

# Early hard rock mining predictions pay off

By JANE GAFFIN

**Keno, the venerable old gentleman mine, refuses to die a natural death as long as a probable hundred million ounces of silver keep its heart beating. Yet, the federal government is bent on subjecting the mine to euthanasia.**

**I believe the mine deserves a dignified burial.**

**In a series of articles being published in the Star each Friday, I'm saying last rites and farewell to a great mine that served as the Yukon's lifeblood off and on for more than 80 years.**

**Here's part 2.**

Nothing was turning up very fast after months of arduous searching for vein-type material similar to the significant Silver King that had been mined out with a primitive pick-and-candle method in 1918.

Louis Beauvette, who once staked claims beside the Silver King, knew silver when he saw it. And he saw silver while hunting sheep on Keno Hill. He staked the showing as the Roulette claim on July 10, 1919.

He made a vain dash to catch the Dawson-bound sidestream *Vidette* riverboat that was drifting out into the current.

Beauvette had missed Fred Bradley, an engineer and mine owner. He was president of Alaska Treadwell whose Juneau mine had flooded. Bradley was running around the country hunting for other deposits in which to invest and develop into paying mines.

A dejected Beauvette massaged the smooth silvery-blue rock and frowned at the bleating white steamer disappearing into the glare of the river.

A whack across the narrow shoulders brought him out of meditation.

"I say, Louie, did you miss your boat?" greeted Jack Pickering, a jovial Englishman and partner in the Pickering & Greenfield teamster and livery business. "Don't take it so hard. The *Nasutlin* will be along in a few days."

"I missed Bradley," Beauvette announced, solemnly.

"Bradley?" Pickering repeated,



Photo submitted

**PIVOTAL FIGURE - Shown above is Alfred Kirk "Shelly" Schellinger, geologist and mining engineer for the Guggenheim-owned Keno Hill Mining Ltd., a subsidiary spun off from the Yukon Gold Co.**

incredulously. "He just rejected my Lookout Mountain property. Crazy engineers. Don't know a good thing when they see it."

Pickering had organized Yukon Silver-Lead Company on the basis of

a property belonging to Andy Johnson, who had staked the galena-bearing vein Sept. 26, 1916 on Lookout Mountain. The dominating land feature, 15 kilometres west of the Silver King, was later renamed Mount Haldane.

Since Bradley wasn't interested and Yukon Silver-Lead Company could not function without big bucks backing it, Pickering had to move to Plan B. And it was standing next to him.

Beauvette handed him the mineral sample. "Beautiful, Louie," admired Pickering. "Where did you find this?" Beauvette replied: "My Roulette, up The Hill."

One chilly fall day, Beauvette had been sheep hunting. Like all good finds, he stumbled across an outcrop. Beauvette recognized the bluish rock pitted with rusty stains as silver and galena.

He traced the galena float uphill a short way without finding the source. Then the bitter cold forced him down The Hill to winter in a Duncan Creek cabin until spring.

When Beauvette heard Bradley was looking at Pickering's Lookout Mountain claim, he hurried up to timberline to continue an investigation that turned up large chunks of galena.

The prospector traced the rich float until it ended in talus a short distance from a cirque where he thought the vein should be. He crammed his pack-sack with the shimmering material from the Roulette claim that July day and raced down the hillside.

"Leave everything to me," Pickering offered. "I'm sure Bradley will be interested in seeing these. If you'll give me those samples, I'll take the next boat to Dawson."

By the time Pickering strode down the *Nasutlin's* plank into dusty Front Street, the elusive Fred Bradley was gone. He had met his engineer, Livingstone Wernecke, in Dawson City. The two had sailed on another scheduled steamer for Whitehorse.

Bradley had yet to invest the \$2 million earned on the last gold shipment from his flooded Treadwell Alaska mine at Juneau.

Pickering sauntered along the walkways and headed to the outskirts of a town hushed when most of the 40,000 Americans were lured to the Alaska gold strike.

The Guggenheim-owned Yukon Gold Company had groaning, creaking dredges scooping dirt and sifting gold from the creeks around the clock.

Pickering stepped inside the dim office to a pungent odour of gold assays. Alfred Kirk Schellinger was rattling around a furnace among a clutter of crucibles and bottles.

"Good afternoon, Shelly," greeted Pickering, who liked Schellinger.

Shelly, as he was affectionately tagged, took a personal interest in hard rock mining. The Guggenheims of New York had sent the 1909 Stanford University mining engineer and geologist to the Yukon to work with placer gold. Occasionally, curiosity had prompted Shelly's visits to the Silver King.

"How are things in Mayo?" Shelly inquired casually while he worked. "Any good mines opening up?"

"May be," answered an enigmatic Pickering, handing over the samples. "Hmmm," was the refined approval. The engineer bustled about splitting, grinding, pulverizing, weighing and finally pulling small dishes containing jelly-like beads from the furnace.

Except for the Silver King, nothing in the Yukon had assayed up to 300 ounces to the ton of silver.

Schellinger notified the local Yukon Gold manager, who consulted the Guggenheims at the American Smelting and Refining Company

(ASARCO) in New York, who returned instructions to dispatch Schellinger to investigate the property.

Pickering and Schellinger arrived in Mayo on July 21, 1919, just as pioneer hard rock miner Jim Anderson was recording the Rico claims. Schellinger hired buckboard and horses from Pickering & Greenfield. An entourage of teamsters and prospectors set off up The Hill.

Beauvette went elsewhere to stake, leaving Schellinger to select the best remaining ground on July 29, 1919. He named the claim for another famous gambling game. Keno served as the inspiration to rename the green knoll Keno Hill.

A group of six claims incorporated all the known vein indications: Louis Beauvette's Roulette; Jim Anderson's Rico and Heather; Alfred Schellinger's Keno; Scotty Mowatt's Scottie; and Jack Pickering's Pinochle.

Schellinger, Pickering and Beauvette rowed a boat to Dawson to confirm values of samples through assaying.

The Guggies sent Schellinger back to Keno Hill as assistant engineer for Keno Hill Mining, a subsidiary spun off from the Yukon Gold Company.

What a tizzy. Supplies were moved from Dawson City to the 1,500-metre (5,000-foot) level. Discouraged Klondike stragglers smelled jobs and regular pay.

The next year, 1920, the cabins at the site of the Duncan Creek rush — including the originals built by the three Swedes — were dismantled to construct the Keno townsite.

The Silver King had not been an isolated occurrence after all. Word leaked out quickly.

Among the 600 claims, squeezed around the Keno claim by other prospectors not yet immune to staking rushes, was Beauvette's Minto, for which he received a substantial sum.

Meanwhile, Fred Bradley was down in the Carcross area, south of Whitehorse, looking over the Venus workings. His antennae went up and homed in on the Gambler — the claim where galena float had first been spotted on Keno Hill.

He wanted a piece of galena pie, the principal ore of lead.

He invested \$10,000 sight unseen. Then he dispatched Livingstone Wernecke, his 38-year-old mining engineer, to inspect the Gambler in June 1921.

It was a dud.

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*Next week, she will write about Livingstone Wernecke's 20-year tenure as Treadwell Yukon's dynamo general manager. He was a hoot.*

## Thank you!

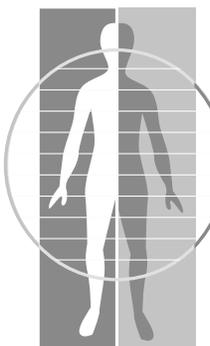
The recent birthday celebration at the legion in my honour has been an extremely humbling experience. The interim period receiving cancer treatment in another city far from home, is one of longing for your unique lifestyle and the many good friends one has.

I salute the musicians, who are too numerous to mention, the personal friends, who managed to find the time to put together such an event, and the friends who came to help celebrate.

*Without such friends, one does not have a life!*  
Merr Bales

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