gold per hour of labor on the gravels. Ambitious plans were made in 1897 to construct a ditch from the Sunflower Reservoir (built to store water for placer mining) to the placer deposits, but the ditch was not completed and the boom placer mining days of Island Mountain ended.

Placer mining was sporadic during this century until 1934 when small-scale placer mining again became common. This activity lasted until the late 1950's

Source: The placer gold is thought to have been derived from small gold lodes to the north of the alluvial basin, and to have been transported south along Gold Creek and the creeks in Hammond Canyon and Coleman Canyon. The small gold lodes are found as vein and replacement deposits in pre-Cenozoic rocks ~~exposed to the north;~~ the replacement deposits are associated with a small intrusive of probable Cretaceous age which occurs between Hammond and Coleman Canyon. The placer gold ~~might~~ may have been derived from this area, ~~but this is not certain.~~ Coash (1967, p. 19) states that much of the material in the placer gravels is similar to older prevolcanic gravels, and the placer gravels, although postvolcanic (late Tertiary) in age, may have been derived from reworking of the prevolcanic (early Tertiary) gravels.

Literature:

Burchard, 1883: Placer mining operations; production in 1882.

Coash, 1967: Source and age of placer gravels; history and early production.

Engineering and Mining Journal, 1896a: Placer mining developments by Gold Creek Mining Company; high value of placer ground; average value.

_____1897b: Test pit on Gold Creek near the mouth of Hope Gulch yielded $7.35 in gold from 5 cubic yards of gravel.

_____1897c: Reports failure of Gold Creek Mining Company to pay employees and states amount of attachments placed on the property.

_____1898: Discusses reasons for failure of Gold Creek Mining Company; reports resale of the property.

Lincoln, 1923: History.

Murbarger, 1957: Early history of discovery, production, and mining at Island Mountain.

Paher, 1970: History of the development of Gold Creek (Island Mountain); photographs of town, miners, and hydraulic mining.

Smith and Vanderburg, 1932: History of early placer mining operations; early production per day per man; problems in placer mining; (name of placer creek erroneously given as Gold Run Creek instead of Gold Creek).

Vanderburg, 1936: Early history; placer mining operations in 1934-35; distribution of gold in gravels; size of gold recovered; source.

Whitehill, [1875]: History of placer discovery and early operations; production.