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Item 43

20. Placer: Tuscarora district

Location: South East slope of Mount Blitzen in the Tuscarora Range. T. 39-40 N., R. 51 E.

Topographic maps: Tuscarora 15-minute quadrangle; Mount Blitzen 15-minute quadrangle.

Geologic maps: Granger, ~~A. E.,~~ Bell, ~~M. M.,~~ Simmons, ~~G. C.,~~ and Lee, ~~F.,~~ 1957, ~~Geology and mineral resources~~ Reconnaissance Geologic map of Elko County, Nevada: ~~Nevada Bur. Mines Bull. 54,~~ (plate 1), scale ~1:250,000

Nolan, ~~T. B.,~~ 1936, ~~The~~ Sketch map of Tuscarora mining district, Elko County, Nevada: ~~Nevada Bur. Mines Bull. 25,~~ (plate 1), scale 1 3/4" = 2000'

Access: From Elko, 45 miles northwest on State Highway 11 to junction with State Highway 18; from there it is 10 miles west to Tuscarora on State Highway 18.

Extent: The placers in the Tuscarora district are largely confined to the low hills southwest of Tuscarora and north of McCann Creek (secs. 3-4; 9-10, T. 39 N., R. 51 E., Tuscarora quadrangle). Both hillside and gulch gravels were placered to depths varying from 4 to 10 feet. Other placers were worked on the south side of Beard Hill (sec. 7, T. 39 N., R. 51 E., Mount Blitzen quadrangle).

Production: The Tuscarora placers were discovered in 1867 by the Beard Brothers, Mr. McCan, (sic) and Mr. Heath, prospectors from Austin. They found gold in small quantities for 3 miles along McCann Creek; news of the discovery reached Austin and soon an influx of miners lead to the discovery of placers and lodes in the hills north of the creek. Nuggets weighing 1 ounce were commonly found in the shallow gravel. Most of the early work was done by sluicing, and, to aid these operations, ditches were built to carry water 3 to 6 miles to the placers. The placer ground was turned over to the Chinese in 1869 and American miners began work on the silver mines to the north at Tuscarora. The Chinese placer miners reportedly recovered $2 to $15 per day per man. Early estimates of placer production stated that the placers yielded about $7,000,000 but Nolan (1936, p. 14) after studying production records concludes that placer production did not exceed $700,000.

The placers have been worked only sporadically in this century. The largest recovery occurred in 1902, 1905, and 1909; very small amounts of gold was recovered in other years. The operation in 1909 was hydraulic mining by the Nevada Hydraulic Mining and Milling Company; the company owned 480 acres of placer ground where the gravels ranged from 4 to 15 feet deep. The value of the gravels was said to range from $1 to $3.50 per cubic yard, but the amount of gold recovered indicates that the operation was not a financial success.

Source: The gold in the placers were derived from the small gold veins and stringers found in bedded volcanic rocks in the area southwest of Tuscarora. The age of mineralization is 38 m.y. (Oligocene-Eocene). The gold-lode deposits are confined to this area as are the placers. Parts of the hillside gravels may have been residual concentrations of gold, as reports by the Nevada Hydraulic Mining and Milling Company indicate that a gold ledge was found below placer gravels. The U.S. Geological Survey is currently studying this area in detail.

Literature:

Browne, 1868: Discovery history; early placer mining operations; production; distribution of gold.

Emmons, 1910: History; production; distribution of gold; size of gold; early placer mining operations.

Lincoln, 1923: History.

Martin, 1931: Production estimates; early history of placer discovery and mining.

Mining World, 1907b: Plans of Nevada Hydraulic Mining and Milling Co. to work placer ground; acres owned; depth of gravel; average value of gravel;

Nolan, 1936b: History; early production estimates (revises Emmons, 1910 estimate); locates placer claims; placer mining operations in 1932; source of placer gold in that operation; source of placer gold in old placer operations.

Roberts and others, 197 : Age of mineralization in district.

Vanderburg, 1936: Early history and production; extent of placered area; names richest gulches; depth of gravel; size of gold particles; size of largest nugget found; source; placer mining operations 1931-35; indicates potential dredging ground based on report by Emmons (1910).

Whitehill, [1873]: Placer mining 1869-1872; number of miners; average yield per day per man.