

Drift Mining in Placer County.

Since speaking last week of the Pliocene channels that traverse so large a portion of the mining districts of California, and which are now being opened up at many points, we have obtained the following more full particulars of the claim belonging to the Blue Gravel Range company in Placer county, this being one of the most promising and accessible localities of the kind yet fixed upon for exploitation, and a description of which will convey a tolerably good idea of all the others.

The property of this company, which embraces an area of nearly 1,000 acres, is situated on the Forrest {Forest} Hill Divide in the neighborhood of Todd's valley, being about 18 miles from Auburn station, on the Central Pacific railroad. It lies on the southerly slope of the ridge overlooking the South Fork [Middle Fork] of the American river, which runs in a narrow gorge more than a thousand feet below. Centrally through this tract passes one of the ancient, gold-bearing channels, buried here to a depth of about 130 feet. Portions of the ground in this vicinity were formerly covered with rich surface placers, fragments of which still remain. There are also within the boundaries of the company's tract extensive banks of auriferous gravel, some of which might be washed to advantage by the hydraulic method and will most likely some day be so handled. The deposits resting in the beds of the buried river constitute here, however, the feature of peculiar interest and greatest value, these being also the most easily available for productive operations. As the section of the old channel owned by the company covers a linear extent of nearly 10,000 feet, having an average width of about 1,600 feet on the surface, they are supposed to have something like five or six million cubic yards of rich bottom gravel, which, according to all precedent, will yield at least \$1 per yard, the average elsewhere having been much higher.

As will be seen by an inspection of Doolittle's map of Central California, there are two main channels bearing southwest across the country here, the one coming in by Forrest hill and Todd's valley, and the other from Yankee Jim's, both distinguished for the large quantities of gold that have been extracted from them; first by drifting and afterwards by the hydraulic process. The group of claims worked along the Forrest hill branch have yielded as much gold, for the area of ground worked, as any other in California, the following being the product of some of the more noted of their number: The Independence, \$450,000; New Jersey, \$850,000; Deidesheimer, \$650,000; the Jenny Lind, \$1,100,000; mostly from the upper and poorer red gravel, and the Dardanelles, \$2,000,000 taken out of the lower stratum of rich blue gravel, the area of ground worked over in these several claims not having exceeded four or five acres.

A short distance above the claim of the company we are speaking of, these two channels come together, the united channel thence pursuing its course through their ground to its lower end, where the old river bed finally disappears, having been eroded and swept away by the North Fork of the American. That this section of the channel, so deepened and augmented, is well stocked with gold, would be fairly deducible from its ascertained character above, had this fact not been established by actual workings and experimental tests. The Spring Garden claim adjoining this, on the north, has been opened and shown itself prolific in gold. The shaft put down by this company at a central point on their own ground, had also reached good gravel at the time the water broke in upon them, stopping further operations. The fertility of the channel here has, in fact, never been with the owners, mostly poor men, a question of such serious import as that of commanding the means for properly opening it. They know, as a matter of fact, that they have a section of the old Pliocene river here, and they know inferentially that it is rich in gold, but they have never been able to get it so thoroughly opened that they could reach and remove its contents.

Even in the flush times this was looked upon as a favorable site for a prospecting operation, As early as 1857 a company of miners started a tunnel from the bank of the North Fork with a view to

developing the lower end of this channel. Having been disrupted by the Frazier River excitement, this company scattered the next year and never re-assembled, nor, so far as known, has any of them ever come back to prosecute the work or assert any claim to the, ground, which has now for a period of nearly 20 years been in the peaceful possession of the company or their predecessors.

After sinking a shaft to the depth of nearly 100 feet at the point mentioned, and being there prevented from going on by an influx of water too great for them to handle with their inadequate pumping apparatus, this company drove a tunnel from the lower end of their claim. After getting in several hundred feet they found the bedrock, pitching before them, showing that they were too high to bottom the channel. The tunnel was then carried down the incline of the bedrock and a steam pump rigged for hoisting the water. But the machinery here again proved insufficient, forcing the company to once more suspend operations. This occurred several years ago, and as the limited means of the company were by these efforts exhausted, nothing further has since been done towards the development of this property. Encouraged by the large returns these drift diggings are yielding wherever they have been effectually opened, the owners have concluded to make another attempt at getting their ground in proper shape for working. All that is now required to secure that end is the sinking of the present vertical shaft some 20 or 30 feet farther, and the transferring of the engine and pumps from the incline to the old shaft, there to be used for hoisting and pumping purposes, all of which can be accomplished with an amount of money so small that they ought to have no trouble in getting it.

In putting down this shaft the following material was penetrated: first, a body of cement 40 feet thick; then, a three-foot stratum of gravel ; next, another mass of cement 45 feet in thickness ; followed by six feet more of gravel ; and finally a sedimentary deposit nine feet thick, underlaid by a bed of large boulders and washed gravel, indicating close proximity to the rich stratum of blue gravel always found next the bedrock. All the gravel here intersected showed well in coarse gold, the best prospects being obtained from that nearest the bottom. With their claim in good working shape, the owners are confident that it would be netting handsome profits within 30 days after starting up.

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Note: It is possible that this mine became the Peckham Hill.