

## FRED "FRITZ" GUDER: FREEGOLD FAME

by Jane Gaffin

The name Paul Fred "Fritz" Guder is synonymous with the Carmacks mining district, specifically Mount Freegold.

Mr. Guder said he was born in July, 1895. As a teen-ager, he struck out from his birth place of Silesia, Germany, for adventure on a Panama-bound ship. He walked across the isthmus shortly before the United States built the Panama Canal in 1914.

It was believed that Mr. Guder said he walked up the coast from Panama in 1912. However, other records state he worked his way north by ship. Perhaps the journey was a combination of both land and sea.

From trailhead at Skagway, Alaska, he scaled the White Pass in 3-1/2 days. It saved him \$21 fare on the narrow-gauge train that would have delivered him to the White Pass & Yukon Route depot in Whitehorse.

The 18-year-old adventurer enter the Yukon 1913 and headed for Dawson City where he found work cutting and hauling timber. He remembered three things: the Indian River water level was low; he never was paid; and George Black (Hall of Fame), his lawyer, went to war.

When the First World War started in 1914, Mr. Guder was not a Canadian citizen. Although he was not incarcerated nor deported due to his German heritage, the Canadian government did take away his guns.

He fashioned a bow with his axe as self-defense against bears. He survived hunting game, fishing, growing a garden and prospecting for gold.

In the winter of 1918-19, he went trapping alone in the Nahanni Valley. He traveled to and from the Indian village of Ross River to replenish provisions. His supplies were hauled with a hand sled up the Pelly River and across the mountains.

He continued prospecting around Fort Norman, Northwest Territories (N.W.T), where a rush ensued following the discovery of petroleum in 1920. He also investigated the Macmillan Pass area along the Yukon-N.W.T. border.

Then he returned to Carmacks, an Indian settlement on the Yukon River at the mouth of the Nordenskiold River, where he is alleged to have come in 1917 and helped Tom Bee run a trading post. In 1922, he settled into the area permanently. For a number of years he worked for the notable Captain Henry Seymour Back (Hall of Fame) on nearby Mount Nansen and vicinity. By then, Captain Back who had earned his rank during the American Civil War, was a relic.

According to one of Dr. Hugh Bostock's geological survey reports, a lode gold strike was reported near Carmacks in 1930. Considerable attention was attracted to the east end of the Dawson Range, about 38 miles northwest of Carmacks and accessible by a trail up Crossing Creek.

It had been in 1917 that a small placer stampede had occurred in the valley of Seymour Creek. Although it produced no direct profitable returns, it aroused the curiosity of some local prospectors who kept going back.

Mr. Guder was one of those prospectors. On top of the ridge north of Seymour Creek, he discovered magnetite float carrying visible gold. After he staked the first claim as Augusta, interest in the locality steadily grew. By the beginning of 1931, over a hundred claims had been recorded. During the summer, a few more mineral showings were discovered.

Mr. Guder was most noted for prospecting this vicinity on the mountain he named Freegold, where he had first staked claims in 1928. During his prospecting career, he made many good discoveries there.

Guder, Fritz.txt

Reference is made several times to Mr. Guder in the Geological Survey of Canada's Bostock Memoirs #284, compiled by Dr. Hugh Bostock (Honour Roll) who held the utmost admiration and respect for the working prospectors and was responsible for naming Prospector Mountain to commemorate them.

His report for the Carmacks District, 1933, stated that active prospecting had been in progress on Mount Freegold and the ridge extending to the southeast of it.

"Mr. F. Guder, the original staker in the locality, has been prospecting continuously in the west end of Mt. Freegold," wrote Dr. Bostock. "He has put in a number of pits and trenches and sunk four shafts ranging between 12 and 23 feet deep. These workings have shown up a number of new veins of mineral and some good gold assays have been obtained."

In 1949, the Carmacks-Freegold Road was built by N.A. Timmins to explore and develop the LaForma Gold Mine on Mount Freegold. The road was subsequently extended by prospectors and the Yukon territorial government to examine other parts of this mineral-rich district.

A creek where Mr. Guder found silver-lead deposits and where he was living while mining the ore was named Guder Creek by his friend Happy Lepage of Carmacks. Guder Creek (NTS 115I) is a tributary to Seymour Creek in the Mount Freegold area.

"I made a living prospecting," he related from his Whitehorse hospital bed about 1980. "The Freegold and the Dawson Range are the best bets in the Yukon," he added, but admitted that the Cariboo (British Columbia) gold rush history was his favourite subject.

His early Yukon investigations can be credited as the precursor that led others in later years to Williams Creek copper and the DEF/Minto copper-gold-silver mineral deposits in the Dawson Range, 50 miles northwest of Carmacks in Big Creek country.

When Fritz Guder reached 80, his active prospecting career began to ebb. The short, quiet-spoken, gentle, hard-working, respected German-born prospector, who had lost his hearing by then, suffered heart and other health problems before passing away in a Whitehorse care facility on June 20, 1981. He was within a whisker of his 86th birthday.

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