

Whitehorse Copper Mines, Ltd.

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THE COPPER CHIEF

The first reports of copper in the Whitehorse area were from miners on their way to the Klondike goldfields around 1897-98. During 1898-99 most of the presently-known showings were staked in a strip, some 4-miles wide and 17-miles long, and became known as the Whitehorse Copper Belt.

CHARLIE BREFALT

A handsome, twinkling-eyed Swede, Charlie Brefalt, yearned for adventure from the town of his birth, Amotfors, Sweden. Charlie, born in 1886, migrated to America in 1909 at age 23 to learn hardrock mining in Denver, Colorado.

After various mining work, he ended up in Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho until 1916, this particular district similar ~~xxxxxxx~~ geologically to the Keno Hill district where Charlie would end up years later as discoverer of the important Elsa mine.

But before going to Keno Hill, Charlie had stopped by the Whitehorse Copper Belt in 1916, working in the Pueblo Mine near Whitehorse. But a little panicky over the condition of the Pueblo, and not able to convince anyone to repair the badly-sagging timbers of the soggy mine owned by Yukon Copper Ltd., Charlie moved onto the Keno district.

And a month later in March, 1917, the Pueblo cave-in buried 16 men, six of whom were never recovered.

According to the Weekly Star, Friday, April 6, 1917, regarding the Pueblo Mine cave-in, Inspectors Arthur Bell and Dan McDonald found the Pueblo cave-in to be an unavoidable accident, the collapse of the stopes to have been from the many water courses which washed away the silt, sand, etc., which acted as binders.

The Pueblo, known as a "wet mine", and there were many water courses throughout the property, and it was probable the water had accumulated in some unknown chamber in such volume as to cause great pressure, and

this pressure would find an exit at the point of least resistance.....

.....the system of timbering in the Pueblo was what was known as "square setting", a system considered the strongest and safest known. The inspectors believed the timbering to be done in a scientific and workmanlike manner, and evidence showed no shortage of timber, tools or machinery.

And it was found that the management of the Yukon Copper, Ltd., working the mine used every possible and known precaution they considered necessary to safeguard the lives of employees and had gone so far by using solid bulkheads of timber.

The Pueblo was the largest producer and shipped in the vicinity of 140,000 tons of ore. Following the cave-in, the mine was shut down, but was subsequently reopened by Atlas Copper Ltd.

In the opinion of management at that time, all the ore extractable was removed. The Pueblo resulted in a severe financial loss, due mostly to the cost of pumping and timbering the wet mine. The ground, soft and difficult to hold, was taking on 500 to 600 gallons per minute. The pumping accomplished by steam power, using wood for fuel, was a very expensive process.

In October 5, 1917, Atlas Copper Ltd. closed down the Pueblo, the announcement coming from Mr. H. Wheeler, General Manager of White Pass & Yukon Route, an Atlas Copper Ltd. Board Member.

Only two more shipments went out from the Pueblo, after the company changed in 1927 to Richmond Yukon Co. Ltd. One shipment went out in 1929, another in 1930.

The (~~tongue n' groove styled~~) 3-storey bunkhouse, built in 1914 at the Pueblo Copper Mine was the best of its class in the North, with accommodations for 68 men, and in addition to sleeping apartments, had both hot and cold running water, five baths, flush toilets, a reading room recreation room and all other modern conveniences.

INSERT

FIRST CLAIM

The credit for staking the first claim in the Whitehorse Copper Belt goes to Jack McIntyre who located the Copper King, July 6, 1898. The Ora, a near-by claim, was staked by John Hanley also on the same date.

In the following year the district was fairly well prospected on the surface and most of the important claims were discovered and staked.

In 1899 trails were constructed to several of the claims from Whitehorse and development work was started at the Copper King, Anacond and Pueblo.

made in 1903.

This was principally due to the owners McIntyre and Granger. Both these gentlemen, whose names are associated with two local mountains, lost their lives around the Whitehorse area--McIntyre drowned and Granger suffocated in the shaft.

GRAFTER

The Grafter ranked among the more important mines in the district. Situated about a mile north of the Arctic Chief, a wagon road of 7.3 miles connected the Grafter with the White Pass railway terminus.

The Grafter was staked August 5, 1899^a, by William Woodney, and in the following years a shallow shaft was sunk. In 1901 the claim was bonded to a local syndicate, and the next year the shaft was continued to the 50 foot depth. Work was resumed in 1907 by Robert Lowe.

The ore shipped from the Grafter averaged about \$3.00 per ton at that time.

VALERIE

The Valerie was another apparently good producer, staked August 22, 1899 by Gustave Gervais. The early development work consisted in sinking shallow shafts on the principal ore outcroppings, from which 40 tons of high-grade chalcopryite ore was shipped in 1904.

In 1907 A. B. Palmer of Whitehorse did more development work and discovered more important ore bodies. Located west of the head of Miles Canyon, about 3 miles south of the Arctic Chief, a wagon road, 2.5 miles long to Wigan station on the WP & YR railway was under construction in 1909.

OTHER CLAIMS

Other claims in the Whitehorse Copper Belt were:

The Best Chance staked on July 7, 1899, by Angus McKinnon, in the valley of McIntyre Creek, directly east of the Grafter. Adjoining this claim was the Retribution. North of the Retribution was the Empress of Indian, and to the north, the Spring Creek claim.

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Then the Pueblo and Copper King. Eastwardly it was the Carlisle, owned at the turn-of-the-century by Yukon Pueblo Mines Company.

West of Porter Creek was the Anaconda, ^{staked by W. H. Puckett} near the northern end of the copper belt. Rabbit Foot was staked July 7, 1899 by Ole Dickson.

The War Eagle was staked July 16, 1899 by Sam McGee, but in 1907 this claim was taken over by Caldwell, Pyntz, Lucas and Kesler.

Other claims in the southern copper belt were the Copper Cliff, the North Star, Keewenaw, Buckingham, Hoodoo, the Jo Jo, Yukon Belle, Josephine, Black and Brown Cubs.

OLD CLAIMS REVISITED

The Arctic Chief is located near the center of the copper belt, a wagon road of 7.1 miles connecting it with the railway at Whitehorse. The Arctic Chief was staked July 12, 1899 by Capt. John Irving of Victoria. In 1908 the Arctic Chief went under bond to the Arctic Chief Copper Mines Company of Spokane.

This claim's ore body outcropped on rising ground and was opened via a tunnel, development work first starting in 1902, work progressing very slowly. Other claims in the area developed only slightly by 1909 were the Whitehorse, Golden Gate, Suburban in the Corvette group, and the Verona.

LITTLE CHIEF

Little Chief claim is situated a short distance north of the Valerie containing important surface showings. By 1909 practically no work had been done on this claim which was first staked September 15, 1898 by Andrew Oleson, and in 1899 was sold to Josia Collins.

BIG CHIEF

The Big Chief claim adjoins the Little Chief on the north, staked on September 15, 1898 by William McTaggart, also bought by Josia Collins. By 1909 the claim had been worked for several years with no shipments to

its credit.

Around the year 1909, and previous to that date, the Whitehorse ores were shipped for treatment to various smelters, transportation charges from the mines to the smelters by wagon, rail and steamer amounted to \$8 to \$10 per ton.

WAGES

Wages in the copper belt were not any higher than British Columbia, hand miners receiving from \$3.50 to \$4.00 per day with board for an 8-hour day.

Labourers received \$3.50 for a 10-hour day. Carpenters and blacksmiths about \$4.00 to \$5.00 and engineers \$5.00 to \$6.00 per day.

Supplies, expensive because of inward freight rates, were \$50 to \$60 and more per ton. Drifting with hand drills usually cost about \$15.00 per foot, and sinking about \$30 to \$40 per foot.

The hand-picked ore shipments were made between 1900 to 1909, and development work and production went on in the Whitehorse Copper Belt from 1915 to 1920, until the price of copper drastically ^{dropped} shut the producing mines down.

During 1926 to about 1929 drilling was performed, but the stock market crash and the Great Depression closed mining to a stand-still until the 1940s.

From 1946 to 1948 some geophysical work, trenching and diamond drilling commenced again on the old workings--mostly the Little Chief, Middle Chief, Big Chief, Valerie and Pueblo.

IMPERIAL MINES

Imperial Mines and Metals Limited was formed in 1954 and acquired claims in the copper belt in 1955, resuming work on old claims such as the Arctic Chief and Big Chief.

In 1957 the company's name was changed to New Imperial Mines, and mining began in 1966 on the open-pit Little Chief, following a ten-year sales agreement with Sumitomo Metal Mining Company in Japan.

Milling began in May, 1967, producing ore concentrates of gross sales value of about 3.9 million dollars. By 1968 sales were up to \$7 million. The company owns 682 claims, spread over approximately 16 miles of the Whitehorse Copper Belt, and milling about 2,000 tons per day.

By 1969 millfeed was coming from both the Arctic Chief and Little Chief open pits. And that same year development work was being completed on the War Eagle. Also in November, 1969, underground development work was under way.

Due to an extremely low metal price, New Imperial shut down in June, 1971, and reopened as Whitehorse Copper Mines, Ltd., a joint-venture with Hudson Bay Mining & Smelting Co., in December, 1972. This was the beginning of an underground mining operation rather than open pitting.

Today Whitehorse Copper Mines employs over 200 Whitehorse residents in the 24-hour per day mining operation.

Today Whitehorse Copper ~~uses~~ conventional flotation methods to produce the copper concentrate, which is packed in 25-ton containers and shipped by White Pass & Yukon Route trucks, transferred to WP & YR rail in Whitehorse for the 110-mile haul to Skagway, by ship to Vancouver, and ultimately by train to the smelter in Noranda, Quebec.

Hudson Bay Mining and Exploration has been conducting extensive and aggressive exploration work in the Whitehorse Copper Belt this summer, some of these old-known properties being re-examined with the lower-grade deposits than on the Little Chief (currently being mined.) Some of the exploration properties include the War Eagle, Valerie and Black Cub areas.

In 1973 Whitehorse Copper produced \$2.6 million worth of copper, compared with \$6.1 million worth in the first half of 1974, the increase due to high-grade ore this year, as well as a greater percentage of

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will recovery of the copper, and there's a higher market price--which may not last too long.

Some more optimistic news from Whitehorse Copper Mines was the announcement of additional ore reserves at the south end ~~and~~ on the 1830 level of the present-producing orebody.

~~Keeping~~

Appreciative of the Whitehorse Copper Mine being kept open are the residents of Whitehorse--as well as all Yukoners--and Vic Jutronic, the mine manager for the past two years at Whitehorse Copper, is making sure the mine keeps operating. Assistant manager is Jack Walsh, who managed the Wellgreen Mine during its ~~xxxx~~ 14-month lifetime.

Filler

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Assay returns are always exciting. The assays give a definite metal content and value. Sometimes the answer is pleasantly surprising; sometimes downright great; but often the results are disappointing. But prospectors are an optimistic group. And often they talk about a mine before the returns are in.

Hector Morrison discovered the Lucky Queen in the Keno area on February 20, 1920. But he was approaching 70 years old by the time he'd found the vein. A man who'd lived frugally on beans and rabbits all his life, Morrison suddenly started dressing well, going to dances, wearing cologne.

Without a family and with \$60,000 he struck up a correspondence with a friend's widow--and married her at age 76.

Grace MacKay was 40 years younger than Morrison, but they married on September 19, 1931, Morrison's first marriage at 76, and they lived happily ever after for 8 years. Then he died on Christmas Eve in 1939, and she lived happily ever after for 30 years quite well off financially.