

Yukon Gold and the Klondike Big Inch Land Co

Bob Moriarty
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I've been around the mining business for a long, long time. My speciality is placer gold, I began my mining career in 1951 or 1952, panning for gold at the Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, California. It's hard to remember the year with precision, I was but six. But well I remember the first flash of buttery gold flakes at the bottom of my pan.

Knott's Berry Farm was a real farm, out in the country. And for prospective miners, both boys and girls, they had a gold panning area where real professionals would show you the ropes as it were. As we get older, we forget how important the memories of childhood are, and how they form what we are. But I remember the first yellow flash of gold I would ever see. And anytime I get a chance to teach a child to pan, I take it. I suspect and hope they will remember it as well as I did.

I continued in my career in 1955 when I staked my first lode gold claim in the Yukon, I was 9 by then. Actually, I didn't stake the claim myself, I had someone else do it and they shipped the paperwork to me in a box of Quaker Oats cereal. I was then an official owner of one square inch of gold ground from the Klondike Big Inch Land Company.

The story actually started in 1947 with a radio show called "The Challenge of the Yukon" starring Sergeant Preston and his faithful companion, a Malamute named Yukon King. Malamutes scare hell out of Ted because they are so big and he is so small. But that's another story. In any case, by 1955 the radio show had dropped in popularity to the point it was dropped and Quaker Oats, the sponsor of the series paid to have the show brought over to the new medium of television.

I actually remember when there was no TV in the average household in the US. 1955 or so was about the time TV became common and affordable. Quaker Oats moved the series, now known as "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon" over to TV in 1955 where it would continue until 1958. But Quaker Oats needed some gimmick to get kids to watch the show and better yet to convince their parents to purchase car loads of overpriced cereal. It was a particular moment of time where some unknown and unheralded advertising wonk came up with the perfect pitch, one which turned into one of the most successful promotions of all time. It got me into the hard rock gold mining business in a small way.

Quaker Oats set up an Illinois corporation called the Klondike Big Inch Land Company. The company promptly bought a 19.11 acre parcel of moose pasture in the Yukon south of Dawson. After carefully measuring out the land in 1 square inch parcels, Quaker Oats began putting 21 million "Deeds" into carefully marked

boxes of cereal. On each show, Sergeant Preston hawked the "Deeds" to all the little kiddies. In a few short weeks, the cereal boxes flew off the shelves and the promotion ended.

I was the proud owner of one of those "Deeds" to what just had to be a lode gold claim. I remember well dreaming of just how I would develop my mine. Alas, the Yukon Lands Branch wasn't so thrilled. The cost to actually issue a deed for each square inch would have been prohibitive so claim holders held "Title" to a square inch but it was a loose title. By 1965 Quaker Oats tired of being contacted on a regular basis by junior miners and let the land taxes in the amount of \$37.20 lapse. The government of the Yukon was once again the owner. To this day Quaker Oats, the Yukon Lands Branch and the Yukon Department of Commerce still get phone calls from now older but no wiser land "Owners."

I was in the Yukon about 10 days ago staying in Dawson. I saw a couple of the deeds framed, front and back and read the story which has been well researched. I do remember well how rich I felt as a landowner of a gold property in the Yukon.

A few days later, I saw a real gold mine in the Yukon. It wasn't moose pasture and wasn't quoted in square inches. But they have boatloads of gold and are so far under the radar screen of most investors that I had to keep kicking myself in disbelief.