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H. E. Porter
By Dick McKenna

More than the usual amount of mystery appears to be attached to this pioneer prospector. No one knows where he came from and no one knows exactly where he ended up. Even his name seems to be some kind of well guarded secret, as in the past the man has always been referred to strictly as H.E. Porter. By himself, by the press and by the mining recorder.

What IS known about H.E. Porter however, is that he spent at least a dozen years of his life scouring the rugged valleys and mountains of south and central Yukon in search of valuable mineral deposits. And oftentimes finding them. Fact is, there are probably few prospectors in the Yukon's history who possess as shining a track record. First to Porters credit is the Pueblo Copper Mine which he discovered and staked in July of 1899. The Pueblo was the major producer on the Whitehorse Copperbelt in the early days by leaps and bounds, out shipping the districts second largest shipper (the Grafter) by ten to one. Between the years 1906 and 1917 the Pueblo Mine employed up to 200 miners at a time who mined upwards to 150,000 tons of copper-silver ore. This ore in turn produced over 9,800,000 pounds of copper metal and over 150,000 ounces of silver valued at \$2,057,400 in 1913 dollars. As Porter was working for the Whitehorse Copper Company at the time of staking the Pueblo, he received no more for his efforts other than a minor staking fee.

Shortly after staking the Pueblo Porter headed up to the Carmacks country where he staked up a succession of coal leases including the Andesite in 1901 the Losch in '02 and in 1903 finally hitting the big one, Division Coal, which remains as one of Yukon's largest known coal deposits. Division today is a valuable property with in excess of 45 Million Metric tonnes of high quality reserves.

By 1906 Porter was firmly entrenched in the Wheaton Valley where he prospected for gold and silver veins. In August of that year quite a stir was caused when prospectors working for J.H. Conrad discovered the original claim posts to the "lost Corwin gold mine" on ground belonging to Porter. The mine, supposedly discovered by Frank Corwin, was said to contain gold valued at \$2000 a ton. Several tons of which was also said to have been packed out to the Juneau Alaska mill in 1893. For reasons of failing health, Corwin did not return and upon his death bed a few years later he drew a map and told the tale to a Catholic nun at the hospital.

Apparently the exact location of Corwin's old workings was never found. However, Porter did discover a vein on the property that ran as high as 500 ounces of silver to the ton. For the next four years Porter worked the vein and with the help of a small crew of miners eventually tunnelled 1000 feet into the mountain before selling out to wealthy Chicago patent medicine "millionaire", W.J. Fleming.

When not prospecting or mining, Porter sometimes hunted as a profession. In August of 1911 the Whitehorse Star reported that he bagged and had shipped to town 19 prime Dall sheep that he shot in the mountains behind his Wheaton home. A home he shared with his wife known as “Mrs. H.E. Porter”.

The last reference made to the man was in late 1912 when he was said to be “in the country and continuously prospecting”. Afterwards, Porter and his wife who had previously garnered a fair amount of press coverage, are completely dropped from the record. A later report states that he went prospecting near the headwaters of the Stewart River and was never seen or heard from again.

Porter Creek which runs through the Pueblo property, and one of Whitehorse’s largest residential subdivisions are both named in honour of this ardent pioneer prospector.

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