



IDAHO STATE
**HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

**IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
REFERENCE SERIES**

STANLEY BASIN MINES

Number 365

1980

When John Stanley brought a prospecting party from Warrens to Stanley Basin and Atlanta in 1863, his adventurers found some gold prospects in Stanley Basin, but did so much better in Atlanta that they did not follow up on their Stanley Basin possibilities until 1864. Even then, they did better in other places.

Following the Leesburg gold rush, interest grew in Stanley Basin. River bars for a hundred miles below Stanley also proved attractive. In 1867, mining finally got underway around Stanley, and Robinson Bar gained local fame. Hydraulic giant operations had commenced at Robinson Bar by 1868, while placers on both sides of the blind summit separating Valley Creek and Marsh Creek between Stanley and Cape Horn provided "quite an extensive area of mining ground . . . which can only be slowly worked, on account of the scarcity of water." In 1871, two owners could "work their claims by the hydraulic method, for about two months in the spring, and they take out about \$20 per day to the hand. For the balance of the year they take it easy, having plenty of time to hunt and fish, and having unequalled hunting and fishing ground." Two years later, A. P. Challis (who had come through Stanley Basin almost a decade earlier as a member of John Stanley's discovery party) and Henry Sturkey began to develop their Stanley placers.

Seven years work went into getting them ready for production. In 1874, miners were busy for a hundred miles along the Salmon River, mainly above Bayhorse past Robinson Bar and Stanley. A short placer season (limited by lack of water most of the year) kept Challis and his associates at work around Stanley until the end of the century. Finally a dredge got started on September 24, 1899, and their modest, yet dependable, operations were enlarged to a production of \$6,400 annually. Even at that, only twenty-five men could work profitably in the area. Lode discoveries in 1897 and 1902 led to the importation of a stamp mill, which was auctioned at a sheriff's sale late in 1904. After that fiasco and after forty years of preparation, mining in Stanley Basin finally became more prosperous.

(This information has not been edited.)

Publications--450 N. 4th Street, Boise, ID 83702--208-334-3428