

Interview of Doc. Antonioli

Chris: This is an interview of Doctor Antonioli conducted by Christopher Antonioli at his home on November the 20th 2002.

C: O.k. what was traveling like in Montana when you were growing up?

Doc: Growing up probably in the 19 starting in the middle to late 1920's, and into the 1930's. In the 1920's almost all of the road were made of gravel. The first paved road in the state of Montana was the piece between Butte and Anaconda. A cars were mostly open cars, a some of them from the middle and late 20's were enclosed had a hard top.

C: How fast did you go back then in a car?

D: Oh, cars would go 50 miles per hour, probably a little faster, but the roads didn't allow you to do much more than that. It would take when we went from Butte to Phillipsburg to visit with relatives there it would probably take somewhere around 3 hours and often times on the flint creek hill going up or coming back the car would overheat the cooling systems were poor and we would have to stop and let it cool off or put some more water in. Some of the back roads not so much in western Montana but in eastern part of the state a were gumbo real clay mud material which made travel a real hard. Cars had chains, in the wintertime a I don't remember the streets being sanded ever, but cars had chains, and I think they may have plowed some of the streets, but they probably didn't do much of that.

C: How did your father get into the mining industry?

D: He got in there when he was probably about 19 or 20 years old he went to work in the mines, and worked at the Blackrock mine in Butte, and he was a semi-specialist in that he worked in the shaft, and I don't think he worked in the mines too long probably not more than a year, and then his next ventures into mining probably occurred in the a 1930's. The first mine that I can recall was the a Ohio Mine east of silver star, it was up about 7500 8000 feet it was a gold property and it did produce ore probably at least 2 or 3 years. A they had a camp up at the mine with a they had a cook and a bunkhouse and there was a small frame house that my mother and father and

Frank and I would stay in. The mine was early enough that we have some pictures that either in the spring or the fall a supplies went up to the mine by a sled a horse drawn sled a later on of course when the snow melted you could go up and down in a car. The ore was a mined in a tunnel it was put in an ore bin and then my brother Frank and I would truck it from the mine from the ore bin to the bottom of the hill which was probably about 4 miles or so and put it in another ore bin, and then there was a contract hauler who had a big truck and he would haul it from there into Butte. I don't remember if this continued much past the mid 1930's, it may have closed when the war started, and gold mining was pretty much shut down.

C: What were some of the past mining experiences leading up to the construction of the mill?

D: Probably when my father was alive there was at least a half a dozen a mining ventures a in the vicinity of Butte there was 1 or 2 down near Dillon, and then a my father acquired the Scratch Awl Mine in Phillipsburg from a Mrs. Hanson and operated that for a few years, it was a manganese, silver, zinc operation, and then a we had a mining foreman Pete Vidoc who would go out and scalp properties for him, and if something looked interesting then we would do some further exploration and try to identify the property. The Scratch Awl was the first property in Phillipsburg that I am aware of that my father was involved in, and then in 1955 Harry Yad who was a native of Phillipsburg and whose father had acquired the Granite Bi-metallic properties a Harry was interested in selling the property and he was an engineer he was moving to California and he sold all of the mining claims to my father in 1955.

C: When and why did you decide to build the mill in P-burg?

D: Probably about 20 years ago, close to 20 years ago, and we were going to build the mill to a process the dumps that were up at Granite that had recoverable silver and gold values, and a as we were planning to build the mill the Black Pine Mine a approached us and cooperated with us in building a much larger mill, and actually it processed about 90% of the rock taken out of Black Pine and a small portion from the dumps.

C: Do you see any possible future for mining in P-burg?

D: I think the future of mining depends entirely on the costs of mining and the price of metals. If the price of metals is high enough it would just be a question of people pursuing it, but it would have to be a considerable increase to what we have now.

C: Any other kind of stories that might have happened when you were doing mining early on?

D: This is a story of the background of the Mayflower Mine east of Whitehall that my father operated in the 1950's, but the story goes back 60 or more years before the time he operated on it. There are a couple of prospectors a prospecting in the north end of the Tobacco Root Mountains and they saw something that looked interesting to them and they took a sample of it and they brought it into Butte, and at that time in the early days the sampling was a the assaying was done by the pharmacists at the drug stores, they were chemists so they did the assaying. So they took the sample to the assayer and they came back a couple days later and he said he was really sorry, but he got so busy that he a hadn't gotten it out yet, so they went back the next day, and he gave them another story about eh was working on it but didn't have it out yet, and in the mean time he had a gotten together with a couple of his friends and they had been able to find out approximately where these guys were prospecting, and before he gave them the results of the sample a his associates went out and located the claims at the Mayflower, and beat the two prospectors out of their claims. Another interesting thing about the Mayflower was that in the time of the mining possible in the maybe in the 20's or earlier than that a they would haul the ore down from the mine in a horse drawn wagon and to the railroad east of Whitehall and then they would load it in railroad cars. And then the story is that the fellow that was doing the hauling as he was coming down the road, he would a check the ore that was in the wagon box, and he picked out what would look to be the very rich samples pieces, and as he went by a certain place there was a depression in the ground next to the road where he would pitch some of these samples from the wagon over into this hole that nobody could see, and sometime later after the mine had closed actually, a he very carefully went back and harvested his stash of high grade ore that he had put in the hole.

C: Now a mine today has a bunch of different equipment to make it easier, did you ever have to sink a shaft or dig a tunnel out the hard way?

D: Myself?

C: Yah.

D: No.

C: No.

D: A, I never worked in a mine, I've been in mines, and tunnels, and prospect holes but I never worked in one.

My great uncle was not able to recall that much of historical information on the mines of Granite County, but he has notified me that a great deal of information has been donated by the Antonioli family to the Montana Historical Society. The Society has thousands of pages of documents, and a great number of old and newer maps about this subject. Here are some examples of material if someone down the line would like to work on this subject, perhaps for a thesis for a master's degree.