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REFERENCE SERIES

PALOUSE MINES (HOODOO)

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Placers on the Palouse rated at \$10 were struck not far from later Moscow in 1866, and whites and Chinese were at work on twenty claims found the first season. Some activity went on for years: after an initial decline, placer operations revived in 1884 and benefitted from national economic depressions after 1893 and 1930. A dredge above Harvard reworked some old Chinese ground from 1940 to 1942, producing slightly over \$550,000. Palouse lode properties have not amounted to much: Hoodoo quartz operations have always been more or less a hoodoo. Although a stamp mill once operated on Moscow mountain, there haven't been any others of consequence. Total upper Palouse gold production approximates \$800,000.

Not rich enough to attract very much attention, some early Palouse River placers justified construction of a Hoodoo ditch to serve claim holders who were active, at least intermittently, for more than a decade before their better deposits were processed. By 1874, a boarding house, a saloon, and a blacksmith shop were serving local mining needs. Frank Points, a prominent early operator there, and two associates got a Nez Perce County road extended to Hoodoo camp in 1875, although by that time, placering there was going into a decline. Enough prospects remained to encourage further development, although complaints were registered in 1879 against a promotion that lacked mineral values to justify investment there.

Lode discoveries, one of which was just above a placer claim that had produced \$16,000 a few years before, brought renewed interest in 1883 and 1884. A number of lodes were located then, but after they failed to come anywhere near matching Coeur

d'Alene discoveries of 1884, most Hoodoo activity resulted from placer leases to Chinese miners. Several large new ditch enterprises flourished in 1884. Local farmers also located Hoodoo properties that they could work during slack agricultural seasons. Until 1888, about \$60,000 worth of gold was being shipped annually through Palouse City, according to Northern Pacific Railway promoters--and their modest production estimates are plausible. After depressed economic conditions made gold mining more rewarding during the Panic of 1893, Hoodoo placers became still more attractive for Palouse farmers who had little else to do. An old Chinese ditch to China Hill was reopened, and efforts to reach some buried placers (at a depth of ten to twenty-five feet) were started. Dredging was not yet practical in North America at that time, though, and major production still had to wait for improved technology.

Interest in copper mining stimulated incorporation of a Palouse company in 1904, and high wartime prices finally led to a limited amount of Mizpah Creek production from 1916 to 1919. Altogether about 1,550 feet of tunnels were driven, and production reached a maximum of 79,000 pounds in 1918. Ore had to be hauled by wagon to a logging rail connection at Harvard until 1920, when high freight costs led to an unsuccessful effort to install a mill. Small amounts of copper ore were shipped in 1924, 1925, and 1929, but significant production never was realized.

After 1929, another depression-inspired revival of gold placers gave unemployed local farmers a small source of income until large scale dredging finally began on June 1, 1940. Wartime restrictions shut down this operation on October 15, 1942, after 2,900,000 cubic yards of gravel were processed, along with soft bedrock to a depth of 18 inches. Averaging 18¢ per yard, recovered at a cost of 14¢ per yard, Palouse dredging was responsible for a production of \$422,000. Another year's dredging commenced in 1947. Altogether, dredging accounted for most Palouse gold production.

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