

## ACTIVITY IN MORMON BASIN

### Mines Being Opened Up And Stamp Mills Installed.

Judge Newbury, who has just returned from Mormon Basin, says that he found the owners of properties in that district generally at work developing them. At the Tarball property, on the south side near the lower end of the Basin, the Boston company who purchased it the last week in August for \$50,000, have a force of men at work and an engineer in charge. It has already erected good bunk and mess houses and office, with water in all, brought from a big spring on the mountain side; a timbered shaft house with eight inches square sawed timber and a heavy hoist. It is said that machinery is on the way for a ten-samp mill. This property is near the mill of the Humboldt group, owned by Coates Brothers of San Bernardino, California, who also own the Sunday Hill group, at the head of the Basin, they also own some of the placer ground and the water ditches in the Basin.

He went to examine the Morning Star group, which is on the north side of the Basin and near the summit of the mountain. The work has been completed for this year. The underground workings are well timbered with sawed timbers. They have over 400 feet of underground work, 100 of which is a shaft. Four ledges have been opened and the veins carry good values. There is a sawmill one and a half miles from the mine, with good timber and a good road from mill to mine, where timber can be delivered for twelve dollars a thousand and wood for three dollars a cord. If judiciously developed there will be a mine there that will be a large and rich one.

One mile east of this the California Commercial Mining company, of Portland, W. E. King, manager, is being developed and ore is being taken out for milling.

The adjoining property, owned by the Oregon City company, Peter Wills manager, is being worked.

The Rainbow, adjoining the two last named properties, owned by Head and Conley, is being worked continuously and their ore hauled two miles to the Golden Gate mill, on Dixie creek. They are operating this mill night and day. He was informed by the operators that it produced fifty dollars to the ton.

To the northwest of the Morning Star several properties are being developed, among them the Gold Ridge mine, which, he was informed by freighters, had hauled ten tons of coal per day for forty days from Durkee, and are awaiting another shipment, it being cheaper than wood.

There are four good roads from all directions to the Basin, from Durkee, Huntington, Malheur and Bridgeport.

As extensive and judicious development proceeds, the Mormon Basin district will be recognized as a rich mineral section and is already attracting the attention of mine investors. It is reached by the new and old wagon road from Sumpter via

McEwen to Hereford, Bridgeport and Clarks creek, distance sixty miles. From Durkee on the O. R. & N., by way of Rye Valley, it is twenty miles.

### OLD "BLUE BUCKET" STORY REVIVED.

History records the fact that gold was first discovered on the Pacific Coast by John Marshall, at Sutter's Mill, in what is now El Dorado county, California, in 1848.

As a matter of fact, gold was found by an old emigrant train on the old Steve Meek's cut-off, in Crook or Harney county, in eastern Oregon, between the Malheur and Deschutes rivers in 1855. This fact can be yet sufficiently attested by living witnesses.

In giving my version of the Blue Bucket diggings, as they are familiarly called, I will explain how it came to me and by whom. My grandfather and his family were in the wagon train that broke the trail afterward known as Meek's cut-off. My father was at that time a boy fourteen years of age. He told me the full particulars in a different country, having removed from Oregon in 1869. It was not the train he was in that found the gold, but the one following them, and he repeated to me from memory the story as told at the time, being unmixed with the version of modern years.

The train encamped on a small stream somewhere along the rim of Harney basin, there being hills to the northward and the level stretch of the desert to the south. A freshet had sluiced out the gulch leaving the bedrock bare. A lady passing over this bare bedrock picked up some yellow pieces of metal and came into camp, carrying it in her apron and calling attention to it. No one seemed to know what it was and when asked how much of the metal she could have picked up had she wished, she pointed to a wooden water bucket painted blue and replied she thought she could have picked up the bucket full in a little while; hence the name given this lost mine, "the Blue Bucket Diggings."

The suggestion made by someone that it might be gold brought the wise men to the fore. He is ever with us, and it is upon these special occasions that he is wont to exhibit his marvelous wisdom. He explained that gold and silver were the only metals that had a natural ring to them (he had evidently forgotten that it was the alloy in the coin that gave it the "ring"). He forthwith hammered a piece out flat on the wagon tire and tested it for the ring. As it would not ring, he promptly pronounced it brass, (he had also evidently forgotten that brass was not a specific metal, but composition) hence sometime called the Wagon Tire Diggings.

Some of this gold found its way into the Willamette valley, being preserved as curios, but it was not until later the discover of gold in California that those people knew what they had found and lost upon the old immigrant trail.

The old blue Bucket has never been rediscovered. A much credited version that Canyon City was the place is undoubtedly erroneous. After a personal examination I am confident upon this point.

Another error made by those old pioneers, and it is still extant, is the

confounding of Crooked river with the John Day river. They struck the Crooked river near Prineville, and mistook it for the John Day. They did not touch the John Day, leaving it to the north and eastward of their route.—John L. Riggs, of Marvin, Oregon, in Oregonian.

### TO DEVELOP JOHN DAY COAL FIELDS.

Tony Mohr and Local Associates  
Will Start Operations Soon.

Anthony Mohr, who has the management of 1,200 acres of John Day coal lands, which he owns in conjunction with local associates, states that work on the development of the deposits is to be started this fall, or winter. He rather thinks he will get around to it this fall.

Mr. Mohr, who has thoroughly prospected the ground, states that from surface indications the John Day coal is of a better quality than that found at Heppner, which the O. R. & N. has recently proved to be well suited to railroad purposes.

The lands controlled by Mr. Mohr and associates are located south of Fossil, in the John Day Valley, and there are three beds of coal, ranging in thickness from five to forty feet. The samples secured from the outcroppings, show a good per cent of fixed carbon, and there is every evidence that the deposit when developed will prove a good quality of coal and of enormous extent. Another item in favor of the company is that the Bonta railroad will go within striking distance of the lands, thus furnishing transportation facilities.

The recent tests of Heppner coal made by the O. R. & N. has excited interest anew in the John Day coal deposits. It is stated that these tests proved entirely satisfactory, proving that the Heppner coal, if anything is better for railroad purposes than the Wyoming product.

People here who are conversant with the John Day fields state that the deposits there are even superior in quality to that found at Heppner. It is said that there are good veins ranging in width from eighteen inches to five or six feet near Dayville, Small's bridge, John Day City and Bear Valley, in the John Day country.

Statements are made that the both quality and quantity exist.

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