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### Russel partner discovers sapphires

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RUSSEL PARTNER  
DISCOVERS SAPPHIRES

MISSOULA---

A man described by cowboy-artist Charles Russell as "the best partner a man ever had," was the discoverer of the famous Yogo sapphire field, according to historical records received by the University of Montana.

While cleaning up tailings from a gold mine at Yogo, Jake Hoover found the sapphires and supposed them to be pieces of glass from broken whisky bottles that had been rounded and water worn.

Hoover, along with four others, staked claims in the area and formed "The New Mine Sapphire Syndicate," and were at once occupied in mining for the gems.

Russell referred to Hoover as a hunter and trapper. It was Hoover who found Russell camped on the prairie after Russell had been fired from his first job in Montana as a shepherd. Hoover offered the artist the doubtful comforts of his cabin and they became friends for life.

According to the records received by the UM, one of the partners in the sapphire enterprise was a Mr. G.A. Wells, an Englishman. Wells, on a visit to England, found several men interested in investing in the operation.

Jake Hoover was the first to sell his one-fourth interest - probably for around \$25,000.

Other prospectors located claims nearby and began mining operations that later became known as the Yogo American Sapphire Company. The American firm's financial situation was precarious from the beginning causing it to make forced sales of the gems below market price to raise cash to cover their operations.

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This worked a hardship on the English syndicate and when the continued financial problems of the American firm forced it to look for a buyer, the English firm purchased the American mine and consolidated the two in 1914.

Rising English taxes, and, to a lesser extent, higher taxes encountered in Montana, coupled with other cost increases, caused dividends to fall off rapidly. Then in July, 1923, a cloudburst did extensive damage and the mine ceased operation.

The mine changed hands in 1956 and was reopened in '59. It has since closed again and the area is now being developed for summer homes.

Dale Johnson, UM archivist to whom the records are entrusted, says that Mrs. Marvel Lowrance, Billings, purchased stock in the firm and became an officer. Mrs. Lowrance donated the old records to the University.

Along with the history - which was written for stockholder's information - are letters, marketing information, stockholder reports and several enlarged color photos that show the mines as they looked a decade ago.

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