



The Prospector

Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.

GPA Portland, Oregon Chapter



October, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C., 1860s:

Politicians' Plan For Army To Seize Gold Mines Was Foiled

By Finn J.D. John

August 4, 2019

IN THE YEARS that followed the American Civil War, the American federal government was gasping for cash.

The war had been largely financed by borrowing huge sums of money from abroad, mostly from England. There weren't many other options. America's two main export crops, cotton and tobacco, were products of the South — which is why President Lincoln spent so heavily to throw a blockade around Southern ports.

By the time it was over, the Union government was having serious heartburn over debt service. And, of course, its revenue-generating options were fairly limited in those pre-income-tax days.

And yet, on the other side of the country, hordes of scruffy ruffians digging in the dirt and wading in the streams of Oregon and California were pulling a vast fortune out of the public domain — and keeping it all, giving not even a nod to the government that was the actual owner of the land that was making them so rich.

To these Eastern politicians, it didn't seem right. Here was Uncle Sam, which owned the land all this loot was being picked out of, getting absolutely nothing while a bunch of squatters swarmed over it, picking the carcass clean.

And to make matters even more open-and-shut for them, it was well known that the majority of miners in the gold fields were of Southern origin, and most of them had pulled hard for the Confederate cause. So, to the way of thinking of men like Rep. George Julian of Indiana, not only were they thieves, but rebels and wartime enemies to boot.

The solution? To seize the gold fields by military force, and either exploit them via government-owned mining operations or turn them over to the nation's creditors

President's Corner October 2023

Greetings! This month I have some news about a very important election coming up. First, I want to thank everyone who showed up and helped put together our End of Summer Gathering! Our sort-of-kind-of-not-really-a-picnic.

35 members and guests of all ages met up at Barton Park. It was a great group!

Fun was had by all - we panned our concentrates and paydirt - we enjoyed the use of six troughs and a high-banker (Rocky) and a blue bowl (Ken).

And wasn't that raffle a blast? We had great prizes available at fantastic odds.

Now about our election. Our annual election is held each November. This year it will take place at our November 19 meeting . Members can vote in person]

At our October 15th club meeting and in our November newsletter we will provide information about the positions that will be on the ballot.

If you are interested in being a candidate or nominating someone??? Let us know.

I hope some established members are ready to join me and help keep our club running smoothly.

See you all at the meeting!

John Mink



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**2022 Portland Gold Prospectors
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**Portland Gold Prospectors, Inc.
Secretary's Report September 17, 2023**

**Eastridge Church
14100 SE Sunnyside Rd.
Clackamas, Oregon 97015**

Meeting was called to order at 1:30 P.M. by President John Mink who also led the Pledge of Allegiance

Attendees - 40 attendees and 6 guests were present.

Treasury Report - A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasury Report that Jessyca read for the month of August.

Molalla River Outing - On September 23rd. Dan Rouse is going to be having an outing on the Molalla River so we are thinking about having a club picnic with him and doing some prospecting. We have a sign up sheet for anybody that is interested in attending.

Shows Next Year - Looking for new shows to advertise our organization

Skookum Gold - There's a new mining camp in Alaska. For info ask kin or John. www.skookumgoldcamp.com

2024 Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show - The 2024 Sportsmen's Show will be February 14th to the 18th. We aren't sure if we will be participating in it. We will have to weigh the pros and cons and determine if it will be profitable for us again.

Gold Bags for Sale - We are still selling our Gold Bags. We have three different sizes. The prices are \$10 and \$20. The more expensive the bag the more Gold you will get. Buy yours today and practice your panning skills.

Gold Swap - It's been suggested that we trade members' fine gold for larger pieces.

Raffle - The Raffle was held with \$1 and \$5 tickets. Ken was the lucky winner of the Gold Bag. Mark was the lucky winner of the Gold Nugget.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Jessyca Harmon, Treasurer



as partial payment of the war debt.

Indeed, those European creditor powers were already massing troops on the Mexican and Canadian borders, ready to surge across the line and start seizing (or helping to seize) mines and gold fields the instant they got the signal. And a strong and growing group of members of Congress from Northern and Eastern states stood ready to give them that signal.

The support for this position was building rapidly in the months after the war ended. So Senator William Stewart of Nevada moved to pre-empt it. In 1866, he introduced a bill that would lock in the status quo and protect miners and future miners from the threat of government expropriation.

"The mineral lands of the public domain ... are hereby declared to be free and open to exploration and occupation by all citizens of the United States," the bill announced, and went on to outline miners' rights to build access roads, dam streams, and build structures to help them in their exploration and occupation.

Stewart and his supporters believed that the injection of billions of dollars into the U.S. economy since 1849 had been so beneficial that changing miners' incentives risked killing a goose that was reliably laying golden eggs for everyone.



An early-1900s vintage picture postcard shows five different methods of mining gold: quartz stamping, hydraulic, dredging (with an old-school bucket-line dredge), use of a doodlebug, and panning.

Then, too, seizing mining operations after the hard, risky work of prospecting, accessing, and excavating was done didn't seem fair to his Western sensibilities. The government represented the people, not the politicians entrusted with it; and it hadn't done a thing to exploit the gold fields except stand aside and let the miners do their thing. For it to step forward now and, as it were, high-grade everyone's claims just because it could — that would be morally insupportable.

The opponents of the bill may have underestimated how much interest there was in gold mining out West — and how much the fairness question weighed. Following a bitter fight, Stewart's bill passed into law. It was refined and expanded over the following six years, finally being completed and codified as the General Mining Act of 1872.

Under it, individuals are granted a literal ownership right in their claims so long as they are being actively worked. That's why miners are legally empowered to hang "no trespassing" signs on their claims: There is very little difference between a miner's ownership interest in an active mining claim and a suburban homeowner's ownership interest in her/his own back yard.

Although it mainly just codified existing practice, as a matter of legal doctrine this was a revolutionary and controversial thing at the time. It was the first time any nation had simply handed over its mineral wealth to whoever wanted to claim it and exploit it.

According to the 1917 Pan-American Scientific Congress, "It was the first instance where a sovereign broke away from the old regalian right and voluntarily ceded to her citizens as a gift all her mineral wealth on the sole condition that the citizen should go out and possess it."

Moreover, according to Jackson, it was also the first time in U.S. history that de novo property rights were granted to single women. The law didn't say what gender the miner had to be. And in consequence, lots of women who didn't want to deal with husband husbandry took advantage of this, and went into the gold fields to work their very own mining claims.

"This is not just a mere license to mine, but in fact, a grant of unique property," Jackson wrote, in his book *Gold Dust: Stories of Oregon's Mining Years*. "The Mining Law was written this way for the simple fact that it was the ideology of its writers that minerals are a critical portion of our infrastructure and that if average people were given the opportunity to own and develop 20 acres of mineral land, that it would benefit the nation as a whole. History has proven that their theory was very much correct."

Editor's Note:

I was recently introduced to the Offbeat Oregon podcast narrated by Finn J.D. John. It is a very informative and entertaining series of stories of Oregon's History. This article was published in November of 2016.

I highly recommend giving him a listen!

From Ken Didier:

i have some items from Richard Ruth that Jim Irwin brought over to my place for storage. I mentioned to Jim that I would try to sell what was in usable condition. Here are pictures and pricing for three items. They are all Harbor Freight items. I have a 14" metal cut-off saw, a 6" metal cut-off saw and a welding cart. Late note: The 14" saw and the welding cart have been sold! Another \$40 for the club.



Classified Ads?

We've had a few requests to bring back classified ads in the newsletter. I'll be glad to include them. Please send them to my email: wrshpmzshn@gmail.com

LOST DUTCHMAN'S MINING ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FOR SALE

We received an email from Greg and Gwyn Bowen. They are selling their LDMA membership for \$900. If you are interested, please call 320-216-5751. Please leave a voicemail.

Our End-of-Summer Picnic September 23 at Barton Park





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

Download a copy to print here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses/environmental/hpa/types/prospecting>



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