

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

LONG VALLEY PLACERS

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Long Valley placer discoveries would have commanded more attention in 1863 if Boise Basin had not offered so great an attraction for prospectors. Miners stampeding from Lewiston along Packer John's Boise trail noticed placers at Copeland [located presumably on Gold Fork and named for their finder] as they went through Long Valley in 1863, and two other districts also gained attention there. An early camp at Lake City [presumably near Payette Lake] had an excitement sufficient to induce miners to import a sawmill. Long before 1870 Lake City had become a ghost town of fallen-down cabins, although the abandoned sawmill still was in good shape in 1872. Between Copeland and Lake City, another camp known as Hawkeye emerged about ten miles from Copeland. Across the ridge beyond Copeland, scattered miners also placered along the south fork of the Salmon River.

When other gold rushes ceased to divert interest from Long Valley, Copeland did a little better. Serious problems attended development there, so almost a decade went by before early Gold Fork placers could be largely worked out. Copeland's bar--about one-hundred feet wide--had to be dug to a depth of forty feet. Lack of water, except during a short spring season, held back development. By 1870 a modest mining community was engaged in ditch construction and in whipsawing lumber. Sixteen men and one woman spent the next winter in that isolated camp continuing their preparations. By 1872 they had recovered most of the gold they were going to be able to save. By that time, interest shifted to Hawkeye where new ditches were dug. Enough gulches

near Gold Fork paid six to eight dollars a day that a limited amount of work there continued for many years. By 1879, John Kennaly of Boise had completed a nine-mile ditch which paid off, and he wanted to extend it to twenty miles to reach more ground.

Occasional excitements continued to follow new discoveries.

A stampede to Long Valley in the summer of 1886 stirred up additional interest, but an excitement at Yellow Pine that same summer lacked foundation and discouraged those who wanted to expand mining on the south fork of the Salmon. Eventually in 1892 the Standard Oil Company of Ohio acquired 240 acres on or near Gold Fork for placer development.

An entirely different kind of dredging production came to Long Valley several decades later. When the principal sources for imported monazite were cut off in 1946 to 1950, an examination of Idaho possibilities for replacement led to extensive Long Valley dredging for monazite beginning in January of 1951. Three dredges operated that year. One capsized and sank in 1953, and lack of a market led to suspension of both remaining dredges in 1955. By that time, monazite production had reached about two-million dollars. By-products raised total production value there to \$3,500,000 when mining ceased.