

## Claim Tags – Mining History

On this picnic site, you can see mining claim tags, which are evidence of the area's gold rush:



Figure 23.1. Picnic site with claim tags.  
Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 23.2. Claim tags.  
Photo by A. Kirch.



Figure 23.3: E.A. Pelletier  
Source: Mining in Manitoba  
Project (2006) <sup>(4)</sup>.

Following the 1900 Geological Survey of Canada, conducted by J.B. Tyrell, the region east of Lake Winnipeg was viewed as being a potential area for gold mining. A decade later, E.A. Pelletier, a former inspector with the Royal North West Mounted Police, traveled to Manigotagan to meet Arthur Quesnel at his trading post <sup>(4)</sup>. Quesnel had staked a mining claim near Hole River Indian Reserve (now Hollow Water) two years earlier and he informed Pelletier of the various mineralized areas along the Manigotagan River. That fall Pelletier set out on an expedition along the Manigotagan River with Alex Spence <sup>(3)</sup>. He met a local trapper by the name of Duncan Twohearts. Pelletier showed Twohearts some samples and encouraged him to look for this kind of mineral while working on the trap lines and traveling the land. A few days before Christmas, Twohearts and his son, Jean-Baptiste (“The Great Wolf”), discovered some scaled off pieces of bedrock containing an unusual mineral <sup>(1)</sup>. Twohearts sent the rock samples to Arthur Quesnel, who later showed them to Pelletier. Pelletier was impressed and set out to meet Twohearts and his son near Turtle Lake. Together, they traveled towards (Big) Rice Lake where they discovered a boulder of rusty quartz containing pure gold. In March 1911, Pelletier staked a claim called “Gabrielle” at this location and when he returned to Turtle Lake, Pelletier extracted several hundred pounds of samples <sup>(3)</sup>. As Bérard (1979) puts it: “Claims were staked and the fuse was lit. It really banged! Hell bent from all over they came and the ‘East Central Manitoba Gold Rush’ was on” <sup>(1)</sup>.

In the following years, San Antonio, Rachel, Ross Fraction, and Island Fraction claims were staked in the area. San Antonio was the biggest and longest-living one. It produced gold from 1932 into the 1960s from shafts up to 1 mile deep <sup>(3)</sup>. During the time of the gold rush, the Manigotagan waterways gained new importance as transportation routes. One of the most prominent historic remnants on the Manigotagan River, the “Alligator” is evidence of this. However, the Wanipigow River was more important as a transport route than the Manigotagan. Ships entered from Lake Winnipeg, where there were rapids right at the mouth <sup>(5)</sup>. Horses pulled the barges through these rapids and then upstream. The river was dredged where needed and the barges continued until the next set of rapids 12km upstream. There was a brief overland carry of a few Km to what is now called English Brook Campground (Lower Landing). All produce or material was then again loaded back onto water taxi and pulled further upstream and through Wanipigow Lake to Upper Curry’s Landing. Finally the freight was loaded onto motorized trucks and transported to Bissett and Long Lake. <sup>(5)</sup>

The Rice Lake gold mine in Bissett, historically known as the San Antonio gold mine, is now owned and operated by San Gold Corporation. Between 1932 and 1968 the mine produced more than 1.36 million ounces of gold despite the limited underground exploration and development that took place. In 1996, Rea Gold began an extensive construction and development program with the intent of increasing production to 1,000 tons per day. Rea Gold deepened the "A" shaft to 4,200 feet, eliminating the need for two out of three internal winzes (a winze is very similar to a shaft). However, they declared bankruptcy in 1997, and Harmony Canada acquired the property in the following year. Harmony Canada completed the constructions and produced 110,000 ounces before placing the property on care and maintenance in 2001 <sup>(6)</sup>. Despite Harmony's growth, the price of gold and the mine's declining significance lead to financial problems.

Today, San Gold Corporation operate two gold mines with extensive exploration in the Rice Lake greenstone belt area and continue to actively explore the belt, where the San Gold #3 deposit was recently discovered <sup>(6)</sup>. This resulted in a strong gold resource base in Manitoba.

Besides the Alligator, claim tags are evidence of the area's mining history and can be seen nailed to tree stumps, like the one on this picnic site on Long Lake. – So, if you do find a pile of gold while canoeing down the Manigotagan....

With thanks to the [Centre for Rupert's Land Studies at the University of Winnipeg](#).

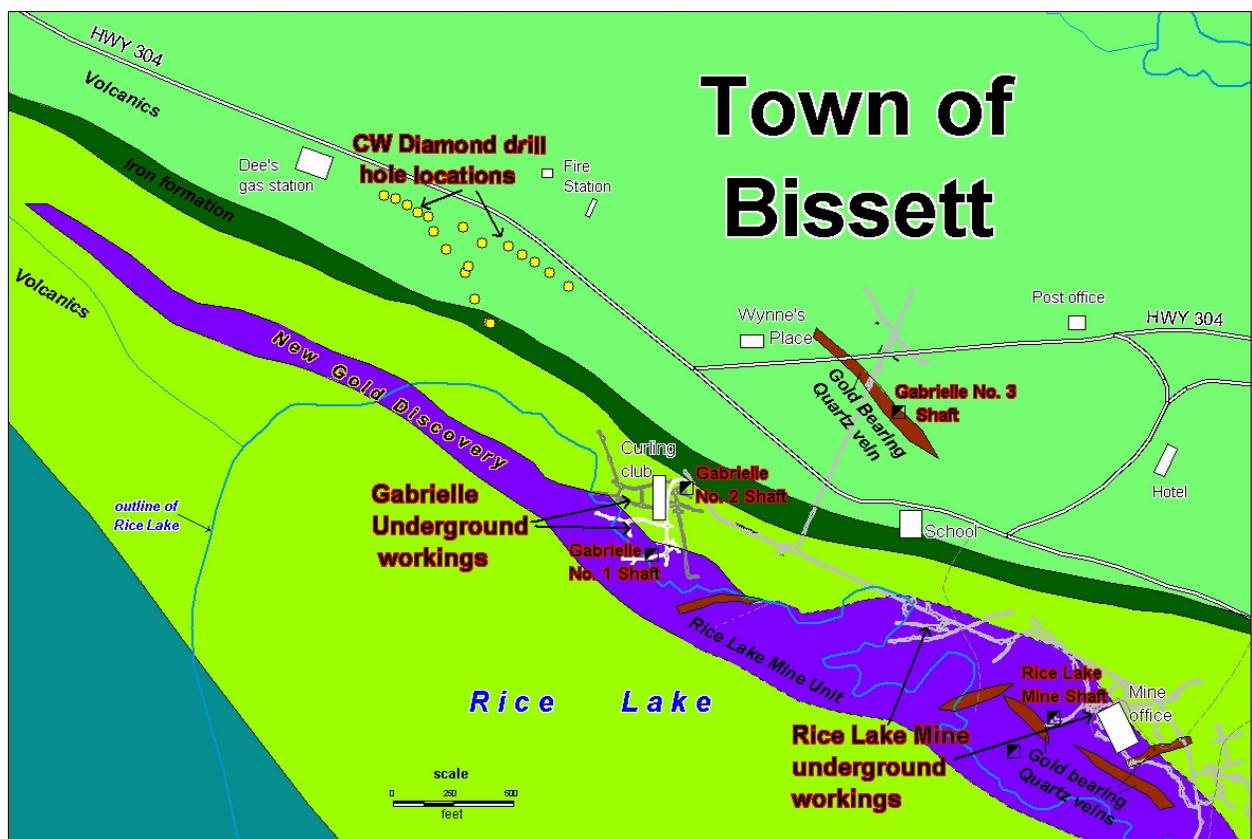


Figure 23.4: Map of Mining Operations in the Rice Lake area  
Source: San Gold Corporation <sup>(6)</sup>

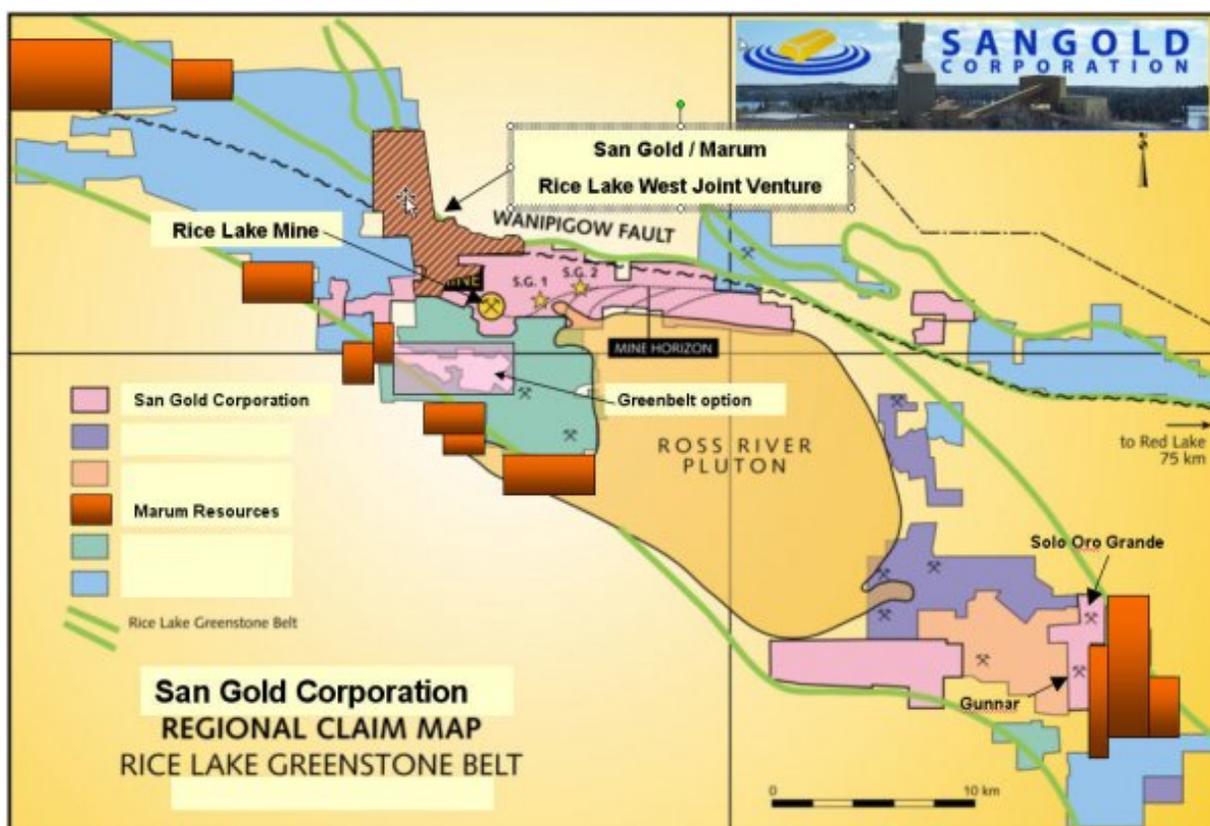


Figure 23.5: Map of the Rice Lake Greenstone Belt  
Source: San Gold Corporation <sup>(6)</sup>

**Sources:**

(1) Bérard. 1979. The Bird-Manigotagan Waterways Map. Manitoba Department of Natural Resources, Parks Branch.

(2) Buchanan, J. 1997. Canoeing Manitoba Rivers. Rocky Mountain Books. Clagary, Alberta. Vol. 1 South.

(3) Cole, G.E. Mining in Manitoba. Manitoba Historical Society website. <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/manitobamining.shtml>. Accessed 3/10/2006.

(4) History of Bissett website: Mining in Manitoba Project. Red River College. <http://www.digistar.mb.ca/minsci/areas/bishist.htm>. Accessed 18/10/2006.

(5) Marchement, M. Coach, Marathon Canoe Racing, Board of Directors, Sports Manitoba. Personal Communication. 22/08/2006

(6) San Gold Corporation. <http://www.sangoldcorp.com> Accessed on 24.10.06.