



The Prospector

Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.

GPAA Portland, Oregon Chapter



The Hand of Faith Nugget

August, 2018

Sitting in the back of a dark, old-fashioned Las Vegas casino sits, rather unremarkably, the largest gold nugget on display in the world. Slowly spinning on a table

in a place not uncoincidentally named "The Golden Nugget," the so-called "Hand of Faith" gold nugget is not as glamorous nor as

shiny as cartoon gold nuggets would have you believe. While the rock gets visitors, the foot traffic does not match its monetary value – which is said to be worth approximately \$5 million.

So, how did the largest displayed gold nugget on the globe end up here in Las Vegas? Here's the tale of the Hand of Faith's discovery and its journey to Sin City.

It had been a rough few months during the fall of 1980 for the Hillier family traveling around Australia. For the last two years, the young family of six had been driving up and down the country's coast in a bus they had named "Gus." Father Kevin earned money for the family doing odd jobs, but that type of work had dried up due in large part to severe back injury. Mother Bip had just given birth and had her hands full dealing with a new baby. In a nutshell, the family was broke, with very little food and in dire straits. In this state, they settled in a small former gold rush town called Kingower near Victoria.

Much like in America, Australia experienced their own gold rush in the mid-19th century. While glittering stones had been found prior, it was on February 12, 1851 that the rush really began with the discovery of gold near Bathurst in New South Wales. Within months, people from all over the world had flocked to the island continent in search of their own riches.

Within decades, the population of Australia nearly doubled from the influx of gold seekers from across the globe. However, also like America, the market just as quickly collapsed.

By the turn of the 20th century, the gold fields were more or less abandoned, with the recent immigrants moving to the rapidly modernizing cities. Despite this, and even years later, there were reports of lucky people coming across small gold nuggets. Discoveries in the late 20th century led many to think that the fields still had enough gold in them to forever change the fortunes of those who found it.

After his back injury, Kevin Hillier was advised by doctors to spend as much time as he could walking. So, Kevin and his wife Bip took up strolling through the former gold fields with a metal detector. In Bip Hillier's book about her family's story, she describes constantly praying for them to find gold. She thought her prayers had been answered when Kevin came home one night with a small gold pebble, but it turned out to only be worth enough to buy a second metal detector. This wasn't exactly fortune-changing gold. But a few nights later, Kevin supposedly dreamed that he found an endless gold nugget that was so big that it could not be dug out of the ground. The next morning, he drew a picture depicting his dream



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WrshpMzshn@gmail.com

Secretary's Report July 15th, 2018

Milwaukie Grange Hall
12015 S.E. 22nd Ave.
Milwaukie, OR. 97222

Meeting was called to order by
President Mike Lewis at 1:30 P.M.

The **Pledge of Allegiance** was
conducted.

Attendance - 35 attendees and no
visitors were present.

Meeting Minutes - A motion was
made and seconded to accept the
Secretary's Report of the previous
month as written and published
in the July newsletter. The motion
was approved by the members
present.

Treasury Report

- A motion was
approved and
seconded to accept
the Treasury Report
for July. The motion
was approved
by the members
present.

Correspondence

- Eastern Oregon
Mining Association
newsletter. They sent some forms
for a Raffle but we realized the
Raffle had already happened.

Club Merchandise - There is a
sign up sheet for people who
are interested in purchasing club
Tshirts, Sweatshirts or patches.

Outings - The S.W. Washington
Chapter has invited us to their
annual Picnic which is on Saturday
August 4th at Lewisville Park.
There is a sign up sheet for
anybody interested in going.
On Sunday August 5th we will
be having our club outing on
our claims on the Lewis River
in Washington. For people who
haven't been there before we will
be meeting at 8:00 A.M. at the

Fred Meyers in Battleground and
caravan up there. There is a sign
up sheet for this also for those
interested in going.

Tyroy - Jerry Johns brought back
a bunch of dirt from the previous
Tyroy outing. He is giving it away
for free to people that didn't get
to go up there. Anybody that
wanted some could get some at
break time. He got rid of all of it
real quick.

Raffle - The Raffle was held with
\$1 and \$5 tickets. Dave Chiara was
the big winner of the \$5 raffle for
the gold nugget.



The meeting was really short this
month because of the extreme
hot weather we have been having
so the meeting was adjourned at
2:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Yolande
Kragerud, Secretary.



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on a piece of paper and had his friend Russell sign it as a witness.

Whether coincidence from having gold on his brain or indeed prophetic, on September 26, 1980, the dream would come true. After lunch, Kevin and Bip were detecting in opposite directions when Kevin screamed. Rushing to him, Bip found her husband on the ground sobbing while kneeling in front of a tip of a gold nugget that couldn't be pried from the ground directly.

As a result, they began to dig... and dig and dig until they finally reached the bottom. Lifting it up, they realized what they had found was history. Weighing an astounding 27.2 kilograms (nearly 60 pounds), it was the largest gold nugget ever found by a hand held metal detector and the second largest discovered in Australia in the 20th century. In a recent interview, Bip claimed that the couple had some heavenly intervention, "People will say it was all coincidence and that's fine. But that's my Father up there...and he's interested in everything we do." To them, the rock looked like a hand making a blessing. So, Bip and Kevin named the gold rock the "Hand of Faith."

Scared to tell anyone, they rushed it home and soaked the sixty-pound chunk in the sink. The kids all helped to clean it with toothbrushes. That night, the family slept as the gold sat in a kiddie pool under the parents' bed. After a few days of debate about what to do, they decided to hand the rock over to a trusted friend to take it back to Melbourne for a delivery to the government.

A few days later, at a televised press conference, Victorian

Premier Dick Hamer announced the discovery. However, the Hilliers were not there. They were held up in a motel room watching the press conference on television, refusing to be identified. Said one of the Hillier kids, "Even for years afterwards, we kids never brought it up."

It took several months for the nugget to sell (according to Bip, this was the government's fault and caused the nugget to dip in value as the hype died down a bit), but finally in early February of 1981, with the help of Kovac's Gems & Minerals, it was sold to the appropriately-named Golden Nugget Casino in Las Vegas for about a million dollars (approximately \$2.7 million today).

In the years after, Kevin and Bip continued to walk those same fields with their metal detector in hopes of finding what they described as the Hand of Faith's companion – the "Foot of Faith." They never did and Kevin Hillier died in 2014. At the funeral, the original metal detector and a replica of the giant nugget were placed next to his coffin. His ashes were spread at the site of his discovery. The metal detector is now stored in Bip's garage. Although Bip's now in her late 70s and her husband is no longer alive, she still thinks about going back out to search. "I do wonder," she told the Monthly in late 2016, "what might still be out there."

Reprinted from
Today I Found Out.com



PRESIDENT'S BLOG

AUGUST 2018

Hello, fellow prospectors!

Thank you to everyone who braved the hot temperatures and the warm grange hall to attend the July chapter meeting!

For those who weren't at July's meeting, we had a sign-up sheet for preliminary interest in purchasing tee-shirts with pockets and zip-up sweat shirts, as well as patches, with the chapter's logo. We are working with a local company to get prices on the tee-shirts and sweatshirts set so we can move forward to see if there is enough interest to proceed. Please note the minimum order for tee-shirts and sweatshirts is 30; it can be a combination of both. We hope to have the pricing information and an example of how the shirts/sweatshirts will look at the August meeting. We will have a sign-up sheet available at both the August and September meetings – to see if there is enough interest to put in an order. In the interim, we have ordered 50 embroidered patches with the chapter logo and hope to have those available by the August chapter meeting. The patches are priced at \$6.50.

Please note that I received a call from Debbie Witcher, President of the SW Washington Gold Prospectors, asking when organizational meetings will be starting for the 2019 Gold and Treasure Show. Since the 2019 show is in Portland, at the Portland Expo Center, it is my understanding our chapter will be taking the lead on organizing the event. Please keep that in mind as we will be starting organizational meetings when we get more information from the GPAA.

Lastly, I want to thank Jerry Johns, Dave Chiara, and Steve Lewin, again for all of their work on the TYRoy claim and outing. I hope more members will be able to attend the TYRoy outing next year!

Hope to see you at the next chapter meeting on August 19, 2018!

Thank you and Happy Prospecting!

Mike Lewis
President
Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.



Thanks for
the pictures,
Gretchen!

The Ballad Of Gum-Boot Ben

by Robert Service

He was an old prospector
with a vision bleared and dim.
He asked me for a grubstake
and the same I gave to him.
He hinted of a hidden trove
and when I made so bold
To question his veracity
this is the tale he told.

"I do not seek the copper streak
nor yet the yellow dust;
I am not fain for sake of gain
to irk the frozen crust;
Let fellows gross find gilded dross
far other is my mark;
Oh, gentle youth this is the truth--
I go to seek the Ark.

"I prospected the Pelly bed
I prospected the White;
The Nordenscöld for love of gold
I piked from morn till night;
Afar and near for many a year
I led the wild stampede,
Until I guessed that all my quest
was vanity and greed.

"Then came I to a land I knew
no man had ever seen,
A haggard land forlornly spanned
by mountains lank and lean;
The nitchies said 'twas full of dread
of smoke and fiery breath,
And no man dare put foot in there
for fear of pain and death.

"But I was made all unafraid
so careless and alone,
Day after day I made my way
into that land unknown;
Night after night by camp-fire light
I crouched in lonely thought;
Oh, gentle youth, this is the truth--
I knew not what I sought.

"I rose at dawn; I wandered on.
'Tis somewhat fine and grand
To be alone and hold your own
in God's vast awesome land;
Come woe or weal 'tis fine to feel
a hundred miles between
The trails you dare and pathways where
the feet of men have been.

"And so it fell on me a spell
of wander-lust was cast.
The land was still and strange and chill
and cavernous and vast;

And sad and dead, and dull as lead,
the valleys sought the snows;
And far and wide on every side
the ashen peaks arose.

"The moon was like a silent spike
that pierced the sky right through;
The small stars popped and
winked and hopped in vastitudes of blue;
And unto me for company
came creatures of the shade,
And formed in rings and whispered things
that made me half afraid.

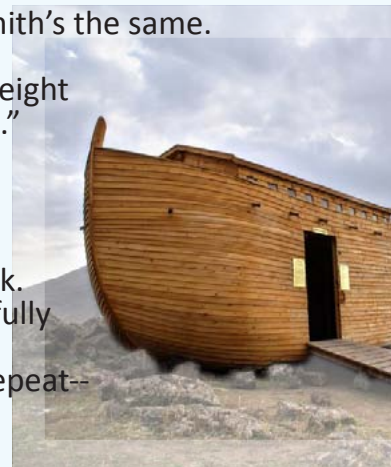
"And strange though be, 'twas borne on me
that land had lived of old,
And men had crept and slain and slept
where now they toiled for gold;
Through jungles dim the mammoth grim
had sought the oozy fen,
And on his track, all bent of back
had crawled the hairy men.

"And furthermore, strange deeds of yore
in this dead place were done.
They haunted me, as wild and free
I roamed from sun to sun;
Until I came where sudden flame
uplit a terraced height,
A regnant peak that seemed to seek
the coronal of night.

"I scaled the peak; my heart was weak
yet on and on I pressed.
Skyward I strained until I gained
its dazzling silver crest;
And there I found, with all around
a world supine and stark,
Swept clean of snow, a flat plateau
and on it lay--the Ark.

"Yes, there, I knew by two and two
the beasts did disembark,
And so in haste I ran and traced
in letters on the Ark
My human name--Ben Smith's the same.
And now I want to float
A syndicate to haul and freight
to town that noble boat."

I met him later in a bar
and made a gay remark
Anent an ancient miner
and an option on the Ark.
He gazed at me reproachfully
as only toppers can;
But what he said I can't repeat--
he was a bad old man.



The Sumpter Valley Gold Dredge

The Sumpter Valley Gold Dredge is located in Sumpter, Oregon – which is about 35 miles from Baker City, Oregon, on Highway 7.

From Wikipedia:

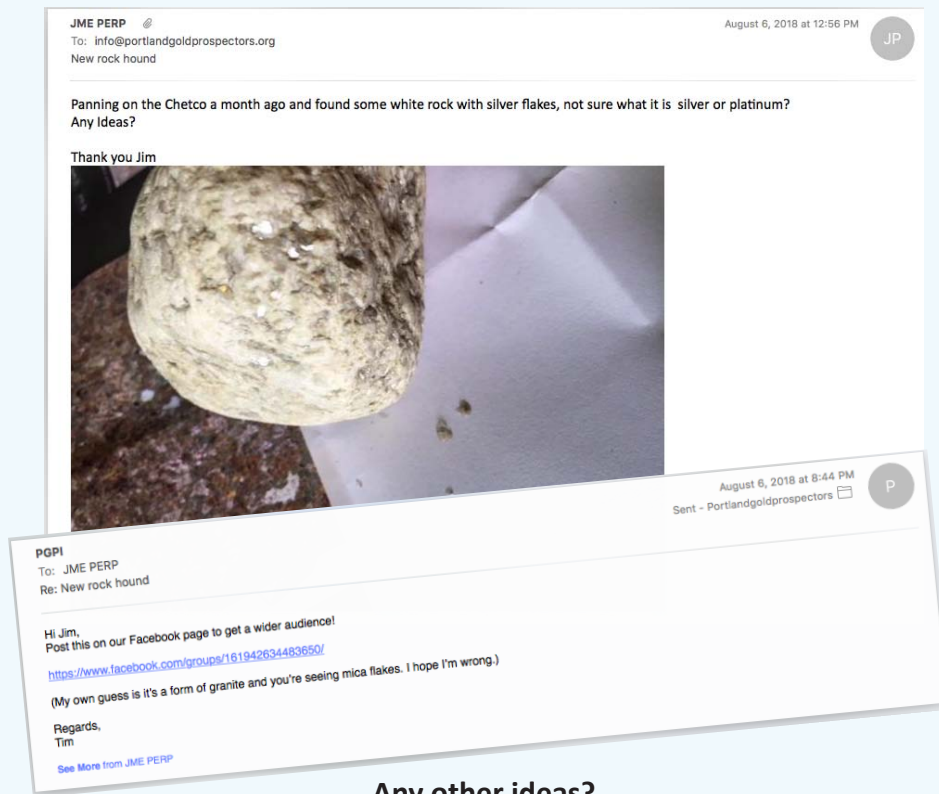
Three dredges worked the Sumpter valley from 1913 to 1954. The last dredge was built substantially from parts of the first dredge, which had been idle for 10 years. Between them, the dredges travel led more than 8 miles, extracting \$10 to \$12 million worth of gold. Still, it cost more to run the dredge than the gold could pay for. The last dredge closed in 1954, more than \$100,000 in debt. In its lifetime this dredge made \$4.5 million at \$35 per troy ounce. That is 128,570 troy ounces which, at the recent value of \$1,213.00 per ounce, would be worth \$171,083,085.[5]

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has preserved this historic area as the Sumpter Valley Dredge State Heritage Area.[6] The park includes the Gold Dredge Gift Store and Museum, with a video featuring interviews with dredge workers, historic photos and artifacts. Tours of the dredge are provided.



Thanks to Gretchen Lewis for the article and excellent pictures!

From the E-Mail bag:



Any other ideas?



East fork of the Lewis River running clear and cold!



Yes, you have to get your gear down that hill!

The new ***Washington Gold and Fish*** pamphlet is available. You must have it with you whenever you prospect in the state of Washington.

Download a copy to print here: [Gold and Fish](#)

2018 Events Calendar – Subject to change as year progresses.

August 19th:	PGPI monthly meeting 1:30pm
Sept 9th:	Direct One in Washington or North Fork Santiam outside Salem
Sept 16th:	PGPI monthly meeting 1:30pm
Oct 13th:	Weather permitting; Beach mining - Low tide 9:20am
October 14th:	PGPI monthly meeting 1:30pm
November 18th:	PGPI monthly meeting 1:30pm
December 16th:	PGPI monthly meeting 1:30pm



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