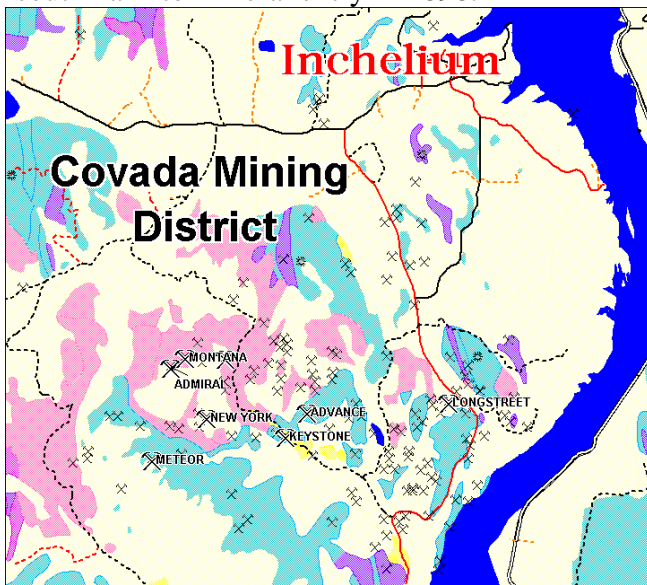


Covada

By Joseph Barreca

I was driving down Covada Road on the Colville Indian Reservation near Inchelium. Gray clouds hung low over second growth timber and stump ranches laid out along the flats. Fresh red rocks in a hillside quarry rose above a recent logging operation, evidence of the mineralization that led to formation of the Covada Mining District. In his 1918 mining report on the Colville Indian Reservation, Joseph Pardee writes that the “District was pretty thoroughly examined by prospectors within the decade following the opening of the diminished Colville Reservation or ‘south half’ to mineral entry in 1898.”



Pardee described rocks of the Covada Group as Paleozoic argillite, schist, quartzite and conglomerate. Today geologists classify the area as the “Covada Terrane”, an ancient sea floor that accumulated debris from volcanic islands as it formed 480 million years ago. Volcanic conduits squeezed basalt into layers of mud on the sea floor and sub-marine hot springs spread metallic deposits of copper, lead, zinc, gold silver and many other metals. These mixed with quartz sand, volcanic sandstone and chert from the shells of plankton fed by the hot spring minerals. This sea floor was crushed into the immovable mass of the North American Craton as other terranes piled on to the west. They pushed it up over some existing formations and into the quartzite rocks that bulged up to form the Huckleberry range in Stevens County.



Carl Putname

My Geologic Atlas of Ferry County shows 138 mines in this district but none are operating today. I wanted to know more about what happened in the Covada. I turned down Putnam Road on my way to visit with Carl Putnam. (Somewhere to my left, on the flanks of Rattlesnake Mountain, was the Silver Leaf, one of the District’s most productive mines.) I met Carl 30 years ago when he helped my family develop wells on land near Republic. He had told me about the stone house he was building with lintels of solid rock above the windows and I had wanted to see it ever since. Carl is 87 now and still runs his cattle ranch spanning several hundred acres. He is looking forward to a knee operation that will let him work on the fence lines more easily. Several mines are on his land, but his real wealth is in knowing the territory.

When his family moved there in 1922 (Carl was 4 years old), the McGrath Ferry crossed the Columbia at the bottom of the road and the town of Camp Columbia with a hotel and barber shop was near by. Several mines had already

been explored and mostly abandoned. What I show as the “Blue Jay” (Iron), that red quarry I saw on the way in, was called the “Ice Mine” because evaporative cooling in the talus slope formed natural ice that the settlers used for refrigeration. The Silver Leaf had produced \$6000 worth of ore (lead and zinc) by 1922. Other mines on the south side of Rattlesnake Mt. had produced gold, silver, copper and antimony.



Silver Leaf Mine

The miners either moved on or married native women and settled down. They established the town of Covada with high hopes. It was laid out in the shape of a wagon wheel, somewhat like Washington DC where Silver Creek Rd meets Stray Dog Canyon Rd. The name comes from some mines in the area, the Columbia + the Vengeance + the Ada = Covada. (None of these names are in use today.) It was abandoned in 1924. The mines were bought up by investors such as R.R. Coleman, who owned stores in Meteor, Inchelium and Covada and George Eves who was worried about enemies and carried a 45 at all times. He accidentally shot himself with it one day but managed to ride up to the Longstreet mine, which kept producing (copper, gold, silver

etc.) until 1937 where he got help from the Kinley family getting to the doctor.

Prospector Thompson, who operated the Bridge Creek Placer at the end of Putnam Rd and had discovered the Silver Leaf mine, eventually sold the pipe from the placer to Carl's Father, C. Frederick Putnam. Thompson used the money to build a service station in Enterprise, on the Stevens County side of the river. Carl went on to become Stevens County Commissioner from 1956 to 1972. He still worked for the county as planner and assorted other jobs when I met him in 1975 and served on the school board for even longer. He built the house from 1946 to 1986 living with his wife Florence in what is now the basement for 17 years. (Now I don't feel so bad about how long my house is taking.) The walls are 2 feet thick and framed on the inside.



Silver Leaf Quartz Crystal Pockets

On the way home, I stopped at the Silver Leaf. There are up to 20 minerals associated with the mine based on metals that include, iron, copper, lead, silver, tungsten, antimony and uranium. The most collectable specimens have pockets of quartz crystals, sometimes coated with other minerals. (This sample thanks to Rufus Cabral.)