Preliminary Report On the Klondike Gold Fields, Yukon District, Canada

McConnell Richard George
PRELIMINARY REPORT
OF THE
KLONDIKE GOLD FIELDS
YUKON DISTRICT, CANADA

BY
R. G. McCONNELL, B.A.

OTTAWA
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1900
Hunker Valley above Gold Bottom.
Showing level of old valley.

Bonanza Valley.
Section of Quartz Drift, Adams Hill.
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CANADA
G. M. DAWSON, C.M.G., LL.D., F.R.S., DIRECTOR.

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The annexed report by Mr. R. G. McConnell is based almost entirely on field-work carried out by him in the summer of 1899, during which his whole time was devoted to an examination of the Klondike region. It is essentially the report prepared by him for inclusion in the annual Summary Report of the Geological Survey Department; but in order to promptly meet the demand for information and to ensure it an extended circulation, it is now printed separately somewhat in advance of the issue of the Summary Report.

Some account of the geology and conditions in the Klondike gold fields has been given in the Summary for 1898, but the present report may be regarded as the first result of a systematic and moderately detailed scientific examination of the district.

The map accompanying this report is a preliminary one, compiled by Mr. J. F. E. Johnston, largely from surveys made by himself while assisting Mr. McConnell in the field.

GEORGE M. DAWSON.

Geological Survey of Canada,
March 10, 1900.
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Prospectors have been at work in the Yukon Region since about 1878, but mining can scarcely be said to have begun till some years later, and then, at first, only on a very small scale. River bar mining began on the Lewes and Salmon in 1881 and 82, on the Stewart in 1882 or 1883. This was followed by the discovery of (coarse) gold on Forty-mile River in the autumn of 1886. The tributaries of this stream yielded the next discoveries, and the producing field was gradually extended across the watershed to streams flowing into Sixty-mile River. In 1896 the Klondike discovery was announced and the extreme richness of the new field speedily attracted, in 1897 and 1898, a host of adventurers from all parts of the world. The route followed by the majority was by steamer from Vancouver, Victoria and United States coast towns further south to Skagway or Dyea across the Coast Range by the Chilcoot or White passes to the head of the Lewes, and down the latter stream and the Yukon, in canoes or boats, to Dawson at the mouth of the Klondike River. This route, which entailed considerable hardship and some danger, is still followed, but under very different conditions. The pack-trail of the pioneer across the White Pass has been replaced by a well built and equipped railway, and the canoes and small boats on the rivers have given way to a fleet of steamers. The journey from Vancouver to Dawson can now be made in comfort in about a week, and is well worth taking as a pleasure trip alone. A telegraph line has been built by the Canadian Government from Skagway to Dawson, and although this remains at present separated from the telegraphic system of the world, work is already in progress by which it will soon be connected with this system at Quesnel, in British Columbia.

The discoveries above briefly alluded to brought about rapid changes of various kinds besides those relating to means of communication. Previous to the discovery of (coarse) gold on Forty-mile River the centre of such limited trade as existed in the country was at the mouth of the Stewart River. In 1887 this was removed to the vicinity of Forty-mile River, and this continued to be the chief place until the Klondike discoveries occurred in 1896, when the town of
Dawson was established on the bank of the Yukon just below the confluence of the Klondike River. This rapidly became and has since remained the chief commercial centre.

When a small force of the North-west Mounted Police was first sent into the Yukon District in 1895, in the interests of law and order, it was quartered near Forty-mile River. Later on, this force increased and the circumstances led to the removal of most of the men to Dawson. This place has since become the seat of government for the entire Yukon District. A local administration, with courts of justice and other organizations necessary for the government of the Yukon district have been established, and the city is now not unprovided with most of the requirements of a civilized and progressive community.

This report relates almost exclusively to the Klondike gold fields proper. For information relating to the geology and geography of the Yukon district generally, reference may be made to the Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District (Reprint, 1898) and to the Summary Report of the Geological Department for 1898.

Extent of Klondike Gold Fields.

The Klondike gold fields are situated east of the Yukon River in latitude 64° north. They are bounded in a general way by the Yukon River on the west, by the Klondike River on the north, by Flat Creek a tributary of the Klondike, and Dominion Creek, a tributary of Indian River, on the east, and by Indian River on the south. The area included between these boundaries measures about 800 square miles. The streams flowing through the area described are all gold-bearing to some extent, but only a limited number have proved remunerative. The most important gold-bearing streams are Bonanza Creek, with its famous tributary Eldorado Creek, Bear Creek and Hunter Creek flowing into the Klondike, and Quartz Creek and Dominion Creek, with Gold Run and Sulphur Creek two tributaries of the latter, flowing into Indian River. A good deal of prospecting has been done outside the area described, but with the exception of a few claims on Eureka Creek, a tributary of the Indian River from the south, no pay-gravels have so far been discovered, although good prospects are reported from many places.

Topography.

The Klondike region may be described as a high plateau cut in all directions by numerous deep and wide branching valleys. The general aspect viewed from one of the higher elevations is rough and hilly but