

# Largest Dredge Tested

10/9/79

DURKEE, Ore. (AP) — What is believed to be the largest dryland mining dredge in the United States is being tested for the first time in an abandoned gold field in Eastern Oregon.

The huge dredging operation was inspired by the skyrocketing price of gold in recent years.

The 65-ton dredge, operated by Mormon Basin Placer Mines, is chewing into an old river bank 50 miles southeast of Baker.

The dredge operated only briefly because water conduits broke three times. However, those in charge of the project say all other parts of the complex operation performed properly.

Partners in the operation, Max Lattig, a Baker chemical engineer, and Ray Ingle, a Los Angeles graphic arts executive, say they have invested \$500,000 in the operation.

It is one of several dredging efforts either operating or planning to operate in the old gold fields of the region.

The Mormon Basin dredge will sift through about 2 tons of dry pebbles every minute, extracting about 316 ounce of gold from the average minute of sifting. Lattig and Ingle claim it will produce \$8,000 worth of gold could be obtained in one eight-hour shift.

The gold fields of the region were abandoned after the larger deposits were mined near the turn of the century. But after the price bolted to \$200 per ounce two years ago, several people made plans to mine the harder-to-find smaller deposits of gold here. Now, the price is near \$400 per ounce, and still more fortune hunters are expected to launch projects to find the gold hidden in these old river banks and mountains.

# *Gold Dredging Inaugurated*

**MORMON BASIN (UPI) —**  
The largest dry-land mining dredge in the nation has been inaugurated and briefly began chewing into an ancient, gold-laden river bank in Eastern Oregon's long-abandoned gold fields.

Inspired by gold's dramatic rise in price, the dredge soon will be producing for a world market that has been paying more than \$400 an ounce recently.

Several other new, well-engineered operations

reportedly have been rushed into production.

Eighteen workers cheered when the first dredge trial was over, as a bright moon hung over a nearby ridge to light their clean-up. Work had begun at dawn.

Testing ended when water conduits burst for the third time. All sections of the one-of-a-kind plant had done their jobs.

Mormon Basin Placer Mines, the operator, has bought gold claims that date

back more than a century here, along a valley that once held towns with thousands but that now contains only scattered shacks, rusty tin cabins and hillside mine entrances.

The 65-ton dredge was assembled here but the 80-foot dragline crane that will feed it was "walked in" on its own crawlers over 11 miles of earthen road. The trip took a week.

More than a half-million dollars has been invested in the operation by partners Max

Lattig, a Baker chemical engineer, and Ray Ingle, a Los Angeles graphic arts executive.

The dredge will sift through about two tons of dry pebbles every minute, extracting about three-sixteenths of an ounce of gold.

In one eight-hour shift, the operation is expected to set aside \$8,000 worth of gold for processing.

The dredge, mounted on crawler tracks, sits in a pit dug into the gold-bearing

gravel. A giant dragline digs into the gravel in front of the dredge and loads the gravel into the dredge.

Rocks and large gravel are sifted out first and dumped behind the dredge by a conveyor belt.

Top soil — an average of 11 feet thick — that covered the gravel has been set to one side and will be replaced to hide the mining scars.

The remaining gravel with the gold is sluiced to a separator mill nearby where

most of the gravel is discarded and a concentrated collection of gold flakes and nuggets, along with sand, is collected for final processing.

The finished gold flakes will be sent to a smelter near Los Angeles, where they will be sold at the prevailing London gold price.