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Aside from Leesburg, more than half a dozen substantial Salmon area mining districts gained attention within a decade of intensive prospecting there after 1867. Along with later discoveries at Gibbonsville, Shoup, Agency Creek, and Ulysses, these constitute one of Idaho's two largest blocks of mining districts. (Wood River, Sawtooth, Copper Basin, and Mackay form the other: both are similar in area.) A promising lode discovery on Comet Creek north of Salmon accounted for a good deal of initial excitement in June 1867. An interesting stampede to an unknown destination (that finally was revealed as Comet Creek a month or so later) created quite a stir in Idaho mining circles.

Placer prospects in a number of streams along the Salmon also commanded attention, although an excessive number of rocks and boulders reduced their value to three dollars a day. These placers soon were disparaged as "China diggings," and many of those who had rushed several hundred miles to examine that situation returned home "weary and disgusted, if not disappointed." On July 7, 1867, Salmon's Semi-Weekly Mining News "still speaks encouragingly of the prospects along the Salmon River [according to the Idaho Tri-Weekly Statesman, July 23], but we should judge from the tone that its faith was rather weak." Such a press reaction from outside the area was rather typical: most newspapers disparaged gold discoveries reported for other regions. In this case, although extensive prospecting had been going on there for several years, nothing too consequential had been found aside from John Adams and E. P. McCurdy's Comet Creek lode. J. Marion More, who went out to examine the situation reported in Boise, August 7, that:

one very rich quartz ledge has been found. The placer mines he does not think very valuable, judging from the reports and from the fact that prospecting has been done there for four or five years past without flattering results.

More's suspicion had a good foundation, although a number of placer districts materialized there.

With an eight-hundred-foot surface exposure, the new Comet Lode had enough good small assays to gain a slightly inflated reputation as having an outcrop richer than any others yet

discovered in Idaho and Montana. Ben Anderson was willing to pay \$300 for two hundred feet of that lode without bothering with further prospecting. At that point, the richest outcrop known in Idaho or Montana drifted into total obscurity. Such transactions were not noted for their rarity during Idaho's gold rush years. Yet prospecting continued. A slow season at Leesburg encouraged miners there to examine a wide area, and other minor camps gradually emerged.

In less than a decade, E. T. Beatty (an old Rocky Bar miner who had settled at Salmon) reported, January 26, 1876, that two arastras were producing gold on Kirtley Creek, that another arastra near Leesburg was paying well on Arnott Creek, that a six-stamp mill was active on the west side of the Salmon at Carmen Creek, and that New York investors had a ten-stamp mill headed for Geertson Creek. Placers also gradually came into production on Bohannon Bar about eight miles above Salmon. Because water was available only for a short season each year, this six-mile long bar [with a half mile width] could be worked very slowly. In about two decades of seasonal operation, more than half a million dollars worth of eighteen-dollar-an-ounce gold was recovered there by the time Idaho became a state in 1890. At that point, only about a tenth of Bohannon Bar had been processed. Surveys for a forty-mile Lemhi ditch [complete with two or three flumes] provided a reasonable, yet expensive, solution to this water problem. But after dredging became practical, Kirtley Creek and Bohannon Creek placers became more productive.

Not all of these mines needed (or could get) supplementary water from the Lemhi or the Salmon. Moose Creek basin, north of Leesburg basin, provided a half-million dollar yield to David McNutt, who had enough water at high elevation to operate a six-inch giant and a bed rock flume over a more extended annual season. On the Moose Creek-Salmon River divide, an extensive field of rich float boulders (successor to the Comet discovery of 1867) furnished ore for a five-stamp Moose Creek mill. Work there went on for many years, with a revival during the depression when gold mining paid better. Around \$400,000 came from that unusual assembly of lode material.

An interesting new direction in the Lemhi mines came with F. B. Sharkey's location of the Copper Queen on Agency Creek in 1883. Although less important than a number of other Idaho copper mines, it produced about \$100,000 by 1910. While this was underway, Bohannon Bar production increased to around \$200,000 in spite of an early dredge failure. A Kirtley Creek dredge did better after 1908; production there may have totaled \$1,200,000.

These operations by no means have exhausted that area's mining possibilities: a large Lemhi Pass thorium deposit--much of which occurs in Montana--has been explored but had not gotten into production in 1980.

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