



THE SUMPTER MINER

WHY THE FRENCHMEN CLOSED THE FLAGSTAFF

Bit of Ancient History Touching "Billy" Reynolds' Squirrel Theory as Applied to Mining.

"W. O. Reynolds, former superintendent of the Ibez mine, later of the White Swan, has a force of men doing special development work at the Flagstaff mine, six miles east of Baker City, owned by a Paris company."

Hidden beneath the above little item, which was printed in yesterday's Miner, is one of the prettiest little mining stories ever written about the eastern Oregon gold fields. The final chapter has not yet been written, the climax has not yet been reached. Still the tale contains all the necessary elements of interest, even if it does lack dramatic fitness.

The Flagstaff mine cost the French Flagstaff company of Paris, France, \$20,000 in American gold. It was a mere prospect when the Yank representative of the Parisians assumed control. A hoisting plant was installed, a 700-foot incline shaft sunk, and a ten-stamp mill erected. All these improvements cost approximately \$130,000, so that the Flagstaff as it stands today represents an investment of \$150,000.

"Billy" Reynolds was superintendent and had charge of the stinking operations. He made the Flagstaff shaft one of the prettiest pieces of mining work in the camp. Crosscuts to the main Flagstaff vein were driven from the 60, 160, 260, 460, and 660-foot levels. Drifts on the vein at the three first-named levels found but little pay ore. The vein was narrow and good gold assays were obtained. The gold was exceedingly fine, however, so that amalgamation was impossible.

Superintendent Reynolds sank the shaft below the 300-foot level, not for ore, but for water. When the 700-foot level was reached and still the shaft was dry as a powder horn, Reynolds suspended operations temporarily, put on his thinking cap, and evolved a theory, which turned out to be correct, and which proves that mining, far from being a

slap-bang sort of business, is an exact science.

On the surface about 140 feet to the north of the main Flagstaff vein, ground squirrels had been busy digging homes. Oddly enough, these squirrel holes were in a direct line, running practically parallel to the trend of the Flagstaff vein. Superintendent Reynolds devoted a whole day to the study of squirrels. The French general manager laughed at him because he squinted down those squirrel holes and because he sampled the squirrel holes dumps. These squirrel holes constituted the ground work of Reynolds' theory. See, now, and judge, how it worked out like the simple rule of three.

Reynolds told the writer about it, one night in the bunk at the White Swan mine, just over a couple of ridges from the Flagstaff. "And, sir," he wound up, "some day I'm going back to the Flagstaff and prove that my theory is right, even to its utmost limits."

The diorite country rock comes almost to the surface on the Flagstaff group, which is located on a barren knoll at an elevation of fully 1,000 feet above Powder river valley. Only a couple of feet of soil affords root-hold for sagebrush and bunchgrass. Because of this fact, and because of the further fact that the squirrel holes, above-mentioned, were in straight line, Reynolds concluded that here was a fissure. And, if there was a fissure vein, 140 feet north of the main Flagstaff vein on the surface, he calculated that a crosscut from the 700-foot level of the Flagstaff shaft, if driven north 140 feet, would intersect that fissure vein, and afford a flow of water.

In brief, that was Reynolds' theory, so down in the dry shaft he sent a crew with machine drills to test its correctness. A crosscut was started, and at a point 138 feet from the shaft a round of machine holes were drilled in the face. Each hole spurted water. The aggregate flow was 140 gallons—enough for all

purposes. The holes were never fired, Reynolds fearing to break into too wet a vein, and not caring to risk the heavy expense of pumping a big flow of water from the 700-foot level (an expense, by the way, which wrecked one or two operators of the adjacent Virtue mine.) The crosscut was bulkheaded, and it today constitutes a subterranean reservoir of adequate capacity.

The water problem solved, Reynolds turned his attention to the ore problem. He hoisted \$10 and \$15 rock from Nos. 1 and 2 levels, but helplessly beheld the gold slime off, the minute particles absolutely refusing to adhere to the amalgam plates. All this was before the cyanide process was perfected, so that it remained for Reynolds to either find better milling ore in the mine, or shut down. The French owners, upon whom assessment after assessment had been levied, advised and almost demanded a shut-down. The French general manager, N. E. Imhaus, however, had faith in Reynolds, and Billy himself turned again to the squirrels.

The squirrel hole vein was known on the Flagstaff maps as the White Frost ledge. Reynolds always called it the Squirrel. He conferred with Imhaus. "I'm going to crosscut from No. 1 to the Squirrel," he announced, and Imhaus told him to go ahead. Eighty feet were driven toward the north from No. 2, and a vein was cut. Good ore came in, and hope was high. Also a horse came in and hope was blasted. "This isn't the Squirrel, anyway," said Reynolds. Forty feet further another vein was cut. It was barren.

The French owners were kept duly informed of the progress of work by weekly reports. They couldn't understand the squirrel system of mining, and each week their joint and separate feet became colder. When the second vein was tapped in the Squirrel crosscut, and tacked onto the announcement was the grim word, "barren," they rushed to the telegraph office and cabled:

"Shut down!"

Imhaus and Reynolds read the message and swore. It is related that Imhaus said "Sacre bleu!" while Reynolds contented himself with a plain American "Damn!"

Paris, however, is a far cry from Powder river. And the squirrels were re-doing business at the same old stand. Wherefore, Imhaus and Reynolds entered into a conspiracy. They would NOT shut down. They would do some more squirrel mining on their own hook. They had faith in those squirrels, and were willing to back it up with their own private and personal coin. Which they did, and now approaches the dramatic climax.

With a crew of three men, paid out of their own pockets, Imhaus and Reynolds continued the Squirrel

crosscut. Within twenty additional feet they broke through the wall of the Squirrel vein. One shot broke down a mass of ore glittering with gold.

That was the climax. Now follows the anti-climax—or rather, the wet blanket.

Pellmell to Baker City rushed Imhaus and cabled to Paris:

"White Frost vein out on No. 2 level. Ore lousy with gold. Wire five thousand to reopen mill."

Over the mountains and under the sea—across a whole hemisphere—flashed the glad words. In due time there came clicking back a message from Paris which almost melted the wires. It was written in French, which is a polite language, and the language of love. Translated into plain United States, and shorn of its jagged edges, it read in effect as follows:

"For two years we have been coughing up. Our legs have been pulled until we limp to our scanty meals. We have paid, paid and paid for the blessed privilege of tracing squirrel holes across a bleak hill top. We have been six hundred and seventy-six separate and distinct sorts of dampfools, but we refuse to be longer buncoed. We have swallowed hot-air promises until our chests are inflated like a Parisian fille de chambre with the newest style of bust pad, but we won't stand for being told of a rich strike in a mine that has been shut down for two weeks. Back, back to the alfalfa fields, or we'll have the law on ye!"

Thus was the Flagstaff shut down, and thus it has long remained.

Reynolds, according to the little news item which has been made the text of this tale is again at the Flagstaff. Perhaps the Parisians have given him permission to show them. Perhaps he only desires to show himself. It's dollars to a doll buggy that his theory is correct.

J. D. Clark has discovered marble on government land about three miles from Lehman Springs. He made no attempt to secure any from beneath the surface, and only brought away some fragments broken from the outcroppings. These have been examined by Monterasetilli brothers, who pronounce them pure marble beyond question, and capable of taking a high polish. In fact, one of Mr. Clark's samples was polished by them as a demonstration. Mr. Clark states that the outcroppings exhibit about every shade of marble he ever saw, and some that he never saw before. The range is from pure white to practically black. The samples he brought in, and which were selected, not on account of their color, but because of the ease of getting them, are slaty black and very unattractive in color, but the marble men assert that they are genuine marble.