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DEADWOOD

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Excitement over placers in Deadwood Basin attracted several parties in the early summer of 1863, and the Golden Age of July 15 announced that prospects ranged as high as 12½¢ to the pan. A company of Frenchmen worked most of the summer of 1864, and several placer finds on the South Fork of the Payette River, not far from the mouth of the Deadwood, kept prospectors in the vicinity. Interest in the Deadwood placers grew that fall when a mining district was organized on October 17. Reports of finds running 50¢ to \$1 per pan brought many men there from Boise Basin. One company made \$600 in one day, but the commotion was a temporary one. When mining at Deadwood began again in 1867, the district was regarded as brand new.

Nathan Smith, one of Idaho's most distinguished prospectors and a member of the Florence discovery party, revived the Deadwood mines. The miners' meeting over which he presided on August 16, 1867, and in which a new district was organized, may be regarded as the serious beginning of Deadwood placer operations. When the story of the new discoveries reached Idaho City, a stampede to Deadwood resulted on September 8-9, 1867. J. Marion More's party found a gulch that prospected 50¢ to \$2 to the pan, and two or three other gulches also promised to yield well. After James A. Pinney, postmaster in Idaho City, returned on September 14 with a good report, it was hoped for a time that Deadwood would build up Idaho placer mining to something like that of the earlier boom days. By the time mining ended for the fall, however, only four gulches had proved workable. Deadwood City already was "quite a little town." But aside from arranging

to construct a substantial ditch for use in the dry gulches the next spring, little could be done that fall.

Mining commenced in earnest about the beginning of May 1868. One hundred men went to work in the older (August 1867) placers, and about thirty prepared to open up a new placer area as soon as the snow melted. One three-man company in the old snow-free district cleaned up \$5,000 with a giant hydraulic in two weeks, and production increased when the new 300- to 400-inch ditch came into use on May 4 (water was supplied at what was regarded as a reasonable rate of 50¢ to 65¢ an inch for twenty-four hours). At the very beginning of the season, two men in the newer placers made \$212 in two days, and in the middle of May two men took out \$70 in one day with a rocker in a dry gulch. The average daily production for the most successful company reached \$100 during the season that ended early in July. Those were the high figures for the area, but even so, placers were worked easily and promised to last for more than one season.

Quartz possibilities in Deadwood Basin pointed the way to the main future production of the district. On May 16, 1868, one prospector worked a rich outcrop at the rate of sixty-two ounces to the ton, using a "rough process," and another good vein was discovered on June 2. Then in July, J. G. Bohlen, whose experience in the mining country had been limited to running the Idaho City Dancing School, astonished everyone with still another very rich quartz ledge. These quartz prospects could not come into production instantly, but they finally accounted for most of the Deadwood yield.

Interest in Deadwood diminished in 1869 with the gold rush to Loon Creek, and by 1876 Deadwood City had become a ghost town.

Mining finally resumed there from 1924 to 1932. By 1947, a Deadwood lead-zinc property had yielded about \$1 million.

(This information has not been edited.)

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