



Newsletter

Summer 2021

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021! It has been quite a few months since we reported on the activities of our Society, and we have some exciting news to report to our membership and sponsors.

MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

Dependent on the easing of Covid protocols later this summer, we hope to welcome members to an 'on site' barbeque and open house at the future home of the Yellowknife Historical Museum. Even though the pandemic has caused our Beer Barge cancellation for the second year in a row, you can still support the cause by purchasing Beer Barge products! Beer steins (glass or plastic) are still available for sale by contacting the coordinator or checking out Jake Olsen's shop [YK Gold and Silver](#) next to the Black Knight Pub!



FUNDING FOR MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION

A sponsorship sign has been ordered so that we can thank all the major contributors to our project over the past many years. Currently, a list of sponsors is on our website but there is no on-site recognition. Society executive Helmut Epp, Marie Adams, Ryan Silke, and coordinator Tracey Bryant have been actively engaged in writing applications for government grants. Discussions continue with the federal government (CanNor), Heritage Canada, and Infrastructure Canada whom we hope will become key supporters of our museum project. The Government of the NWT ECE department has provided \$60,000 in operating funds over the past few years and we are optimistic that this support will continue. Meanwhile, we are very pleased to report that GNWT ITI department, through the Community Tourism Infrastructure Contribution Program, has granted us \$200,000 this year. Additionally, the City of Yellowknife is contributing \$10,000 to our projects.

SUMMER CONSTRUCTION PLANS

Guy Architects were engaged provide architectural and engineering oversight and prepare drawings for various elements of Phase 1 of the project, which involves insulation, construction of interior partitions and doors, staircases, entrance landing, and minor roof repairs. Plans were received in May 2021 and a contractor has been approached. The \$200,000 from ITI is the major source of funds for this work. More will be reported as construction begins. It is looking to be another busy season of construction at the museum site!

LEASE

A 14-year lease between the Society and the Government of the NWT was signed and executed in February 2021. With this long-term lease, we now have better security which was a key requirement for some of the government funders.

GIANT MINE REMEDIATION PROJECT UPDATE

We met with the Giant Mine remediation project team on June 1 for an update on remediation plans and to give them a tour of our museum site. The timeline of remediation and its impact on our operations is ever evolving. Townsite demolition will start next summer (2022) while it is foreseen that fore-shore tailings dredging and city boat launch removal may start in 2023. Work on Baker Creek re-alignment may not start for another couple of years.

Of interest to the Society are plans for moving the city boat launch to the current sailing club site. A new parking lot in this area may be of long-term benefit to our museum facility. Of more concern is the general remediation of soils in our area. It is likely that significant waste rock and soil material from around our building will have to be removed and safely disposed of. We will continue dialogue with the Giant Mine remediation project team as plans move forward to ensure that our interests are respected.



Museum site when completed

ACQUISITIONS AND DONATIONS

Thank you to the following people and organizations for the recent donations in the winter of 2020-2021:

Barb O’Neil – A longtime supporter of the Society donated \$250 dollars. Thanks Barb!

Robert Carr – Donated a length of the old wood-stave pipeline that supplied fresh water to the Ptarmigan gold mine in 1941-1942. This pipeline ran from Cassidy Point on Prosperous Lake to the mine and can still be observed in a number of places.

Wallace Finlayson – Donated a 1981 gold coin celebrating mining in the NWT.

Glen Macdonald – Son of mine manager Colin Macdonald at Discovery Mine (1953-1964) sent us some photographs and a book on Discovery Mine community history published by the Discovery Women’s Institute in 1965. See story below.

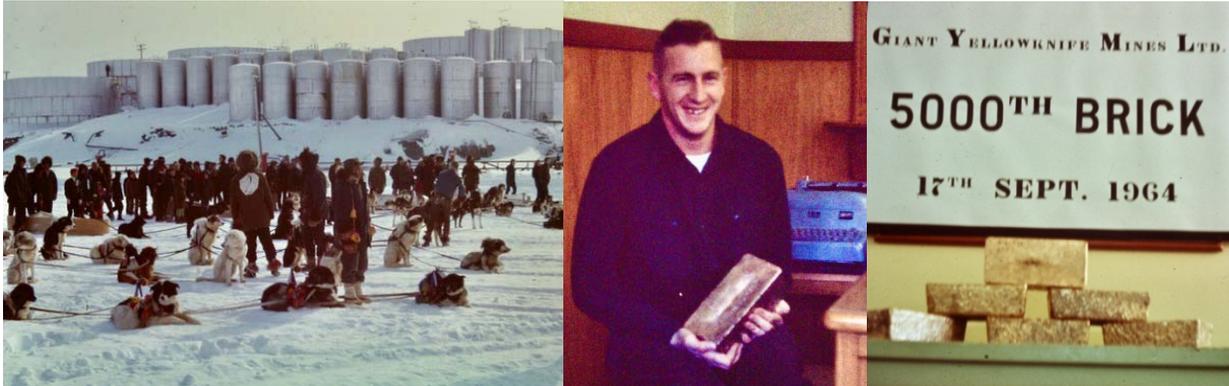
Trevor Teed – Donated an old calculator from the Terra silver mine.

Joe Walsh – Former Giant Mine accountant and office manager (1975-1991) is leaving Yellowknife this summer and donated artwork and a sample of quartz from the high-grade Brock vein.

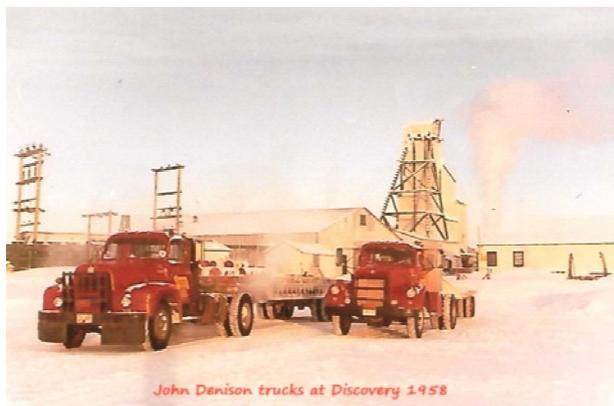
Sandra Dye – Donated a copy of J.W. Horan’s 1940 book of poetry “Songs of the North”

DOWN MEMORY LANE

Over the winter we heard from **Andy Stuart-Hill**, a mill clerk at Giant Mine from 1958-1960 and returning later as a metallurgical accountant from 1962-1964. As metallurgical staff, Andy was responsible for production accounting and was entrusted with gold brick shipments. He shared some of his photographs which include scenes of the 1959 Dog Derby races in Yellowknife and holding a gold brick in his office.



We also received copies of images from the Discovery Mine, courtesy of **Glen Macdonald**. Glen was the son of Colin Macdonald, Discovery's mine manager from 1953 to 1964. The photos include many scenes of bush planes, together with cat trains, trucks, and Yellowknife scenes. Here is a small selection of Glen's photos.



John Denison trucks at Discovery 1958



Max Ward's new Bristol on ice strip



D-7 Cat Train to Tundra from Discovery January 1957



Yellowknife Winter 1957/58 - Federal Building

LETTERS FROM YELLOWKNIFE 1937-1939

Bob Stubbs recently sent us an email to let us know about his family history web site. In 1937 his father, Tony Stubbs, came north with Cominco to work at Con Mine as an accounting clerk. He wrote several letters home to his parents on the journey north and then regularly as he settled into Yellowknife life. The letters portray the gold community in its infancy as a construction camp and follow the trajectory of Yellowknife as it booms and then busts in 1939 with the call to war, and the subsequent deluge of workers, including Tony, leaving the north to sign up with the armed forces.

On July 29, 1937, soon after Tony's arrival, he wrote: *"The bunkhouses are being built very quickly and the windows are being put in the first one already. The staff house is supposed to be finished by Aug. 15th—or else the chief carpenter loses a bottle of scotch. At present the new camp looks like a lumber yard as an enormous amount of lumber came in on the boat. They are making a very expensive storage tank for oil by tunnelling into a solid rock hillside. They have gone in about 30 feet and are now making the cave at the end which is to be 25' x 25' x 25'. All they have to do is block up the tunnel and fill the cave with oil. It takes all day to get the holes drilled for the powder and then blast at night. It acts much like a cannon sending rocks as much as 200 yds out into the lake."*

On June 18, 1938 he reported on the arrival of the summer's first boat: *"Greatest news of the week is the arrival of the first boats. The very first, if it can be called a boat, came in at 8:40 p.m. on Thursday. It was nothing more than a rudely covered barge with two out board engines. It also had a launch pushing it, hitched on in the same manner as the ferry at Shuswap. Freight was chiefly fruit and vegetables of which we bought none and which were probably auctioned at town. That same night two similar craft arrived. They did not stop here either except to sell a few oranges to the boys. Incidentally the first boat had taken eleven days to come from Smith."*

On July 26, 1938 the town of Yellowknife was booming: *"Town building has gone ahead rapidly. The new hotel is already open though not finished. It is a two storey affair—quite large but with very small rooms. It is equipped for electric light. The new bank building and the H. B. store are also large and two storey. The air pictures will suggest the size of the town (remember that a similar shot a year ago would have shown possibly two tents)..."*

Visit <https://rdstubbs.ca/letters-from-yellowknife/> to read the letters.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM PROJECT

The Yellowknife Historical Society envisions the museum site at Giant Mine as a place that celebrates all aspects of Yellowknife's interesting history, from its Indigenous stories, geological setting, prospecting, the industrial activities of the gold mines, and the pioneer entrepreneurs that laid the foundation for the town in the 1930s. The museum will diversify current tourism-related opportunities and is expected to appeal to visitors as well as residents of Yellowknife.

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