

Digging in the Cariboo: Unlike the Fraser

Digging in the Cariboo was very different from digging along the Fraser. Pans and rockers wouldn't do the trick any more. In the Cariboo, simple surface digging would not yield the gold. Miners had to go deeper into the ground to get at the gold.

Digging deep into the ground meant sinking a mineshaft - usually at least 15 to 20 metres underground.

Sinking a mineshaft was expensive. Miners got together and pooled their money in order to pay for sinking shafts.

Using Waterwheels

Water had to be pumped from underground mines. Huge waterwheels were used to pump out the water. Sometimes millions of litres a day would be pumped from a mine. And after all the effort and expense of pumping out water, miners had no guarantee that they would for sure hit pay dirt underground. Sometimes they came up empty-handed.

Understanding What You Read

Answer the following questions on a piece of paper or in your class journal. Be sure to answer in complete sentences.

1. Why was simple "panning" no longer a profitable mining method in the Cariboo?
2. Why did miners find it necessary to get together and pool their resources in order to dig mine shafts?
3. How was water extracted from mine shafts deep underground?
4. Why were miners sometimes disappointed after they had spent lots of money and effort into sinking a mineshaft?

Gold Thieves Abounded: It was hard enough to prospect and pan for gold, but it was even harder to protect your find once you had it. Many miners were robbed of their gold before they got it out of the mining camps, and many others were robbed on the trip back to Victoria. Men hid their gold under the floorboards in their cabins or they buried their loot under trees. Some carried their gold on their bodies - prepared to fight to the death if attacked.