

## The Stewart Bill and Drift Mines, California Mining Interests Threatened.

Editors Press:— We, the undersigned being interested in the development of drift gravel mining properties, desire to call Attention, through your columns, to the injurious character of certain clauses in the Stewart mining bill now pending before Congress.

These claims concern the required annual expenditure on placer claims, and the number of acres which may be included in a single application for patent.

The bill calls for the annual expenditure of \$25 "for each 20 acres of placer claims."

We assume that a "placer claim " may still contain as much as 160 acres, as formerly.

The annual assessment work open one placer claim of 160 acres would then amount to \$200, or double the amount now required,

A further provision permits the owner of several adjoining claims, not exceeding five, to hold the same by expending \$5000 in labor upon one of the claims.

The owner of five adjoining; claims, say of 800 acres, might then hold his property— either by expending \$200 in labor upon each of the five claims, amounting to twice the present requirement, or by expending \$5000 upon one of the claims, amounting to ten times the present requirement.

No distinction is made between shallow superficially exposed placer deposits and the covered deposits of the ancient channel systems.

It is possible for the prospector to make a location upon the exposed deposit with a certain degree of intelligence, even if confined to a small claim, He may test the quality of the gravel by means of shallow pits or open outs.

But the location of the covered deposit is a very different matter. As a rule, the latter contains only a narrow winding course of pay gravel, which may be worked only by underground drifting, and cannot be exposed for prospecting without the outlay of a large amount of capital. The position and course of the pay channel is a matter of vague conjecture within limits too broad to be covered with certainty by a 160-acre claim.

As an example of the drift-mining gravel deposits we herewith furnish a cross-section characteristic of the Forest Hill divide. The narrow channels are filled with pay gravel to the depth of a few feet only, and are, as a rule, covered by a large deposit of barren volcanic material from one to three miles in width, and from 500 to 1000 feet in depth.

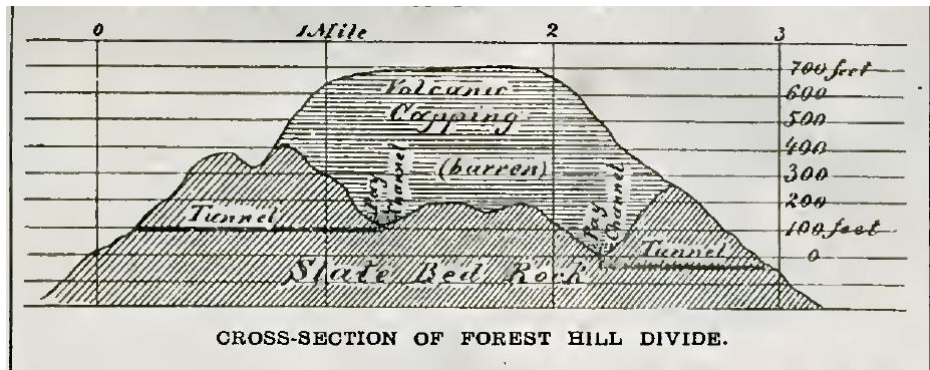
The surface of this extensive volcanic capping offers no definite clue for the location of the hidden channel. The locator may satisfy himself that a pay channel exists somewhere under the volcanic capping, but he cannot determine the position within one-fourth of a mile or frequently within one-half of a mile or more.

Even if the precise location were known, the channel could not be worked profitably through shafts sunk from the surface, owing to the large flow of water in the channel course and to the comparatively small pay of the gravel per ton.

These channels can only be worked profitably through long bedrock tunnels placed low enough to drain the ground.

Such tunnels have to be driven through hard rock, seldom less than 2000 feet, and often as much as 5000 feet, before tapping the pay channel, and involve an expense of from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

To justify such an expense, it is necessary that the individual or company running such tunnel should own at least one or two miles length of pay tunnel.



Owing to the uncertainty of the position or course of the channel, this usually involves the holding of from 500 to 1000 acres of ground, or more.

Assessment work done upon the surface of such properties is, as a rule, absolutely valueless. The above cross-section shows how fruitless would be the sinking of a shallow pit upon each 160 acre lot of the barren volcanic capping.

The provisions of the Stewart bill would cause the useless waste of a large amount of labor on the Forest Hill Divide and numerous similar divides in this State.

If the annual work is to be made a matter of valuable development, the provisions of the bill leave no choice to the owner of one of these properties—his assessment work will amount to ten times that at present required.

It is not our purpose to object to the rate of \$25 for each 20 acres—i. e., the doubling of the present rate—but we consider such increase sufficient, and think that provision should be made for doing all of the work at such rate at any point within the boundaries of the property.

A further provision of the bill limits the extent of ground which may be included in a single application for patent to 80 acres. We do not understand the purpose of this limitation, especially in its application to drift-mining properties, such as above described.

As already stated, the character and position of the gravel deposit to be worked by drifting, makes it necessary to include 500 or 1000 acres in one property. We do not see why the owner should be subjected to the useless expense of making a separate application for each 80 acres. Such a requirement would entail subdivisational surveys and a large amount of purposeless clerical work, and would greatly encumber the records.

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Ross E. Browne, Mining Engineer.

J. B. Hobson, Owner of drift mines on Iowa Hill and Forest Hill divides.

Anthony Clark, Owner Big Channel claim.

F. Chappellet, Sup't Mayflower G. M. Co.

Forest Hill, Placer Co., Nov. 23, 1889,

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