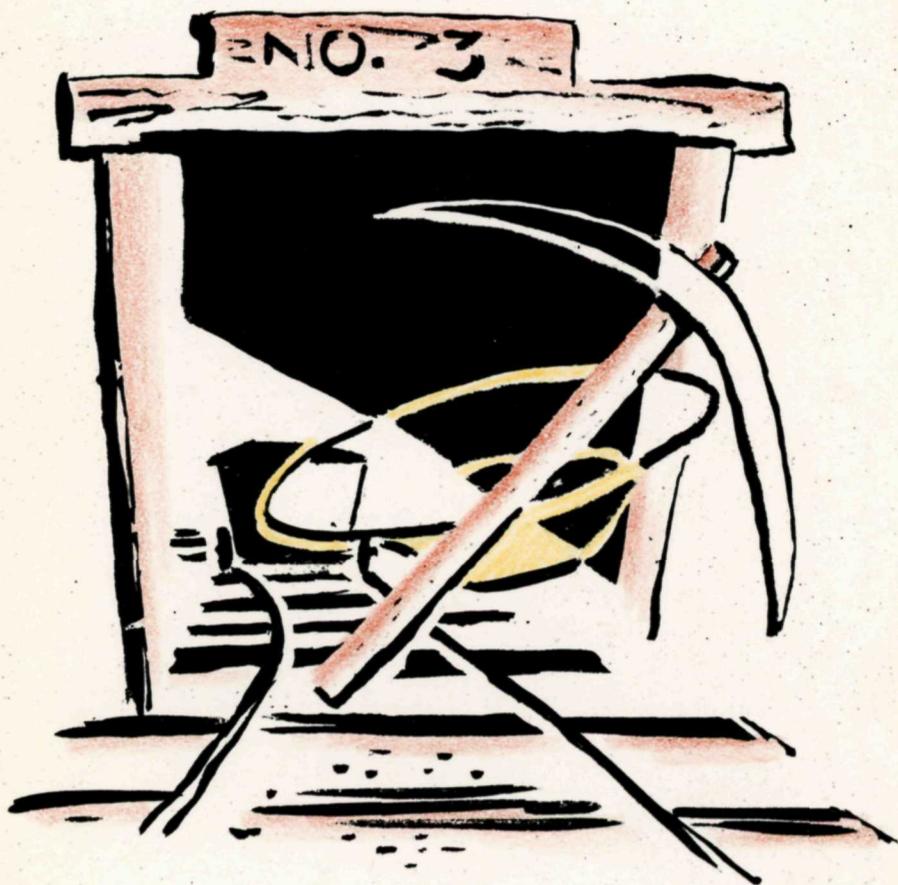


# The Mining Frontier



THE NATIONAL SURVEY  
OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS



Once more on Hangtown's hills we delve

On Murderer's Bar we mine,

At Nigger's Tent and Boston Jim's

You Bet, Red Dog, Port Wine.

On Poker Flat and Poor Man's Shack

Once more our luck we try,

Where nuggets once were found as thick

As planets in the sky.

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

Theme XV, Westward Expansion and the Extension of the National  
Boundaries to the Pacific  
1830-1898

THE MINING FRONTIER

Based on a study prepared by Dr. Benjamin F. Gilbert,  
San Jose State College. Contributing historians:  
Ray H. Mattison, Region Two, Omaha; Robert M. Utley,  
Region Three, Santa Fe. Project under general super-  
vision of John O. Littleton, Washington.

Edited by  
William C. Everhart  
Region Four, San Francisco  
1959

## FOREWORD

This study represents the work of the National Park Service field staff assigned to the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. In the process of evaluating the sites treated in the several themes, the Consulting Committee for the Survey and the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments have screened the findings of the field staff. Some sites recommended by the field staff for classification of exceptional value have been eliminated, and in a few cases sites and buildings have been added to the lists of exceptionally valuable sites.

The sites and buildings associated with this study, "The Mining Frontier," recommended for classification of exceptional value by the Advisory Board are as follows:

1. Bodie, California
2. Coloma, California
3. Columbia, California
4. New Almaden, California
5. San Francisco Old Mint, California
6. Virginia City, Nevada
7. Tombstone, Arizona
8. Central City, Colorado
9. Cripple Creek, Colorado
10. Leadville, Colorado
11. Virginia City, Montana
12. Butte, Montana
13. Bannack, Montana
14. Deadwood, South Dakota
15. Silverton Telluride Area, Colorado
16. Durango Silverton Narrow Gauge Line, Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, Colorado

When the studies are published for wider distribution they will reflect this change.

Conrad L. Wirth  
Director

## PREFACE

This study is one of a series being conducted by the National Park Service as a part of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. One of the major themes of American history being studied by the National Survey is "Westward Expansion and the Extension of the National Boundaries to the Pacific, 1830-1898." Because sites associated with western history have generally received less attention than those in the East, particular emphasis is being placed upon the Westward Expansion theme; it has been divided into a number of subthemes, one of which is the Mining Frontier.

This report is a joint product. The section on the history of the mining frontier is based upon a scholarly report written for the National Park Service by Dr. Benjamin F. Gilbert, of San Jose State College. Historians Ray H. Mattison, Region Two Office, Omaha, and Robert M. Utley, Region Three Office, Santa Fe, contributed the material on the individual sites in their respective regions, reviewed Dr. Gilbert's study and assisted in the general planning of the study. Historian William C. Everhart, Region Four Office, San Francisco, who coordinated the project, contributed the site material for Region Four, and prepared the final historical narrative.

One statement should be made concerning the scope of the narrative. Although the Alaska mining rush was important, it is planned to treat that State as a separate study in the National Survey. It is granted that coal, iron and oil, and

many other minerals besides gold and silver, constitute important industries of the western states; however, in this study the focus of attention has been gold and silver because these precious minerals were chiefly responsible for the importance of the mining frontier to Westward Expansion. Granting that the subject does not lend itself to either the chronological or geographical approach, the latter has been employed, for the most part, following the trend of the mining frontier eastward. The criteria used in evaluating the sites is included in the appendix.

Considerable assistance and counsel were received from the Staffs of the Division of Interpretation in the Regional and Washington Offices. Dr. John A. Hussey, Regional Historian in San Francisco, was particularly helpful.

The work of the National Survey profits especially from the experience and knowledge of a considerable number of persons and organizations. Every effort is made to solicit the considered opinion of as many qualified people as possible, in reaching final selection of the most significant sites. Assistance from the following is acknowledged:

Professor Frank D. Reeve, Department of History, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; Mr. Dennis McCarthy, Director of the Arizona State Parks Board, Phoenix; Dr. Emil W. Haury and Dr. W. W. Wasley, Arizona State Museum, Tucson; Mrs. Edna G. Landin, President of the Tombstone Restoration Commission; and Dr. A. R. Mortensen, Director of the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

Miss Irene Simpson, Wells Fargo Museum, San Francisco;  
Dr. Aubrey Neasham, California Division of Beaches and Parks,  
Sacramento; Thomas Vaughan, Director, Oregon Historical Society,  
Portland; Albert Culverwell, Historian, Washington State Park  
Commission, Seattle; H. J. Swinney, Director, and Dr. Merle Wells,  
Historian, Idaho State Historical Society, Boise; Mrs. Clara S.  
Beatty, Director, Nevada State Historical Society, Reno.

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## INTRODUCTION

The initial pattern of settlement of the Far West was largely determined by the location of its mineral wealth. Although some emigrants and explorers had crossed the vast territory between the Missouri and the Pacific shores before 1849, it was the miner who discovered and revealed to the nation the resources and possibilities of this vast region. The process begun in California was repeated time and again--in Nevada and Arizona, in Colorado and Idaho, in Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota. Gold was the magnet which attracted the first settlers, advertised the wealth of the territory, and provided it with a permanent population. "The first frontier of the last West was the miners' frontier."<sup>1</sup>

The furious vitality, the cascading energy of the American people in the last half of the nineteenth century, are nowhere more vividly illustrated than in the history of the mining era. The California rush turned the eyes of restless Americans westward to behold the glittering vision of a new and greater El Dorado. Instantly, a roaring, turbulent tide of humanity was on the move. Argonauts "from the ends of the earth converged on California and engaged in an orgy of gold gathering that ranks as the greatest of all mining rushes."<sup>2</sup> Some came by ship, most came

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York, 1937), II, 85.

<sup>2</sup>John W. Caughey, Gold in the Cornerstone (Berkeley, 1948), 1.

overland in prairie schooners, farm wagons or "wind" wagons, or with packs on their backs, "the toiling farmer, whose mortgage loomed above the growing family, the briefless lawyer, the starving students, the quack, the idler, the harlot, the gambler, the hen-pecked husband, the disgraced; with many earnest, enterprising, honest men and women." Yankees and Buckeyes, Jayhawkers and Hoosiers, in little more than a year they transformed California from wilderness to statehood.

But those who panned the rich dust of the Mother Lode were hopelessly infected with gold fever. Eternally restless Forty-niners who fought to get ship passage from New York in 1849 were jamming the wharfs of San Francisco a decade later, fighting for passage to the gold fields of British Columbia's Fraser River. Again and again the process was to be repeated as rich lodes one after the other, in almost every state of the West, stirred the nation with sensational reports of fortune piled upon fortune. As the miners pushed into the widely scattered gold districts, like quicksilver they broke into individual globules and were off in all directions seeking gold, to use the striking figure of Bancroft. Prospectors swarmed along the inland empire rivers of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, into the deserts of Arizona and Nevada, the mountains of Colorado and Montana, and finally, questing ever eastward, to the domed Black Hills of Dakota.

The gold rush town burst into life overnight on the crest of the placer boom, lived furiously for a few months, perhaps a few years--another of a countless series of candidates for the "richest shortest-lived camp in America." Some are remembered principally for their names, Second Garrote, Lousy Level, Humbug Creek. A few were more permanent, Denver, Boise, and Carson City. All were truly American in the juxtaposition of wealth and poverty, in the mixture of races, professions, backgrounds, certainly one of the most remarkable conglomerations of individuals that chance ever cast together.

But as easily worked placer deposits were exhausted, mining and its riches passed from the hands of the individual prospector to corporations which could drive tunnels deep into the ground to reach the mineral bearing quartz and erect stamp mills to extract the gold. The miner became a day laborer or he drifted away, pan in hand, seeking the illusive "color" in other places. His place was taken by farmers and ranchers, carpenters and bookkeepers, merchants and businessmen, who built an enduring civilization. But the miner, in his mad and seldom successful quest for gold, had set in motion a chain of events that led directly to the settlement of considerable portions of the Far West.

## CALIFORNIA

During the nearly three centuries of Westward Expansion across the United States which began with the Jamestown landing in 1607, no phase of this epic movement involved such large numbers of people or provided such dramatic pageantry as the Gold Rush to California in 1849. "This great mass-migration burst resistlessly through the last and most formidable barriers of the North American continent, and made the Pacific Coast an American shore in the national as well as the geographical sense."<sup>1</sup>

### The Discovery

The rush to California was the result of a chance discovery by an employee of John Sutter, feudal baron of the Sacramento Valley. James Marshall, in January, 1848, was constructing a saw mill about 40 miles up the south fork of the American River from Sutters Fort in a small valley, named Culluma (Coloma) by the Indians. On the morning of January 24 while Marshall was inspecting progress on the excavation of the tail-race, he noticed the glint of metal on the bottom of the stream. Placing the flakes in the dented crown of his slouch hat, he excitedly rushed to the mill, shouting, "Boys, I believe I've found a gold mine."<sup>2</sup> An immediate victim of gold fever, Marshall

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<sup>1</sup>David M. Potter, ed., Trail to California (New Haven, 1945), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Caughey, Gold is the Cornerstone, 8.

posted off to his employer at the fort; the samples responded to every test which their ingenuity and the American Encyclopedia could suggest.

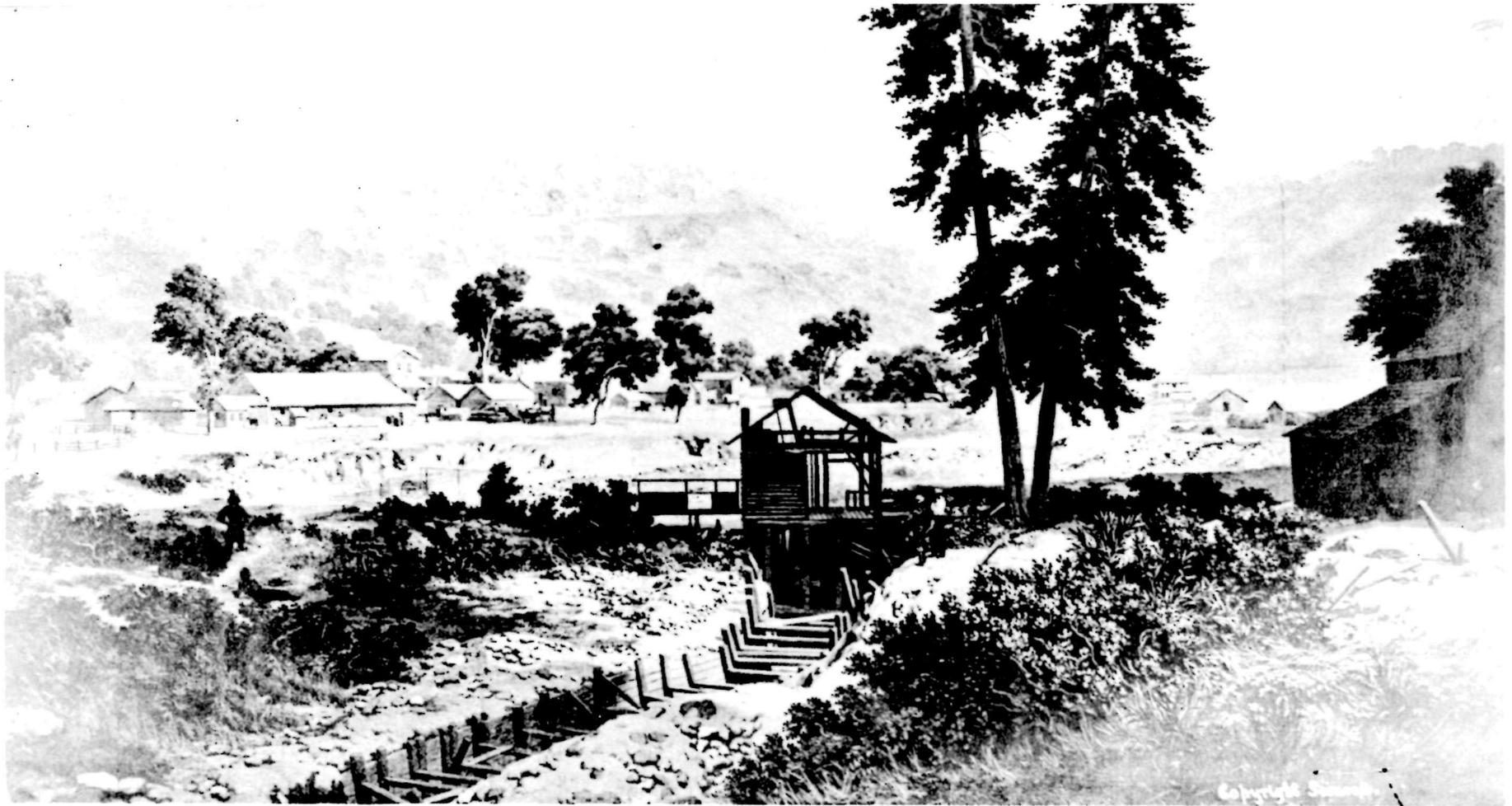
Marshall had discovered a mammoth lode of quartz more than 150 miles in length, lying along the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. Time and erosion had helped break down the lode; exposed particles were carried down the mountainside by streams, to be deposited in sand bars or between rock crevices. This was the fabulous "Mother Lode" of California.

Sutter foresaw the disaster to his enterprises--gardens, farms, industries--if his workmen should learn of the gold strike and he attempted to keep the news secret. But in May the energetic San Francisco businessman and Mormon elder Sam Brannan returned from the diggings. His appearance on the streets of the city, holding aloft a bottle of glistening gold dust and bellowing, "Gold! gold! gold from the American River," started the stampede.<sup>3</sup>

The gold fever swept San Francisco. Shopkeepers hung signs on their doors, "Gone to the Diggings," schools were closed as teachers and pupils deserted. San Francisco became a ghost town as all who could walk, ride, run, or crawl headed toward the gold field. In Monterey, Santa Barbara, and San Diego, soldiers

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<sup>3</sup>  
Ray Billington, The Far Western Frontier 1830-1860 (New York, 1956), 219.



Marshall's Discovery of Gold,  
California, January 19th, 1848.  
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## SUTTER'S MILL, 1851.

From Nahl's Famous Fainting.  
Copyrighted 1876, by A. Roman.

The famous painting of Sutter's Mill, done in 1851 by the well-known California landscape painter, Charles Nahl, showing the tailrace in foreground, where gold was first discovered in January, 1848.

Courtesy, The California State Library

deserted their posts, sailors abandoned their ships, lawyers left their clients, and editors suspended publication of their newspapers. Before the end of the year gold seekers arrived from Hawaii, Mexico, and South America.

In December, President Polk incorporated dispatches from California into his message to Congress, stating "The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service."<sup>4</sup> Two days later a government courier arrived in Washington with a tea caddy containing over 230 fine ounces of gold. Sanity vanished. The tea caddy did for the nation what Sam Brannan's quinine bottle had done for San Francisco. The country, the entire civilized world, went mad.

Within a month of Polk's address, frenzied gold seekers had chartered more than 60 ships, of dubious vintage, and had weighed anchor for California. "From Maine to Texas the noise of preparation for travel was heard in every town. The name of California was in every mouth; it was current theme for conversation and song, for plays and sermons,"<sup>5</sup> The New York Herald published a special edition pertaining to California, which commented,

In every Atlantic seaport, vessels are being fitted up, societies are being formed, husbands are preparing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>5</sup> Hubert H. Bancroft, History of California (7 vols., San Francisco, 1884-90), VI, 117.

to leave their wives, sons are parting with their mothers, and bachelors are abandoning their comforts; all are rushing head over heels toward the El Dorado on the Pacific....<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the year, the excitement over California gold was causing as much of a furor as the Mexican War had caused, and the season of 1848, in California, which yielded \$10,000,000 in pure dust and nuggets, lost very little in the recounting. On the island of Nantucket one-fourth of the voting population was drained away by the gold fever. Not many communities were cleaned out so completely, but whenever men congregated, the talk was of California.

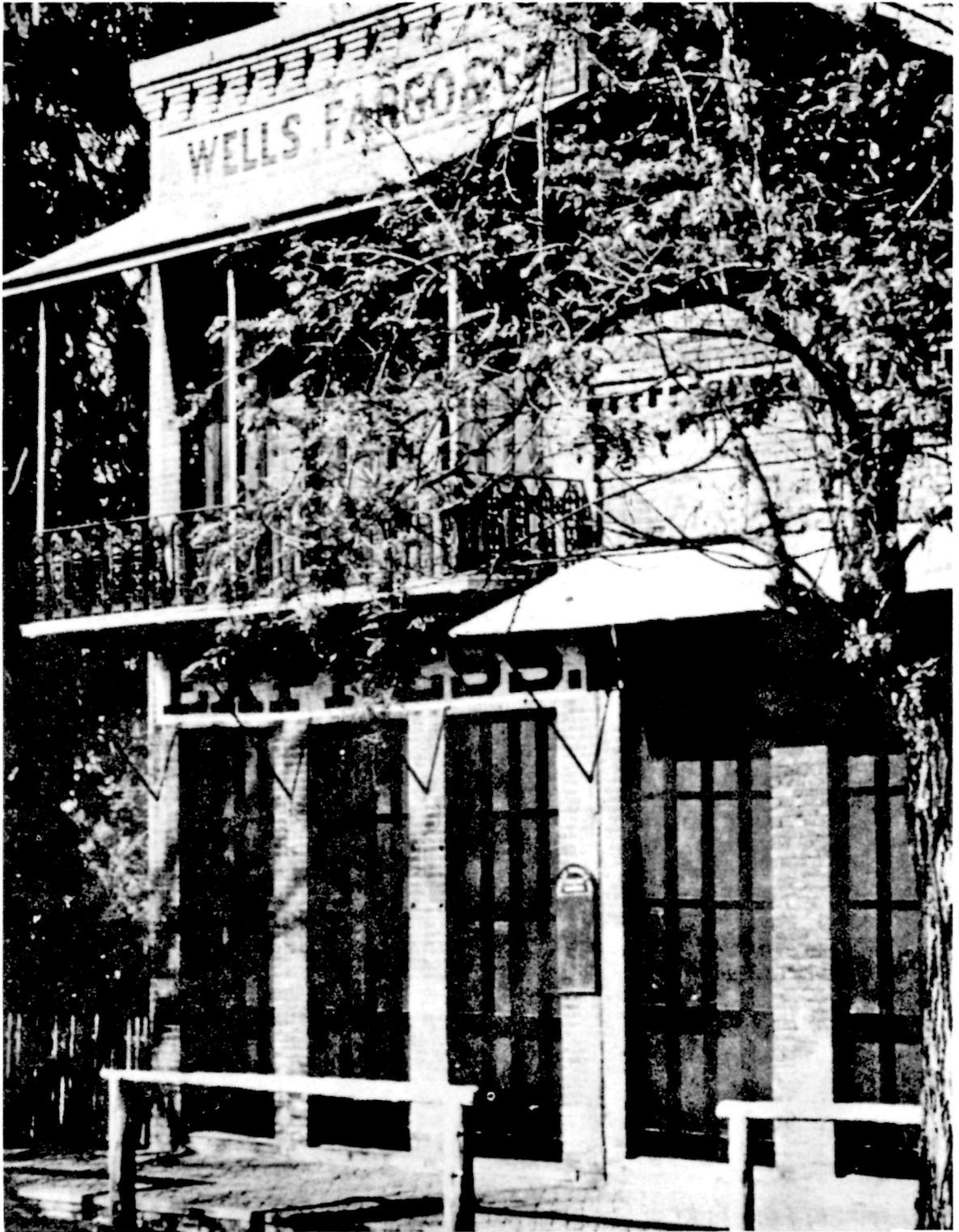
#### The Forty-niner

There were three principal routes to California, two by sea and one overland. "Boston" ships had rounded Cape Horn to trade on the California coast for many years. This journey was relatively safe and comfortable, compared to the other two, but six or eight months were required to complete the 18,000 mile voyage-- a long and tedious journey for those frantic to reach the gold fields.

The second water route was a broken voyage, by way of the Panama Isthmus. Fortunately, two steamship lines, which made connections on both sides of the isthmus, had begun service in 1848. The crossing of the isthmus, up the Chagres River, was

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<sup>6</sup>  
Quoted in Rodman W. Paul, California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West (Cambridge, 1947), 30.



A fine example of Mother Lode architecture and one of the most characteristic structures of the gold rush—the Wells Fargo building, in Columbia. On the scales in this office was weighed more than \$50,000,000 in gold.

Courtesy, The Wells Fargo Museum,  
San Francisco

a hazardous undertaking, however. Native guides who supplied the necessary canoes and pack animals were ignorant and thieving, their prices exorbitant, their tempers and actions unpredictable. Voyagers risked cholera, dysentery and yellow fever which took a heavy toll in the steaming, tropical jungle. Reaching Panama City on the Pacific side, Forty-niners milled about waiting for the occasional ship which was able to unload its passengers at San Francisco and return without the crew deserting to the mines. Advertised as a six-week trip, it generally took considerably longer; although completion of the Panama Railroad in 1855 eliminated the greatest hazard. In 1849, more than 15,000 Argonauts reached San Francisco by the Cape Horn route, while about half that number took the Panama route.

But the most popular of all the routes was overland, along the Platte River to South Pass, the historic Oregon Trail, which had already been publicized by the writings of John C. Fremont and Lansford W. Hastings and by the experiences of the Bidwell and Donner parties. It was more convenient for the Mississippi Valley residents, and much cheaper. A wagon and oxen, sufficient food and a few tools, most of which the farmer had ready, and he was outfitted for the trek. Tens of thousands of Forty-niners flocked to the embarkation towns--Independence, St. Joseph, Westport, and Kaneshville--there to be "skinned" by storekeepers until the grass along the trail was high enough to sustain the stock. Then the great wagon trains rolled out upon the endless prairie, climbing steadily until the caravans rounded through South Pass and dropped down to the Great Basin desert. Those who thought nothing was so deadly

as plodding through the choking dust of the desert had almost forgotten this interlude in the almost unbelievable hardships encountered in passing wagons and oxen over the Sierra, lowering wagons by rope down precipitous mountain canyons.

Those who finally arrived at the California diggings after a 2,000-mile crossing, which required three or four months, had been tried and found not wanting. Asiatic cholera alone in 1849 marked the Oregon Trail with 5,000 graves before the wagons reached the Rocky Mountains.<sup>7</sup> Although it is impossible to determine how many persons reached California in 1849, the figure was probably 80,000 or more. Of this total some 55,000 went overland, perhaps 45,000 following the Oregon Trail through South Pass, the remainder taking the Sante Fe or El Paso routes or passing through northern Mexico.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of the dangers encountered and the privations endured, all was forgotten upon arrival at the diggings. There the Forty-niners found groups of miners working every large stream along the Mother Lode, from the Feather to the Tuolumne Rivers. Everywhere tent camps sprang up, as the Argonaut with washing pan in hand, set out for the riches so lavishly described in the guide books. Most were soon disillusioned.

The mines of California did yield \$10,000,000 during 1849, but after 1852, the peak year, mining became more and more an industry

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<sup>7</sup> Billington, Far Western Frontier, 228.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 226.

requiring capital investment. The rich deposits had been appropriated, and the region had been so thoroughly prospected there was little chance of finding new deposits. The decline of placer mining created a labor surplus, some miners turning to farming and ranching, others in their wanderings contributing to new rushes. As the more easily located placer deposits were exhausted, mining companies which could afford to drive tunnels deep into the earth to reach the ore came into control, financed by Eastern capitalists. California miners moved on to New South Wales in 1851, and in large numbers to the Fraser River in 1858, the Comstock and Pike's Peak in 1859, to the other districts throughout the West which followed, and eventually to Alaska. California served as the training school for miners, and in a real sense new territories such as Nevada and Idaho were colonies of California.

#### Consequences

The immediate consequences of the gold rush to California were similar in many ways to the effect which gold discoveries produced in many of the western states. The population of California in 1848 was but a few thousand; in 1850, with an estimated population of over 100,000, it was admitted as a State without passing through territorial status. San Francisco, the port city of the Gold Rush, whose harbor was clogged with the hulks of abandoned ships, became one of the most cosmopolitan, if not the most blatantly lusty, of American cities, with populations drawn from every state, from South America and from Europe, China, Japan, and the Hawaiian Islands. Many mining camps became important trading centers.



An early example of hydraulic mining. The "monitor" is being used to wash away a bank of gold-bearing gravel near Yuba City, California.

Courtesy, The Wells Fargo Museum,  
San Francisco

Commerce, agriculture, banking, lumbering and transportation were tremendously stimulated. Mining demands had created an agriculture in California which by 1873 was influencing the wheat and wool markets of the world. The sudden outpouring of gold had a considerable effect upon the price structure and economy of the nation and led directly to the construction of the San Francisco Mint. And, it supplied the impetus to begin the final conquest of the previously unpeopled West, and linked it to the East. "Gold," states a leading authority on California history, "without question, has influenced the state's history more than any other single factor."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John W. Caughey, California (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1957), 225. The literature on the California Gold Rush is quite voluminous. An excellent treatment of the subject in all its phases, along with a complete bibliography, is found in Caughey, Gold is the Cornerstone; Paul, California Gold, is also excellent.

## SEEING THE ELEPHANT<sup>1</sup>

One needs only to look at a map of the West, especially a topographic map, to appreciate the incredible distances covered by the prospector, at a time when roads did not exist, nor maps for that matter, nor handy trading centers to purchase food and supplies. Unerringly, he followed his lodestar--gold--over snow-covered mountains and across desolate wastes, as successive gold discoveries lured him from California through thousands of miles of wilderness country. No sooner had the miners begun prospecting beyond California than rumors came of rich deposits all the way from Canada to New Mexico.

### The Mining Camp

For several decades tales of gold discoveries came thick and fast, inevitably producing the wildest enthusiasm, for the blood of the young man who had gone West to seek his fortune could scarcely stand much of the following, a typical example of responsible journalism of the era:

Ho, then, for the Reese River! Have you a gold mine? Sell out and go to Reese! Have you a copper mine? Throw it away and go to Reese! Do you own dry goods? Pack them up for Reese! Are you the proprietor of lots in the city of Oakland, California? Give them to your worst enemy and go to Reese. Are you a merchant, broker, doctor, lawyer, or mule-driver? Buckle up your blankets and off with you to Reese, for there is the land of glittering bullion, there lies the pay streak.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In California, the elephant stood for gold hunting. When a man told a friend he was going to "see the elephant," he did not mean he was going to get drunk, but that he was going to take a flier at the diggings.

<sup>2</sup>Oscar Lewis, The Town That Died Laughing, The Story of Austin, Nevada (Boston, 1955), 9.

Each new strike would bring thousands of fortune hunters-- "greenhorns" from the East, "yondersiders" from California and grizzled prospectors from somewhere between--swarming to remote wilderness posts. Some sought the wealth buried in the streams and mountains, others came to work a more dependable source of gold--their fellow man. They plodded along Indian trails or river bottoms, from sunrise to sunset, an ever-increasing column, with picks on their shoulders or pushing a wheel-barrow containing tools, food and bedroll--"Sydney Ducks" from Australia, "Paddies" from Ireland, "Coolies" from China, "Cousin Jacks" from Cornwall,"Keskydees"from France. Cursing teamsters urged on ox teams loaded with whiskey, clothing, lumber--and more whiskey.<sup>3</sup>

The "cities," which sprang into being overnight, boasted populations, we are told, of many thousands. Most of this was widely scattered through the diggings, the miners living in cave or lean-to. Generally, the city was a jerry-built hodgepodge of shacks, constructed of juniper posts, willow branches, blankets, and rawhide, along streets which dodged at acute angles or struggled up the side of a mountain. The "restaurant" might be roofless, the walls made of flour sacks, with rough planking for tables and a mud floor. The cuisine can be imagined. Newly arrived gentlemen of fortune slept on the floors of stores or saloons, or on the open ground.

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<sup>3</sup>The frenetic rise and fall of the mining camps is a favorite subject of all writers on the mining frontier; Lillard, Desert Challenge, 186 ff., is especially colorful. See also Jim D. Hill, "The Early Mining Camp in American Life," Pacific Historical Review, I, (September, 1932)

The saloons, often the most pretentious structures in town, were filled with ragged, unshaven miners, dapper gamblers and bunco men, bursts of profanity and gunfire, and the stale fumes of tobacco and that villainous brew "Taos Lightning."

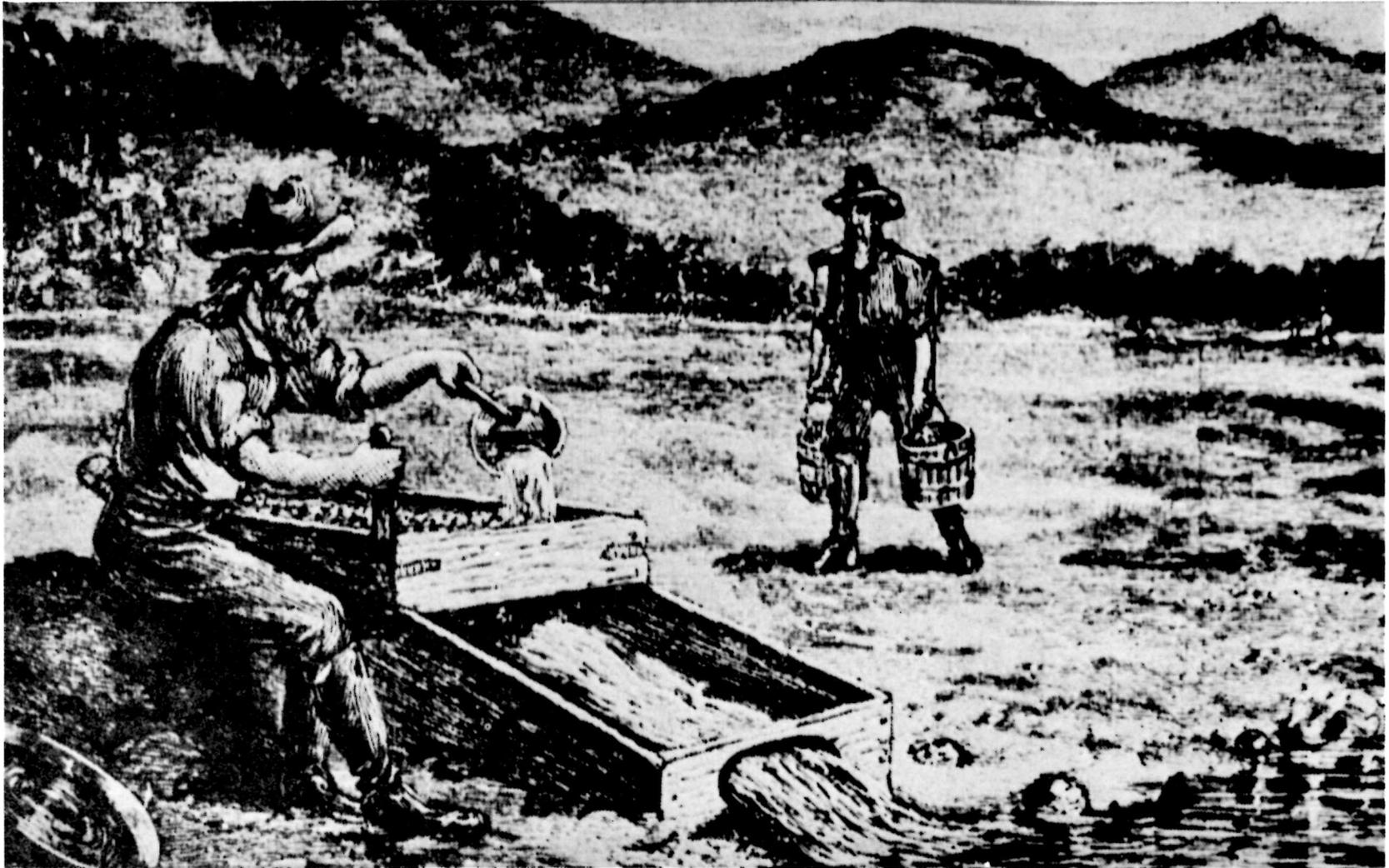
A graphic description of Virginia City, Montana was perhaps typical of the times:

This human hive, numbering at least ten thousand people, was the product of ninety days. Into it were crowded all the elements of a rough and active civilization. Thousands of cabins and tents and brush wakiups, thrown together in the roughest form, and scattered at random along the banks, and in the nooks of the hills, were seen on every hand. Every foot of the gulch, under the active manipulation of the miners, was undergoing displacement, and it was already displaced by huge heaps of gravel, which had been passed through the sluices and rifled of the glittering contents. In the gulch itself all was activity. Some were removing the superincumbent earth to reach the pay-dirt, others who had accomplished that were gathering up the clay and gravel upon the surface of the bed-rock, while by others still it was thrown into the sluice boxes. This exhibition of mining industry was twelve miles long.<sup>4</sup>

Small inconveniences were considered only temporary. The newspaper, always among the earliest to arrive, generally announced "If we strike it rich, what a town you will see here." Long before the place was legitimized with a name, it had a platted townsite and lots selling for \$2,000. The clatter of carpenters' hammers notified all that cultural institutions were on the way--saloons, sporting houses, hotels and stores--as soon as green lumber and hurdy-gurdy girls could be freighted in. Life was unsettled, animated

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<sup>4</sup>Nathaniel P. Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways (Chicago, 1912), 223-4.



The rocker, or cradle, replaced the pan. Operators shoveled dirt into the hopper, bailed in water, and rocked the contraption with a handle. It was easier than panning and much more dirt could be handled, although more gold went out with the tailings.

Courtesy, The National Archives

by a nervous, crude energy. The streets were crowded; men argued over ore samples, prospectors compared location notices and assay certificates, bummers claiming to be pioneers of '49 cadged drinks from strangers in return for tales of the diggings. Mingling together were men from the ends of the earth.

Entertainment, of the non-violent type, was scarce. "There's nothing to do but hang around the saloons, get drunk and fight, and lie out in the snow and die,"<sup>5</sup> dolefully declared one miner. To a society so lacking in cultural opportunities, the theater became an essential feature--the theater of the mining camp being the equivalent of today's burlesque. Although hard put to match the refined action of the gaming table, the inspiring sport of cockfights and bull-baitings, or the innocent gaiety provided by the saloon impresario, the theater did mark a welcome change from the monotony of camp life. In Deadwood a stock company performed Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" for a record run of 130 nights.

#### Life in the Diggings

Considering the enormous land mass of the mineral empire, the gold deposits were rather quickly found, not however without considerable searching. Under the continental divide from Central America to the Yukon, there were auriferous rocks. From the beginning of the present geologic era, the forces of erosion had been washing gold particles from their lodes and depositing them

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<sup>5</sup>Muriel Wolle, The Bonanza Trail (Bloomington, 1955), 133.

along gulches and river banks. Prospectors were understandably interested in locating the source of alluvial gold in the streams. Working upward far above existing stream levels they found rich sedimented gravels which had been deposited long hence by water-courses that had changed their paths.<sup>6</sup>

The free dust and nuggets of the placer deposits could be extracted by inexperienced miners using the familiar washing pan--a few shovels full of dirt were thrown into the pan, twirled until water washed the gravel and stone away, leaving the heavy grains of gold at the bottom. Refinements were soon developed, the cradle was a crude box rocked with one hand while dipping dirt and water in with another, the rocking motion washed the debris and left gold particles behind the cleats. The Long Tom was of indefinite length, a big box into which a stream of water was directed while miners shoveled in dirt.

All of these methods could be worked by individuals or small groups, for neither work experience or capital was required. But the toil was monotonous and back-breaking. Often the miners stood waist deep in icy water. Day after day they labored for generally meager profits, returning to primitive shacks at night to uninviting repasts of coffee, beans, and greasy pork. In such conditions, even in good weather, the miners suffered from many diseases--diarrhea, dysentery, "chills and fever" and malaria. It

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A thorough description of life in the diggings is in Caughey, Gold is the Cornerstone, chapter IX.



Placer mining on the California Mother Lode in the 1850's. Chinese miners are among those working the sluice.

Courtesy, The Wells Fargo Museum,  
San Francisco

is not surprising that men who led such lives delivered themselves with abandon into the eager embraces of the saloonkeepers and the "soiled doves."

When the placer gold had played out, it was necessary to get at the gold locked in quartz lodes deep in the earth. This required stamp mills to crush the quartz so that the gold might be dissolved in mercury. Shafts had to be sunk hundreds, perhaps thousands of feet in the ground. Gold continued to be mined in great quantities, but the process was big business, the work of eastern capital. The miner became a day laborer--or a farmer.

#### Mining Camp Democracy

One of the first and most pressing problems of the mining district was to create laws to govern mining activities. The land was public domain; there were no laws to govern the staking of claims nor officers to enforce justice. Under these special circumstances, the miners called meetings and formally adopted rules to govern themselves. These laws were remarkably similar in hundreds of mining camps throughout the West; they held that use was proof of ownership, defined how many feet of ground one man was entitled to (often only ten feet square), determined how long a man could absent himself without forfeiting his claim, and established procedures to settle disputes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The best study of the development of mining camp law is in Charles H. Shinn, Mining Camps A Study in American Frontier Government (New York, 1948)

An observer described a meeting of miners for the purpose of revising certain laws:

The miners met in front of the store to the number of about two hundred; a very respectable-looking old chap was called to the chair; but for want of that article of furniture he mounted an empty pork-barrel, which gave him a commanding position; another man was appointed secretary, who placed his writing materials on some empty boxes piled up alongside the chair.... Some one proposed an amendment of the law relating to a certain description of claim, arguing the point in a very neat speech. He was duly seconded, and there was some slight opposition and discussion; but when the chairman declared it carried by the ayes, no one called for a division, so the secretary wrote it all down, and it became law.<sup>8</sup>

Later, when Congress began to legislate on mining claims, senators from Western states were instrumental in sanctioning local mining laws, so long as they did not conflict with the laws of the United States. Congress asserted that the mineral lands of the United States are "open to exploration, occupation, and purchase," stipulating that this be done under regulations "prescribed by law and according to local customs of miners in the several mining districts."

Writing during the mining era (in 1885) Shinn declared that one of the significant facts of the mining frontier was the American frontiersman working out his own law as he went along, which modern writers often refer to as one of the prime examples of "frontier democracy." He asserted, prophetically,

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<sup>8</sup>J. D. Broderick in Charles Neider, ed., The Great West (New York, 1958), 370.

Nothing that is likely to happen will ever take from the civilization of this imperial domain of Pacific Coast and Rocky Mountain region certain characteristics due to the mining-camp era. Even when, a century hence, it is, perhaps, divided into twenty states, with a population of twice as many millions, the atmosphere and traditions of the mining camp will yet linger in the mountain gorges, and fragments of the miner's jurisprudence will yet remain firmly embedded in local and state law.<sup>9</sup>

Most historians agree that the atmosphere of the mining camp was one which engendered individual freedom and social democracy (except of course for Chinese, Indians, and Mexicans) and promoted civil liberties (except for former Confederates). And yet, as one writer has noted, the men of this epoch "wrought exceedingly well in their system of claim law. They did passably well in their first responses to crime.... They proved themselves notable architects of law and government."<sup>10</sup>

#### The Vigilantes

Crime and violence was common; nowhere in the West was it more common than in mining camps, towns such as Tombstone and Deadwood, and countless camps less publicized but equally vicious. With great sums of bullion being shipped constantly over deserted trails, stage robberies were commonplace. Claim jumping, hold-ups, and murder were hazards of the profession; by nature the men were drifters, unsettled; and the law had been left far behind. Without domestic and feminine associations as a counterweight, often driven

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<sup>9</sup>Shinn, Mining Camps, 7.

<sup>10</sup>Caughey, Gold is the Cornerstone, 248.

to desperation by hard living, disappointment and bad liquor, men met insult or injustice, fancied or otherwise, with a knife blade or pistol. In one Nevada camp there were 72 graves in the cemetery before the first citizen died of natural causes.<sup>11</sup>

But the turbulence was not perhaps the entire picture. Schools and churches and even debating societies made their appearance in most of the larger mining towns, and often at a remarkably early period. With them the men brought institutions, legal and social, which had evolved on the Eastern frontier and which gave permanence and protection to the population. The responsible citizens formed a committee to keep order, a post office was petitioned for, and a U.S. marshal appeared. Vigilante associations were a feature of the mining frontier, forming sporadically whenever murder and robbery provoked the citizenry sufficiently.

Of the many cases of vigilante justice, involving the rounding up of miscellaneous badmen and unconvicted criminals for banishment from the district or something even more final, the case of Henry Plummer was the most notorious. Under his skilled leadership, a gang of highwaymen began operations in 1863 along the ninety-mile stretch between Virginia City and Bannack, Montana. Complete with spies and secret codes, they knocked off men and stagecoaches at will. During the course of these operations, more than one hundred men were murdered. With Plummer himself installed as Sheriff, little opposition was experienced.

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<sup>11</sup> Lillard, Desert Challenge, 199.



In large numbers the Chinese joined the gold rush and were to be found in mining camps from the California Mother Lode to the Black Hills. Joss houses, or places of worship, such as the Weaverville (California) Joss House shown above, illustrated the oriental way of life, along with their gambling and opium dens.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

Finally, and desperately, a secret group was organized, calling themselves the Vigilantes, dedicated to providing swift and wholesale justice to the outlaws. Within a few weeks twenty-four badmen were executed, Plummer himself stretching hemp at Bannack.

One who knew the Montana situation well summed up the contemporary attitude towards the use of vigilante justice:

The early Vigilantes were the best and most intelligent men in the mining regions. They saw and felt that, in the absence of all law, they must become a 'law unto themselves,' or submit to the bloody code of the banditti by which they were surrounded, and which were increasing in numbers more rapidly than themselves.... What else could they do? How else were their own lives and property, and the lives and property of the great body of peaceable miners in the placers to be preserved? What other protection was there for a country entirely destitute of law?<sup>12</sup>

#### The Boom Plays Out

But for most of the mining camps, the end was oblivion, some sooner, some later. A great many lapsed into ghost towns, others persisted with only a fraction of their former population. A very few continued to prosper, and these did so generally from other sources of wealth. Almost no surviving mining camp has today the population it had during the days of the gold rush. Often, after the original excitement died down, there was found to be no real need for the town, as the gold deposits were found to be somewhat exaggerated.

Eventually, in most cases, the placers were worked out, and the ore became so refractory it would not pay for its own mining.

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<sup>12</sup> Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways, XIV-XV;

All that was needed was news of a new El Dorado and the miners prepared to move on, despite the injured feelings of the local politician with aspirations for the U.S. Senate. With the departure of the miners, there was less and less demand for storekeeping, freighting and innkeeping. Farming was sometimes tried, not always with success, especially if the soil had been buried under mining debris. Although many moved away to new mines, some drifted off to cities or even back home.

Portable possessions were loaded upon ore wagons; the editor took his hand press, the merchant his merchandise and iron cash box, the miner his pick and bed roll. The epitaph of a thousand Western mining camps was written by a California newspaper editor in his last issue, "The discovery of the rich mines on the other side of the mountains has carried off a large proportion of our most enterprising businessmen, who have now become permanent residents...and we have determined to pull up stakes and follow them."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Lillard, Desert Challenge, 187.

## THE INLAND EMPIRE: IDAHO, OREGON, AND WASHINGTON

Almost before the California gold rush was well under way, the prospector had extended his search for a new bonanza beyond the California borders. His hunting ground eventually became the entire West. For the true prospector, any other life was unthinkable. He was imbued with a feverish restlessness peculiar to the miner; for him, as for the mountain man who preceded him, the settled, safe life was unthinkable. With a washing pan, a grubstake and endless hope, he tramped the West, panning each promising stream, anxiously scanning each outcropping of rock for the telltale glint of gold. These men and those who followed and supplied them in the mining camps, built the first permanent settlements throughout much of the Rocky Mountain and Great Basin region.

### Idaho

A series of strikes in the Snake River Valley in the early Sixties brought permanent settlement to Idaho, then a part of Washington territory.<sup>1</sup> The treaty with the Nez Perce in 1860 ended hostilities and enabled an Indian trader, Captain E. D. Pierce, to prospect the Clearwater River, where he discovered gold. The new field was somewhat north of the Oregon Trail but that winter reports of gold reached Portland, and by spring of 1861 miners from Oregon and Washington Territory were flocking to the diggings,

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<sup>1</sup>The best account of the mining frontier in the Northwest is William J. Trimble, The Mining Advance Into the Inland Empire (Madison, 1914). Trimble deals with the early Idaho strikes in "A Reconsideration of the Gold Discoveries of the Northwest," in Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V (June, 1918).

where the mining camps of Pierce City and Oro Fino went up. As the rush gained momentum, river steamers were put into service for the passage of the Columbia River from Portland to Lewiston, which developed into the principal distributing center of the region as well as the center of mining operations.

In quick succession, the miners spread to the Salmon River, and in the late summer of 1862 the rich placer deposits of the Boise River Basin section of southwestern Idaho were discovered. Within two years, more than 15,000 people were in this district. The Owyhee River silver mines around Silver City were discovered the following year.

Reaching the rugged Idaho wilderness was a formidable chore, even for prospectors. By river they came up the Missouri to Fort Benton or up the Columbia to Lewiston or Walla Walla. The Mullan Road, originally constructed between 1855 and 1862 as a military road between Fort Benton and Walla Walla, eased the problem of transporting mining supplies and provisions and helped open the entire region to settlement. To safeguard the miners from Indian attacks, Fort Lapwai was built near Lewiston and Fort Boise near the present city of Boise.

In Idaho, as elsewhere, the surface placers contained but a fraction of the real mineral wealth which lay deep in the earth, encased in veins of quartz. Eastern capital began to exploit these reserves in Idaho beginning in the Seventies; shafts were sunk, stamp mills built and new mines opened. A chance discovery by a wandering prospector in search of his burro in the Coeur d'Alene



A familiar sight in mining areas of the West. An abandoned mine headframe, a cluster of dilapidated and unpainted shacks, and space.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

district brought in one of the great lodes of the mining era, one which eventually yielded \$750,000,000 in silver and lead. Workers who came to operate mills and mines provided the region with a permanent population.

The rich mines of Idaho have been equally famous for labor troubles. Violence between miners' unions and the mine owners, which was hardly restricted to the Coeur d'Alene region, broke out there in 1892 when the union dynamited the mines in retaliation for the importation of strike breakers. This bitter fight contributed to formation of the Western Federation of Miners at Butte in 1893. A dynamiting in 1899 caused Governor Steunenberg to declare the county to be in a state of insurrection and to appeal to President McKinley for federal troops. More than 1,000 miners were arrested and the unions were almost destroyed until their revival in the 1930's. Despite labor turmoil, the wealth of the mines at Coeur d'Alene and Kellogg transformed the region. Spokane prospered and became the metropolis of the inland empire of the Northwest.

At the time of the 1860 discovery Idaho was a part of Washington Territory. The miners in Idaho, as in other districts, began to clamor for Territorial status almost as quickly as they staked claims. Petitions for separation from Washington Territory began to circulate among the mining camps the year of the first strike, the not too illogical argument being that the seat of

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph K. Howard, "The Coeur d'Alene, Vulnerable Valley," in Ray B. West, Jr., ed., Rocky Mountain Cities (New York, 1949), 66-72. Labor's story is presented in May A. Hutton, The Coeur d'Alenes, or A Tale of the Modern Inquisition in Idaho (Denver, 1900).

Washington was too far west and the seat of Dakota too far east. Congress rejected the petition for several years, until the introduction of mining machinery and the growing agricultural population gave strong indication that the Idaho settlements were permanent. In 1863 the Territory of Idaho was established, including all of Montana and most of Wyoming.

### Oregon and Washington

Although less spectacular, the gold rush activities in Oregon and Washington were of consequence. During the California rush, many Oregonians had joined the Forty-niners, and eventually many returned with sufficient capital to develop the resources of Oregon. The California rush brought prosperity generally to Oregon, creating a demand for her foodstuffs and lumber.

Just across the California border, in southwestern Oregon, prospectors appeared shortly after the beginning of the California boom. Irate Indians, angered by the invasion of the white men, constituted a real danger in the early Fifties. Despite these attacks, the first strike was made in 1851 at Sailor's Diggings. Successive finds were made in Jackson and Josephine Counties, and the district flourished. Jacksonville, unusually well preserved today, became the trading center.

The eastern Oregon mining district, in the area of the Blue and Wallowa Mountains, was opened in 1861, and discoveries continued to be made in the Seventies and Eighties. However, most of the Oregon mines were not of the Big Bonanza type, and the rushes were modest in size as were the returns.

Gold rushes contributed to the early history of Washington Territory. The 1855 strike at Fort Colville, on the east bank of the Columbia, came at a time when conflicts with the Indians were frequent and most of the Territory was unsafe for prospectors. After peace was restored in 1858, the state was combed by the placer miners. Soldiers connected with the boundary Commission discovered gold just south of the forty-ninth parallel in 1889; the next year the Cariboo rush in British Columbia stimulated increased prospecting activity throughout northern Washington. However, the Pierce discovery in Idaho soon drained off the Washington miners.

In the Eighties, Washington mining increased markedly as prospectors turned their attention from placer to lode mining. Silver deposits were found in the Colville Mountains and along Salmon Creek, which became the Ruby mining district and was known as the "Comstock of Washington," although almost the only similarity was that both produced silver.

## THE SOUTHWEST

The mineral resources of the Southwest, unlike those of California, had been known for centuries, both to the Spanish and to the Indians. The Santa Rita copper mine had been leased to Sylvester Pattie in 1825. Rumors of fabulous "lost mines," which persisted from the days of Spanish occupation, could not be tested because of the exuberance of the Apaches. But in 1850 Fort Yuma was constructed at the junction of the Gila and Colorado, opening that area to prospecting.

The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 added the Tucson area of southern Arizona to the United States. When Fort Buchanan was built three years later as a protection against Apache attacks, prospectors flocked in and opened the long-abandoned mines at Ajo near the Mexican border. Ore from this area had to be transported in ox carts across the desert to Yuma, floated down the Colorado on barges to the Gulf of California, whence it was shipped to the copper smelters in New South Wales.

Arizona's first large scale mining activity was in the Gadsden country in 1854, when gold and silver were found in the mountains around Tubac; Sylvester Mowry made a strike in the Santa Ana Mountains in 1860. Arizona attracted more than its share of the lawless and the criminal; and Tucson, the center of mining operations, became known as the "paradise of devils," a designation not lightly won in the mining West of that period.

The capture of Arizona by the Confederates at the outbreak of the Civil War temporarily ended mining in Arizona, but

re-occupation by Federal troops in 1862 and the encouragement of the Federal governor resulted in increased mining activity and the discovery of new deposits. The population attracted to the Southwest by the success of the prospectors made the division of New Mexico and Arizona desirable, and the separation took place in 1863.

With the pacification of the Apaches in 1874, mining resumed in Arizona, with discoveries of silver, copper, and gold in Gila and Pinal counties. In 1878, Ed Schieffelin discovered the Tombstone mines in southeastern Arizona, and for several years Tombstone was noted as one of the wildest of the frontier mining towns, offering the talented Wyatt Earp an opportunity to make a lasting contribution to American jurisprudence. The Tombstone gold deposits were soon exhausted, but the district produced some \$40,000,000 in silver within twenty years.

The most important mineral in Arizona was copper, however, and mining in the Morenci district of eastern Arizona began in 1871. The Bisbee and Jerome districts were opened in 1877, and copper was mined at Globe the following year. By the Eighties two giants in the copper industry, the Calumet and Arizona Mining Company and the Phelps, Dodge Company, were leaders in production. The coming of the railroads in the Eighties opened a new era in the mining history of both Arizona and New Mexico, and despite the tremendous Montana copper production, the Arizona mines prospered.



Perhaps the best symbol of the mining frontier—the prospector and his burros. With a grubstake and endless hope, he tramped the West. After him, came civilization.

Courtesy, The National Archives

## NEVADA

Nevada furnishes students of the mining frontier with perhaps the most extreme example of a community completely and continuously dependent upon mineral wealth. The inhospitable desert country offered no other source of wealth or livelihood to the early inhabitants of the region. The early history of Nevada is largely the history of the Comstock Lode.<sup>1</sup>

### The Comstock Lode

In 1858, the year of the Pike's Peak rush, prospectors who had ranged along the eastern slope of the Sierra in the mountains about the Carson River Valley stumbled upon a concentration of minerals rich beyond all belief. Named after a somewhat visionary braggart, the Comstock Lode early proved troublesome. Attempts to extract gold by those lucky enough to obtain "feet" in the area were hindered by a black substance encasing the gold. Sent to California to be assayed, the "black stuff" proved to be almost pure silver. The original discovery hole became the Ophir mine which eventually yielded more than \$17,000,000.

Silver bars from the Ophir displayed in San Francisco brought on a craze similar to that which followed Sam Brannan's exhibit of gold in the city a decade earlier. By the fall of 1859 the tortuous roads over the mountains to Nevada were jammed with

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<sup>1</sup>A penetrating, thoughtful account of mining in Nevada is Richard G. Lillard, Desert Challenge (New York, 1942); the standard work on the Comstock Lode is Grant H. Smith, History of the Comstock Lode (Reno, 1943).

20,000 people frantic to reach the Washoe district: Carson City, just off the California Trail, and Virginia City, smack on the site of the Comstock Lode, became leading centers of mining operations.

The situation at the Comstock Lode was exceedingly bizarre. Although gold and silver fairly veined the ground, no one could mine. The minerals were locked in quartz veins which could only be reached with expensive machinery. Existence was feverish, everyone roamed the district by day and peddled "feet" in imaginary mines by night. Mark Twain, who arrived in Carson City soon afterward, and who traded "feet" with the best of them, summed up with wry humor the climate of the Comstock Lode.

This country is fabulously rich in gold, silver, copper, lead, coal, iron, quicksilver, marble, granite, chalk, plaster of Paris (Gypsum), thieves, murderers, desperados, ladies, children, lawyers, Christians, Indians, Chinamen, Spaniards, gamblers, sharpies, coyotes (pronounced ci-yo-ties), poets, preachers, and jackass rabbits. I overheard a gentleman say the other day that it was 'the d--dest country under the sun'--and that comprehensive conception I fully subscribe to.<sup>2</sup>

As capital flowed in, the wild dreams of the promoters were realized. Roads were laid out over the mountains to California, for everything had to be freighted in from the outside, and the Placerville road was macademized. The eastern slopes of the Sierra and the shores of Lake Tahoe were almost denuded to provide wood for buildings, fuel, flumes, shafts, and drifts. Machinery to construct quartz mills was hauled in, and express companies were formed to

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in C. A. Beard and M. R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York, 1927), II, 134.



Virginia City, Nevada. Compare this modern view of the "Queen of the Comstock," at the foot of Mount Davidson, with the following photograph, taken from almost the same location in 1865, during its heyday.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

bring in supplies needed for Virginia City's population of 15,000.

Although less than a dozen of the 3,000 mines staked out ever produced, the profits of these few were such as to sustain the hopes of all, and to provide Virginia City with a group of newly rich citizens whose antics were as legendary as the profits of their mines. Ornate mansions costing up to half a million dollars rose out of the desert hills; more than twenty theaters provided cultural relaxation for the citizenry. Meanwhile every new discovery launched a period of wild trading in "feet" as the boom continued on its somewhat irregular path.

A demand for territorial status induced Congress to set aside western Utah as Nevada Territory in 1861, but the Nevadians believed statehood a more suitable condition for so worthy a land. Congress might well have ignored this request had not the Republicans been seeking electoral votes for the 1864 election, from whatever source. On October 31, 1864, Nevada was admitted to Statehood, in good time to return a majority for the re-election of Lincoln.

#### The Big Bonanza

Although the Comstock Lode or similar veins had been tapped at varying places by small companies, the greatest discovery lay ahead. Boring straight through the flinty mountain rock, the Consolidated Virginia in 1873 struck the Big Bonanza--the lode at this point was 54 feet wide and filled with gold and silver. It was probably the richest find in mining history, returning some \$200,000,000.



Virginia City, Nevada. The boom here dwarfed all that came before—or afterward. Probably nowhere else on the mining frontier did the term “fabulous” apply so well to the unbelievable wealth of the Comstock Lode, the blatant speculation and the unscrupulous rigging of the market, the fortunes of the “Bonanza Kings.”

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

Two prime characteristics of the Comstock Lode from 1860 to 1880 were wildcat speculation and expensive litigation. In this atmosphere of frantic financial manipulation and unscrupulous rigging of the market, the "Kings of the Comstock" struggled for power, bought and sold seats in the U. S. Senate, and brought ruin to the Bank of California. Speculative investment in San Francisco touched a new high, and, as the hectic trading continued without any regulation, a wildly fluctuating market resulted in the rise and fall of many fortunes. But the Comstock Lode was not inexhaustible. In 1880 Nevada's mining stocks, which had been valued at \$300,000,000 five years before, were worth less than \$7,000,000.<sup>3</sup> Nevada sank quickly into sleepy lethargy (briefly but joyfully disturbed by the Tonapah rush in 1900) lasting into the modern era until roused by the discovery of the greatest of all lodes--the Las Vegas--by Wilbur Clark.

#### Legacy of the Comstock

Nevada mining was responsible for significant advances in engineering techniques. Early mining on the Comstock was close to the surface, with quartz being collected from open or shallow shafts and horizontal tunnels. To reach the deeper ore new equipment and improved techniques were needed. Philip Deidesheimer, a German engineer, originated the plan of building a series of cells

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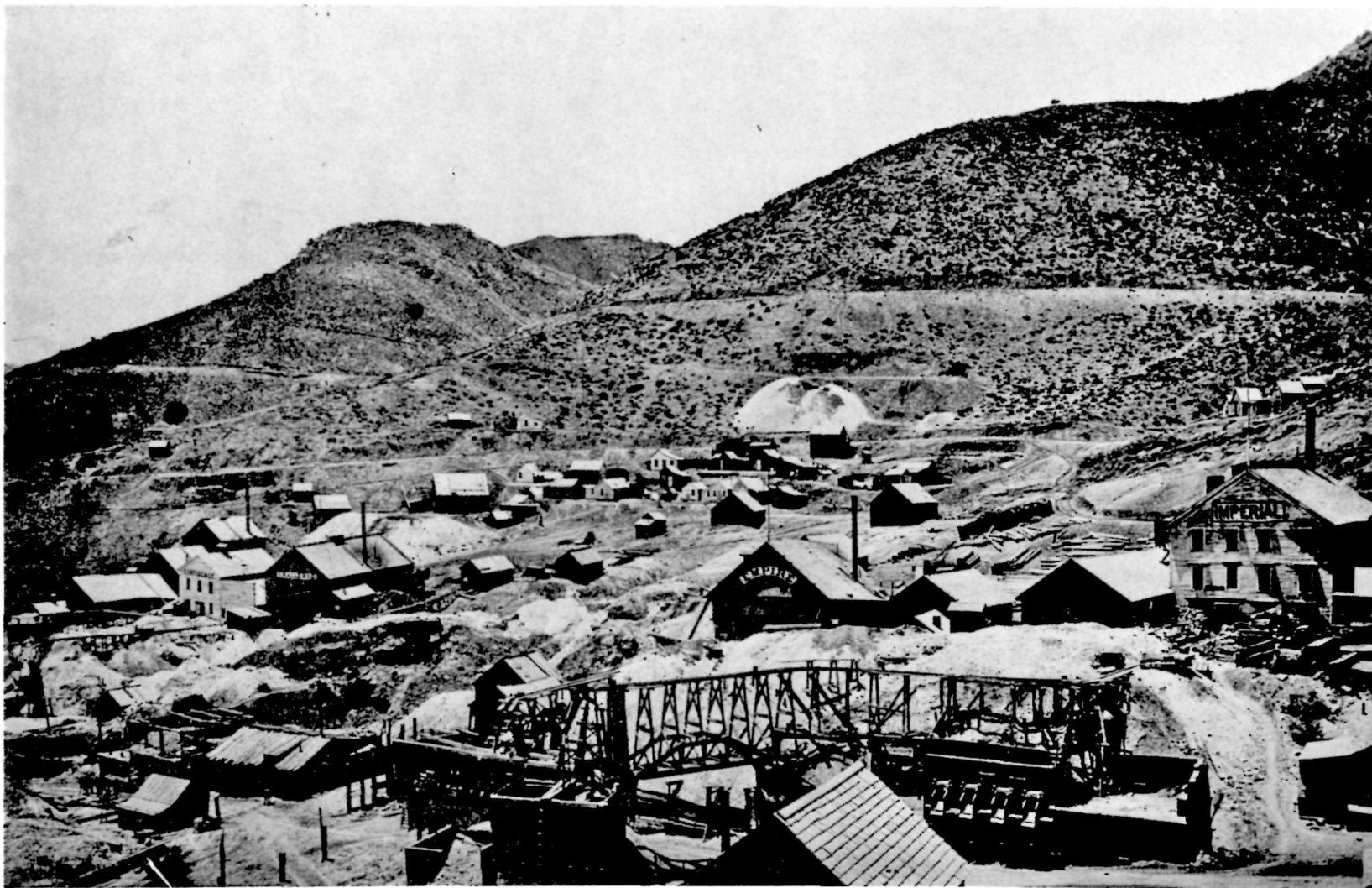
<sup>3</sup>Effie M. Mack, Nevada; A History of the State from the Earliest Times through the Civil War (Glendale, 1936), 449-450. Dan De Quille, The Big Bonanza, is one of the best of the contemporary accounts; G. D. Lyman, Ralston's Ring; California Plunders the Comstock Lode (New York, 1937) is informative.

braced with square-cut timbers wherever the ore was stoped out, permitting the mining of quartz lodes at greater width and depth. The Deidesheimer system, installed throughout the Comstock, was a marvel which attracted mining engineers from Europe. The Washoe Process for reducing ores was also developed on the Comstock.

The Comstock Lode poured wealth into San Francisco and established the stock exchange, as well as launching the spirited careers of a group of Silver Kings led by James G. Fair, John W. Mackay, James C. Flood and William S. O'Brien. The output of the Nevada mines strengthened the credit of the United States during the crucial years of the Civil War. Freighting was stimulated, and the Comstock Lode bullion accelerated the construction and helped determine the location of the trans-continental railroad. The effects were international--the ratio of gold and silver were altered, probably contributing to the demonitization of silver by European nations. Despite these monumental consequences, one frontier historian expressed the conviction that the real significance of the Comstock Lode was that it attracted Mark Twain to the West and gave posterity his classic account, Roughing It.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Frederic L. Paxson, History of the American Frontier 1763-1893 (Cambridge, 1924), 451.



Gold Hill, Nevada, lying just across the "divide" from its sister city of the Comstock Lode, Virginia City. Shown in this 1865 view are the Imperial, Empire, Challenge and Confidence Mines.

Courtesy, The National Archives

## COLORADO

While gold strikes were being made in many places in the years after the California rush, the greatest, the most exciting and perhaps the most consequential were in central Colorado and Nevada. In the summer of 1858 several hundred prospectors were searching along the Continental Divide directly west of Kansas Territory, in a time when most of the West was being similarly explored by those who had acquired the habit of the roving life. Gold was panned along the stream beds near Pike's Peak, and before winter set in Denver City was in existence.

### The Pike's Peak Rush

News of the Pike's Peak discovery soon found its way eastward to the Mississippi Valley where it met an unusually cordial reception from a population badly used by the panic of 1857, which had brought widespread unemployment and business failures. Accounts, somewhat inflated, of the gold fields rioted along the border settlements with the same effect as had the news from Sutter's Mill a decade earlier. Poverty-ridden frontiersmen eagerly scanned newspaper accounts of the new El Dorado, the work of editors free from the sin of understatement. Pike's Peak was located conveniently, requiring no grueling trek over mountains or desert, but a relatively easy seven hundred miles from the Missouri River. In the spring of 1859 the rush to Pike's Peak

was one of the wildest and biggest in the nation's history.<sup>1</sup>

An almost continuous stream of prospectors began crossing the plains to Colorado. Some used the heavy prairie schooner wagons, others the light carriages of the border; some went by horseback using pack animal; others, taking their lead from the Mormon migration, headed for their destination pushing two-wheeled handcarts. Probably 100,000 "fifty-niners" passed through Nebraska en route to the mountains that summer.<sup>2</sup> These enthusiasts contributed one of the famous slogans of American history, "Pike's Peak or Bust," painted on their packs and wagon canvas, but the newspapers and guidebooks had been somewhat deceiving. Panning every stream, chopping away at every rock outcropping, they found nothing. In the jargon of the times, they had been "humbled."

A shrewd observer of the scene, one who was shortly to do a bit of treasure hunting himself, watched the exodus from Leavenworth, Kansas, in April:

At this moment we are in the midst of a rush to Pike's Peak. Steamboats arrive in twos and threes each day. Loaded with people for the new gold region. The streets are full of people buying flour, bacon,

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<sup>1</sup>Contemporary accounts of the Pike's Peak rush have been published in three volumes of the Southwest Historical Series, edited by Leroy R. Hafen: Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guide Books of 1859 (Glendale, 1941); Overland Routes to the Gold Fields, 1859, from Contemporary Diaries (Glendale, 1942); Colorado Gold Rush, Contemporary Letters and Reports 1858-1859 (Glendale, 1941)

<sup>2</sup>Ray Billington, Westward Expansion (New York, 1956), 619.

and groceries, with wagons and outfits, and all around the two are little camps preparing to go West.... Strange to say, even yet, although probably 25,000 people have actually gone, we are without authentic advices of gold.<sup>3</sup>

One of the greatest booms was followed by one of the quickest busts. By midsummer half of the miners who had reached Colorado were back home. Below the hopeful slogan on the white canvas of the prairie schooner a new comment appeared in bolder, blacker letters, "Busted, by God," an eloquent epitaph to one of the major fiascoes of frontier history.

It was ironic that just as the "Pilgrims," as they called themselves, were taking their disgruntled way eastward, actual gold strikes were being made. And yet it was hardly what many naive gold seekers had been led to expect. "Hell," said one, watching the laborious work at the diggings, "I expected to see them backing up carts and shoveling it in."<sup>4</sup> The failure of the early boom was due not to the lack of minerals but to their location. The placer dust, washed from creek bottoms, soon played out; the quartz lodes, when found upstream, were rich in minerals of all kinds, but were so refractory they could not be mined without great outlays of labor and capital. In this situation, gold production was for mining companies, rather than prospectors. When the Guggenheim interests took over the Colorado mines, a new era began.

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<sup>3</sup>William Tecumseh Sherman in Harry J. Carman and Harold C. Syrett, A History of the American People (New York, 1952), II, 57.

<sup>4</sup>Ghost Towns of Colorado, American Guide Series (New York, 1947), 18.



A superb photograph by Jackson of two gold prospectors camped in Cunningham Gulch, Colorado, in 1875, with the favorite tools of the miner—pick and shovel, washing pan, knife and bean pot—shown ready for action.

Courtesy, The National Archives

## Political Effects

Colorado is an excellent example of the contribution which miners made to the establishment of orderly government and the drawing of political boundaries. Although the Pike's Peak rush of Fifty-nine had been disastrous and the prospects of maintaining a permanent population seemed rather remote, a popular referendum that year showed a majority favored immediate statehood. In October a constitution was drawn up and ratified, and a governor and legislature chosen to govern the territory until Congress acted. The drive of the Colorado citizens for political legitimacy prompted a foreign observer to remark:

Making governments and building towns are the natural employments of the migratory Yankee. He takes to them as instinctively as a young duck to water. Congregate a hundred Americans anywhere beyond the settlements and they immediately lay out a city, frame a state constitution and apply for admission into the Union, while twenty-five of them become candidates for the United States Senate.<sup>5</sup>

## The Silver Boom

In succeeding years discoveries were made in Colorado which would have more than satisfied the hopes of the "Pike's Peak or Bust" parties. Fabulous silver strikes at Leadville and Aspen late in the 1870's set off the second great Colorado boom in which "Colorado" and "silver" became synonymous and Bonanza Kings were crashing the jealously guarded portals of the United States Senate. An incredible third great boom ensued in the 1890's with the discovery of gold on Cripple Creek, which rose to dazzle the world

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<sup>5</sup>Billington, Westward Expansion, 622.

as one of the richest of all gold fields. For nearly a century Colorado has remained a major mining region, producing over two billion dollars in mineral wealth. Mining has continued to be the leading industry of the State.



The sluice or Long Tom was a further refinement over pan and rocker. Given sufficient water supply and drainage, sluice mining was the most agreeable form of gold washing yet devised. In this Jackson photograph miners are working a sluice in Borens Gulch, Colorado, in 1875.

Courtesy, The National Archives

## UTAH AND WYOMING

### Utah

In an era marked by the almost religious pursuit of gold, there were few voices raised against the great quest. Brigham Young, a prophet of considerable honor especially in his own home, was among the few. Realizing the absolute necessity of agricultural development to the life of his Mormon colony, he forbade the opening of mines by the Saints.<sup>1</sup>

The rush to California had brought considerable prosperity to the Mormons at an especially critical time. Salt Lake City was on a direct route to the California gold fields and in the summer of 1849 a great number of wagon trains passed through the Mormon center. As a result of heavy immigration the previous year and a short harvest, the Mormons were in desperate straits. The arrival of the gold seekers brought trade and needed supplies.

In 1862 Colonel P. E. Connor assumed command of the District of Utah. Firm in the belief that the Mormons were disloyal, he encouraged every gentile and apostate who opposed Brigham Young. In a report to his superior he stated his position concisely:

My policy in this territory has been to invite hither a large Gentile and loyal population, sufficient by peaceful means and through the ballot box to overwhelm the Mormons by mere force of numbers...

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<sup>1</sup>Although most literature on the Mormons is unreliable, a good account of Mormon industry is in Nels Anderson, Desert Saints: The Mormon Frontier in Utah (Chicago, 1942).

with this view, I have bent every energy...towards the discovery and development of the mining resources of the Territory, using without stint the soldiers of my command, whenever and wherever it could be done without detriment to the public service....<sup>2</sup>

Soldiers and other prospectors discovered deposits of silver, lead and copper ores in 1863, inducing Connor and his associates to publish a newspaper, the Union Vidette, which announced the mountains were rich in gold, and silver and other minerals. Prospecting parties were offered government protection.

Placer gold was discovered in Bingham Canyon the following year, starting the first Utah rush. A number of strikes were made and several mining camps established. Alta, in Little Cottonwood Canyon, gained almost as much fame from its Bucket of Blood and Gold Miner's Daughter saloons as from its Emma Mine. To the south, the Ophir Mining District was a boom town of the Seventies.

A few Mormons apparently joined the scramble to the diggings, prompting Brigham Young to express his view of the mining frontier.

It is a fearful deception which all the world labors under, and many of the people too, who profess not to be of the world, that gold is wealth. On the bare report that gold was discovered in these west mountains, men left their threshing machines, and their houses at large, to eat up and trample down and destroy the precious bounties of the earth. They at once sacrificed all at the glittering shrine of the

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<sup>2</sup>Connor to Colonel Richard C. Drum, July 21, 1864, quoted in Robert G. Raymer, "Early Mining in Utah," Pacific Historical Review, VIII (1939), 83.

popular idol, declaring they were now going to be rich, and would raise wheat no more. Should this feeling become universal on the discovery of gold mines in our immediate vicinity, nakedness, starvation, utter destitution and annihilation would be the inevitable lot of this people. Instead of bringing us wealth and independence it would weld upon our necks chains of slavery.<sup>3</sup>

Precious metals were not discovered in amounts sufficient to draw into Utah the huge gentile population hoped for by Colonel Connor, and mining operations did not seriously interfere with Mormon affairs. Unknown to the prospectors, the very mountain they raked for gold and silver at Bingham Canyon contained one of the largest and richest open copper deposits in the world. Although copper ore was shipped from Bingham Canyon as early as 1868, the development of the open-pit mines by the Kennecott Copper Company was begun in the twentieth century and has become a major industry of Utah. Although Young's policy surrendered a great part of Utah's mineral wealth, the landed basis of the church, which he foresaw, has proved impregnable.

### Wyoming

Wyoming was almost the only State of the Far West which did not experience a major boom during the mining era, and its establishment as a Territory in 1868 was due more to the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad across its breadth and the establishment of Cheyenne as an important rail junction than to the influence of its mines.

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<sup>3</sup>Ray B. West, Jr., Kingdom of the Saints (New York, 1957), 306-307.



South Pass City, located a few miles from historic South Pass, on the Oregon Trail, as photographed by Jackson in 1870, during the peak of the mining boom on the Sweetwater.

Courtesy, The National Archives

In the early Sixties gold deposits were found in the Big Horn country and for a few years this region received the excess population of Montana's mines. The rush to the Sweetwater River, and a rather substantial one, occurred in 1867, resulting in the founding of South Pass City and Atlantic City. This, the only real mining boom which Wyoming experienced, ended quickly. The pockets proved shallow, and by 1870 the Sweetwater rush was over, leaving behind no permanent population. Although prospecting continued during the Seventies and Eighties, Wyoming's people had long since turned their attention to the cattle industry.

## MONTANA

Even before Congress acted upon Idaho's petitions for Territorial status, miners were crossing the Continental Divide and prospecting the headwaters of the Missouri. Granville Stuart, one of the foremost figures of pioneer Montana, whose father had been a Forty-niner, led the first band of prospectors into Montana in 1862. Hearing of their success, a group of Colorado miners, led by John Bozeman, heading for the Salmon River country from Cripple Creek, turned north from the Oregon Trail and discovered gold on the Beaverhead River. Other miners flocked in from all points, staking out claims, with the focus of their activities on Grasshopper Creek.

Here some 500 prospectors spent the winter of 1863 in the mining camp they called Bannack City which became famous, not so much for its mineral wealth as for its Sheriff, Henry Plummer, who assumed that post of trust the following year. Swarming out from Bannack, prospectors made another and richer strike the following spring 70 miles to the east at Alder Gulch (site of Virginia City), one of the celebrated gulches of mining history, which produced \$30,000,000 in gold during the next three years.

The rush to Montana in 1863, following the glowing reports of success at Bannack and Virginia City, was one of the great rushes of the frontier. The Snake River camps were declining, and Idaho prospectors seeking an improvement in their financial status joined other temporarily distressed miners who trekked across the mountains and deserts of the West from California and Oregon to Colorado and

Montana, and from the states along the Missouri River. Virginia City experienced the usual, that is, a sensational, boom. At that time there were upwards of 15,000 people in the Alder Gulch district, and Montana, which three years earlier was uninhabited by white men, had a total population of 30,000.

There were those, strange to say, in the early days of Montana's history who were bemused by other gods than mammon and who noticed the possibilities of the fertile mountain valleys of the region.

The chief constructive force of the mining period was the impetus it gave to the development of the nearby agricultural valleys. In the valleys of the Gallatin, Deer Lodge, Bitter Root, Madison and Jefferson, permanent settlements were made upon which the territory and state might build with security.<sup>1</sup>

Farmers and merchants joined the rush to Montana in important numbers, testifying to the promise of the future and quickening the demand for stable government. Because communication facilities were inadequate, the Idaho government was unable to administer the Montana districts. Congress received the petitions of the mining camps sympathetically and in May, 1864, created Montana Territory. The Territorial legislature adopted a seal depicting a miner's pick and shovel and a farmer's plow against a mountain background.

Montana's gold era was concluded in handsome but typical fashion. A venerable prospector from Georgia, one of the early gold regions of the United States, who had exhausted his supplies and patience as he panned his way down the Missouri in 1864 without detecting a trace of color, made one last attempt in a spot he later termed

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill G. Burlingame, The Montana Frontier (Helena, 1942), 100.

Last Chance Gulch. The result is history, or legend, and Helena was founded on the site within a few months. Helena possessed a dozen nearby gulches which contained rich gold deposits, and the town was strategically located on the wagon route from Fort Benton to Bannack and Virginia City. It rapidly achieved its position as one of the most important cities which emerged from the mining era.

The so-called "Bozeman Road" was a product of the early Montana rush. Although the newly opened Mullan Road provided convenient transportation from the West, gold seekers from the East had a long and difficult route to follow--up the Missouri to the head of navigation, thence by circuitous route over the Oregon Trail to Fort Hall, and then north to Virginia City. Bozeman left Bannack the first winter (1862) to find a more direct route east, reaching the Platte after losing all of his furs and supplies to a raiding party of Sioux. He led a party back the following spring over the divide and what is now Bozeman Pass. The Indians were increasingly hostile, especially when the government surveyed the "Bozeman Trail" or "Powder River Road" in 1865. The result is well known, the Fetterman Massacre ensued, and the government abandoned its plans for the road. Bozeman himself was killed on the route in 1867.

Montana mining entered upon a new era with the discovery of silver at Butte in 1874 by an Idaho miner. A small gold strike at Silver Bow City in 1864 had encouraged miners to establish a camp nearby which a contemporary newspaper passed off with the notation that it consisted of "a small cluster of cabins rejoicing in



A lone miner working a cradle, photographed by Jackson in 1871, probably near Virginia City, Montana.

Courtesy, The National Archives

the name of Butte City."<sup>2</sup> But this one was different. Beneath it lay one of the world's richest mineral deposits--an area less than five miles square which eventually produced between two and three billion dollars in mineral wealth.

Initially Butte prospered in the typical fashion of the period on the basis of its silver lodes. But despite this boom, conditions in Montana were generally unsatisfactory. The mines were scattered, the region lacked transportation, and many of the miners were leaving to join the rush to the Black Hills. The genius of an Irish-born opportunist who had worked with pick and shovel in the California diggings precipitated the third and greatest phase of Montana mining history, the copper era.

Marcus Daly had arrived in America with nothing in his pockets "save his Irish smile." Although there are indications that his uncanny instinct for the main chance was almost an equally valuable asset, the legendary luck of the Irish might have been the greatest asset of all. Daly, who had persuaded George Hearst to invest in the Anaconda Silver Mine, was disappointed as his shaft struck copper instead of silver. Persisting in his effort to locate a silver vein, Daly drove his shaft deeper and deeper, until he struck a copper vein 50 feet wide and of unparalleled richness.

With the copper discovery, Butte enjoyed an international reputation, as the "richest hill on earth." In addition to attracting

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<sup>2</sup>In Montana Post, February 18, 1864, quoted in Wollé, Bonanza Trail, 203.

miners from throughout the American West, high wages being paid for mine labor brought considerable numbers of miners from Ireland, Cornwall, Wales, Germany, and Italy, all of which have their own districts in Butte today.

The wars between the copper kings of Butte, similar to those between other kings of gold and silver districts of the West, have been the subject of many writers.<sup>3</sup> In all cases extreme wealth induced a frenzied struggle for more wealth and political power.

The accomplishments of Daly, who became the head of one of the world's most powerful monopolies, were similar to those of other noted benefactors who amassed fortunes from the mines. Daly was a founder and builder of cities; selecting the site for Anaconda, which became the smelter for Butte, he pointed to a cow, which was meditatively chewing its cud, and instructed his engineers "Main Street will run north and south straight through that cow." He mined coal for his furnaces and acquired huge tracts of timber to supply lumber for the mines; he established banks, power plants and irrigation systems; he was a strong force in Montana politics. His final achievement was combining a series of lumber and mining companies into that industrial giant, the Amalgamated Copper Company.

The wars between the copper kings alternated with labor battles. The men who worked the mines of Butte were also a strong influence on the politics of the state. As the city quickly rose to

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<sup>3</sup>See C. B. Glasscock, The War of the Copper Kings (New York, 1935)

a position of the world's copper metropolis, there was a strong movement among the miners for organization culminating in the founding of the militant Western Federation of Miners in Butte in 1893, which included miners from Idaho, Colorado and South Dakota.

Perhaps to a greater degree than any other state, the mining industry of Montana, centered at Butte, influences directly or indirectly every major industry in the state. Obviously this influence is strong and has powerful connections in other states and in many foreign countries.

## THE BLACK HILLS OF DAKOTA

The trend of the mining frontier continued its uneven but inexorable way eastward from California, until only one region of the United States had escaped the prospector's pick--the Black Hills of Dakota, a region occupied by the warlike Sioux and guarded by troops with orders to bar all white men. From the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition these domed hills had been shrouded in mystery. Tales were recounted of Indians who came from the Hills to Fort Laramie with nuggets of pure gold, of military commanders who suppressed news of gold discoveries to prevent wholesale desertions, and of Father De Smet, the pioneer Jesuit missionary, who had received gold from the Sioux before the discovery in California and who warned the natives not to reveal this secret if they wished to retain their hunting grounds.

### The Indian Barrier

A somewhat more substantial assay was offered by a special commissioner appointed in 1866 by the Secretary of the Treasury to collect data concerning the mineral resources east of the Rocky Mountains. The report published in 1867 asserted that explorations by Lt. G. K. Warren in 1857 and Captain W. F. Reynolds in 1859 and 1860 had verified that the Black Hills were rich in gold and silver, and in iron, coal, and copper.

With the pacification of the Sioux Indians and the establishment of emigrant roads, this district of Dakota would doubtless be the scene of great mining excitement, as the gold-field of the Black

Hills is accessible at a distance of 120 miles from the Missouri River.<sup>1</sup>

By the middle Seventies, as the mines of the West were passing into the hands of Eastern capitalists and the realm of the prospector had dwindled away, a persistent effort was being made to force the government to open the Black Hills to prospecting. Alarmed by the buildup, the government in 1874 fitted out a military expedition under General George Custer, accompanied by a corps of scientists, to explore the mineral resources of the region. In July the party encamped at the future site of Custer, where two scientists panned gold in French Creek. Custer returned with the report that gold was present in the Black Hills in profitable amounts.

Gold seekers from every region of the West now jammed such nearby towns as Bismarck, Cheyenne, and Sioux City, demanding that the region be opened to the miners. Many slipped into the area only to be ousted by the cavalry. The Indians refused to give up their land, for these hills and prairies, rich in game, were all that was left. In September, 1875, a special commission failed to obtain any concessions from the Sioux, who were determined to fight if need be to protect their homeland.

The impasse ended the following month when the government, realizing the inevitable and unable to control the situation indefinitely, threw open the Black Hills to those who were willing

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<sup>1</sup>J. Ross Browne and James W. Taylor, Reports Upon the Mineral Resources of the United States (Washington, 1867), 330. One of the best accounts of the Black Hills mining rush is in Harold E. Briggs, "The Black Hills Gold Rush," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, V (January, 1931).

to accept the risks. Nearly 15,000 miners entered the region in the next few months.

The direct result of this phase of the mining frontier on Indian relations was the Sioux uprising early in 1876 which lasted for a year and a half and which was highlighted by Custer's Armageddon on the Little Big Horn. Not always so fortunate, the Sioux were finally forced to cede the Black Hills, and the legal settlement of the area began in 1877.

#### On to Deadwood

The objective of the first group of prospectors into the Black Hills was French Creek, and here Custer City was laid out. During the fall of 1875 a party of prospectors exploring northward from Custer made the last great strike of the mining frontier in Deadwood Gulch. To this unsung group of frontiersmen America is indebted for the imperishable saga of Deadwood, where the mining frontier achieved its apotheosis. One of the most respected authorities on Westward Expansion has summed up the Deadwood story, which, with a few less murders and stage coach holdups, is the story of all the mining camps:

The Wild West made its last glorious stand in the Black Hills mining camps. Deadwood was the rip-roaring center of frontier lawlessness. There the faro games were wilder, the hurdy-gurdy dance halls noisier, the street brawls more common, than in any other western town. There congregated road agents, gunmen, murders, bawds, and gamblers driven off from more orderly communities by vigilantes-- Wild Bill Hickok, California Jack, Bed Rock Tom, Poker Alice, Calamity Jane. There stagecoaches were robbed with such monotonous regularity the local paper dismissed one such incident with: "We have again to repeat the hackneyed phrase, 'The stage has been robbed!'" There desperados from the hills



For years prospectors had heard rumors that the Black Hills of Dakota, guarded by the warlike Sioux, contained gold. This 1874 Signal Corps photograph shows the Custer expedition, composed of 1200 soldiers and scientists, en route to survey the Black Hills. Custer returned with stirring news—gold throughout the district—and the last great rush of the mining frontier began.

*Courtesy, The National Archives*

regularly roared in to "take over the town," while storekeepers boarded up their doors, shut out their lights, and unashamedly hid until danger was past. There the vigilance committee "stretched hemp" over the necks of more unregenerate cutthroats than in all the gold fields from Pike's Peak to Sutter's Fort. Deadwood's place in the criminal sun was brief, but during those hectic years no other spot in the nation could boast such unrestrained lawlessness as that famous mining camp.<sup>2</sup>

The placers of Deadwood, and nearby Lead, brought fortunes to many prospectors, but the surface gold was soon drained away. To extract the quartz, heavily capitalized companies such as the Homestead, took over the mining, and the colorful, highly individualistic era of the prospector and placer miner was at an end.

The zenith of the rush to the Black Hills was reached in 1877, and with the Deadwood boom the eastward movement of the mining frontier ended. Much gold and silver remained to be discovered, but its extraction was the work of the engineer, rather than the prospector, and no great population migrations into the uncharted domain resulted. Long before, mining towns and agricultural settlements testified to the permanent contribution of the miner.

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<sup>2</sup>Billington, Westward Expansion, 632. Admirers of the heroes and heroines of a number of other mining camps might wish to argue Billington's use of the superlative in recounting the achievements, such as they were, of Deadwood.

## THE HERITAGE OF THE MINING FRONTIER

The advance of the mining frontier hastened the settlement of the trans-Mississippi West. "To attempt to restrain miners would be, to my mind, like attempting to restrain the whirlwind,"<sup>1</sup> the Indian agent in Idaho observed. In much the same fashion as a whirlwind, the miners pushed inexorably into the far corners of the West, beginning with the rush to California in 1849 which caused the frontier to jump across the Great Plains to the Pacific Ocean. In the 1850's the map of western United States showed Oregon, Utah, California and Washington with the Rocky Mountains as the eastern boundary, Kansas and Nebraska with the Rockies as a western boundary.

It was the miner who was responsible for gaining territorial status, and eventually statehood, for many of the western states. California was the first, in 1850, then in 1861 the partitioning of the mineral empire began with the establishment of Colorado Territory. Within a few years the Territories of Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Montana and Dakota were established or set apart; great cities such as San Francisco, Denver, Spokane and Butte were founded; and the "subdivision of the mineral empire was completed. The map told a new story, and the new conditions brought into American politics by the influence of the dispersed settlements of the miners, were affecting the courses both of economic development and political balance."<sup>2</sup>

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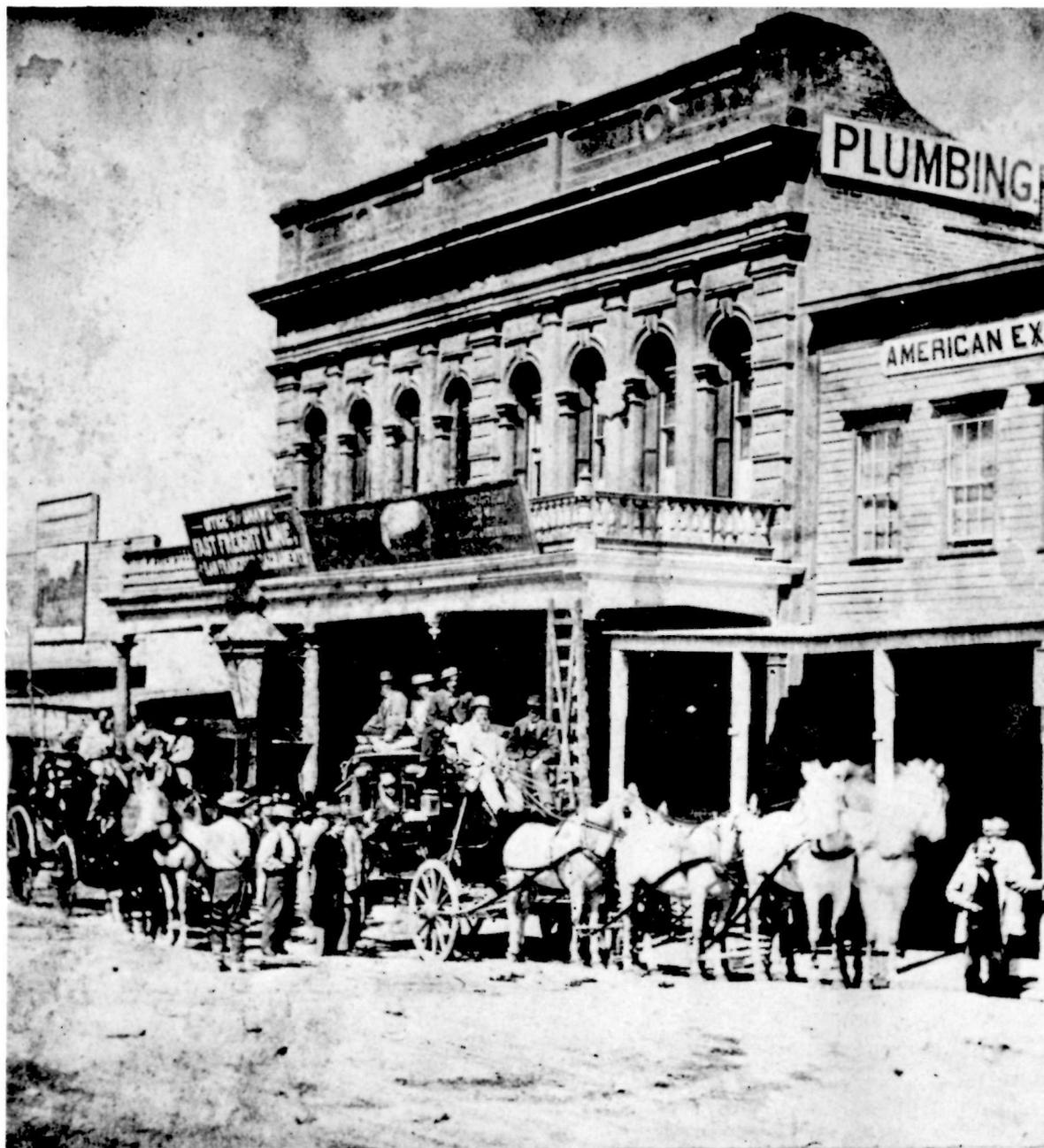
<sup>1</sup>Paxson, History of the American Frontier, 455.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 456.

Once the miners had established their far-flung, isolated settlements, they were insistent upon better communications between the mining camps and with the older sections. Roads meant lower prices and more frequent news of the outside world. Transportation facilities and freight lines began linking the settlements. California's mineral wealth and its growing population reinforced arguments that the federal government should speed the mails to the Pacific by stage and subsidize a trans-continental railroad. Unoccupied areas were explored to locate roads, and the Pacific railroad surveys of the Fifties expanded geographical knowledge. In a real sense the overland stage, clipper ship, pony express, trans-continental telegraph and railroad were heritages of the gold rush.

By greatly enlarging the demand for foodstuffs and supplies, the miner hastened the advance of the agricultural frontier and drew to his camps merchants, traders and businessmen. Some few communities remained almost exclusively based on a mining economy, but for most, the mining phase was temporary; the real wealth of Montana and Colorado, Wyoming and Idaho, as well as of California, was in their soil and grass, although gold and silver were the prime movers.

The vastly increased supply of bullion fostered commerce and industry. To process the bullion three United States mints were established in the West at San Francisco, Carson City and Denver. The needs of the mines and miners opened new markets and the wealth produced created capital to build new industries. Stock exchanges were opened, and investment in mines attracted Eastern



709. Wells, Fargo & Co's Express Office, C street,  
Virginia City.

A stage preparing to depart from the Wells, Fargo office in Virginia City, Nevada. The mining frontier established early transportation systems in the West. During the rush to the Comstock Lode the road over the Sierra to Sacramento, a narrow shelf with a 12% grade, was used by Concord coaches, pack trains and long mule trains loaded with freight or bullion.

Courtesy, The Wells Fargo Museum,  
San Francisco

and foreign capital, particularly British. The wealth of the mines helped considerably to forestall deflation as business and industry expanded after the Civil War. The mining frontier was indirectly responsible for the later demand for free coinage of silver and the Battle of the Standards. The labor movement was strengthened, through the founding of the Western Federation of Miners; the ranks of Big Business were reinforced by the Bonanza Kings.

The influx of large numbers of miners into Indian country contributed to the final destruction of Indian life. Within a year of the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, California miners were demanding that coastal tribes be moved into the interior. Treaty lands were violated, food supplies were destroyed, wars of extermination precipitated, as miners invaded the lands of the Cherokee, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Apache, Ute, Sioux, Kiowa, Nez Perce and other tribes.

As has been shown, the miners developed significant elements of local government. The customs and regulations of the mining districts were extended into state and national law by legislative action and court decision. "It was perhaps the most impressive demonstration ever conducted of the peculiar genius of the American people for retaining individual independence yet having the rules understood."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Shinn, Mining Camps, v.

As in all great movements of American history, the results were such as to defy precise identification. But the mass migration of miners to California, and from thence to all parts of the Far West, is the very essence of that historic and seemingly irresistible impulse of the pioneer to overrun and conquer the land. Although gold was ostensibly the moving force, the explanation possibly does not lie entirely with the money value of the gold. Americans had always harbored a strong desire to see what lay on the "yonder side," and the gold discoveries provided the opportunity. All of the excitement, the drama, the hardships, and the occasional rewards, have become a part of the gold rush legend:

... its human and picturesque elements have so universally appealed to the imagination that the 'Forty-niner' has taken a prominent place in the gallery of American historical types, and certain features of the Rush have almost become folk knowledge. The excitement of free gold, lying loose in the stream beds; the exuberance of 'Oh Susannah'; the recklessness of gunplay, gambling, and 'Hangtown Gals' in the mining camps; the epic length of the journey to the diggings; the hardships and dangers of mountain, desert, and plain--these ingredients form a pageant familiar to most Americans.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Potter, Trail to California, vii.

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The various rushes to the diggings constitute a comparatively recent phenomenon. There are, therefore, a vast number of diaries and personal memoirs of participants in print. There are well over one hundred diaries of miners who followed the Oregon Trail route to the California Mother Lode in 1849, and almost that many for the following year. Caughey (Gold is the Cornerstone) limits himself to fifteen pages in listing the better works on the California mining story.

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## A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE PRESENT CONDITION AND DISTRIBUTION OF MINING FRONTIER SITES

The Gold Rush may not have had the greatest impact upon Westward Expansion of any of the pioneer movements, but it probably has left behind the greatest amount of physical evidence. These remains are plentifully distributed throughout twelve states north and west of Texas--New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington and South Dakota. As a result, the term "ghost town" conjures up for most people a familiar picture of a deserted town with dusty streets flanked by weather-stained, unpainted structures, relics of a once booming mining camp. The ghost town vividly symbolizes one of the most colorful and significant chapters of Western history. For this reason it has become a much publicized tourist attraction and a popular objective of vacation travel, and travelers are offered a wide choice of attractions, from "The Town Too Tough To Die" (Tombstone) to "The Town That Died Laughing" (Austin). Probably no other theme of Westward Expansion which will be studied by the National Survey possesses as many sites with as extensive remains as the Mining Frontier.

### DISTRIBUTION OF SITES

In this Survey, the "site" is most generally the mining camp itself, including the town and mine remains. There are undoubtedly thousands of so-called "sites" in the twelve western states of the mining frontier. These range from the crumbling

stone wall of a Wells Fargo office, with its ever-present iron door and shutters, to sizeable but deserted towns such as Silver City, Idaho; from weather-battered headframes over empty mining shafts to the immense stamp mill of the abandoned Drumlummon mine in Montana. Throughout the mining frontier are innumerable evidences of mining activity. Driving from Cripple Creek through its satellite camps one is never out of sight of the mines--ore dumps, shaft houses, hoists, mill foundations, and railroad tracks.

It would probably be impossible to list or even locate more than a fraction of all the mines which once yielded substantial fortunes, or even all the mining settlements. In the gold region of California it is estimated that more than 500 mining towns were established in the period from 1848 to 1860, of which more than half have disappeared even from maps. As one explores deserted mining districts today he frequently comes upon the wreckage of sluice boxes, rusted machinery and decaying cabins, especially in the desert country. In the best account of the present status of mining frontier sites, Wollé declares that no attempt was made to cover completely the mining towns of all twelve states, "to do so would require at least twelve separate volumes, each as large as this one."

Undoubtedly the outstanding group of mining frontier sites today is found in the California Mother Lode country. State Highway No. 49, the "Mother Lode Highway," follows generally the course of the great gold vein along the foothills of the Sierra Nevada for 175 miles. Located on or near this highway



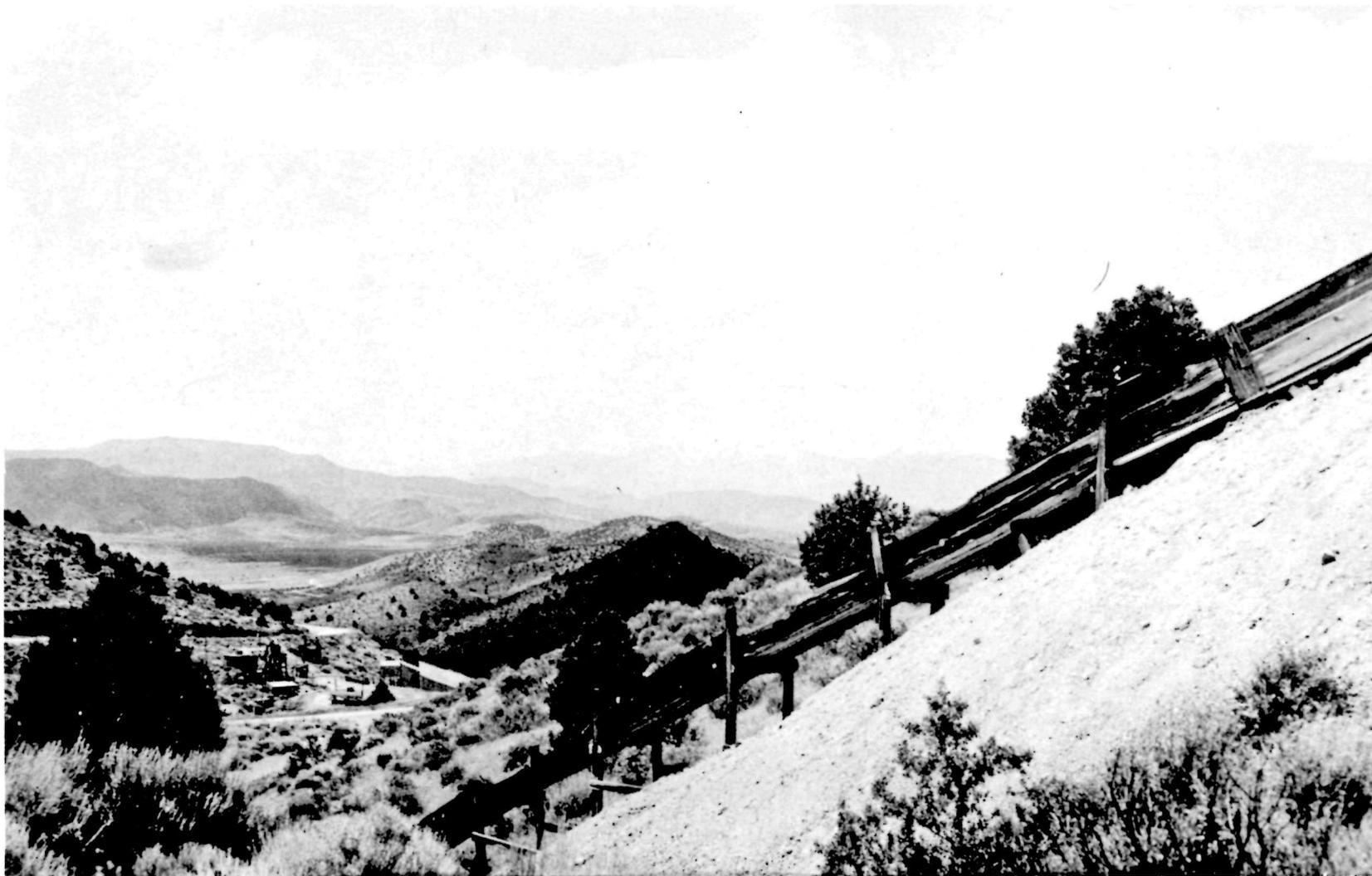
In Weaverville, California, a gold rush camp, the townspeople have tastefully restored the old structures for modern commercial use. The outside stairways are an attractive feature of these main street buildings.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

are the mining towns of California's historic Gold Rush days. In one of several "Guides" to the Mother Lode, 132 mining towns are listed which still have substantial remains. There are many more which lie well off the beaten track.

And yet, the greater part of the original construction has long since disappeared. Homes, stores, mines--most have vanished, casualties of time and neglect. Frenzied boom cities of several thousand inhabitants have disappeared without a trace. Many times subsequent exploitation of mines has obliterated early remains; an adobe structure built by the Spanish at the Santa Rita Mine in New Mexico was recently demolished to make way for open pit excavations. One is lucky to find a section of the 300 miles of flumes that once carried water to the diggings on San Juan Ridge in California. And only a few oldtimers can still point out the site of Ruby City, Idaho, where 1,000 miners built banks, homes, churches and saloons, and which now is completely covered with sand and sagebrush. A prominent feature of the mining district landscape, however, is the debris left behind--mile after mile of stark, unsightly waste, mounds of boulders which line innumerable streams and canyons, the colorless rock-piles spewed out by countless dredges.

Although most mineral deposits were exhausted rather quickly, some mining towns have continued to produce to the present--towns such as Tonapah, Nevada and Victor, Colorado. A few which began as mining camps have become prosperous modern cities--Sonora, California and Butte, Montana. And many have



Sagebrush and decaying mine remains are thickly scattered over the mountain slopes of Nevada's Comstock Lode, within sight of the Sierra.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

continued to exist as lumber towns, trading centers or stock-raising towns.

The mines themselves, most of which have long since been abandoned, still honeycomb vast sections of the mountain west, and visitors may tour some of these deserted shafts, as at the Occidental Mine at Gold Hill, Nevada. At Grass Valley, California, under the great headframe of the fabulous Empire-Star mine, is a mainshaft boring 11,000 feet into the earth, while at Jerome, Arizona, nearly 100 miles of shafts and drifts of the United Verde copper mine undercut Mingus Mountain. In many areas, mining has been carried on continuously to the present, as in the Coeur d'Alene district of Idaho and at Butte, Montana. Many mines were occasionally activated up to the early part of World War II, but most of these have been unable to meet low prices and the rising labor costs. For the most part, the legendary El Dorados and Big Bonanzas, which bedazzled the imaginations of the most optimistic prospector, now belong to the mining frontier legend.

#### PRESERVATION OF SITES

Because of widespread interest as well as local pride in the relics of the frontier mining days the preservation of individual structures, or groups of buildings, or in some cases even entire towns is done on a rather large scale, and there is at least one well preserved town in almost every important mining state in the West. Such preservation is the work of many types of organizations--State Park commissions, towns and municipalities, individuals and private foundations. The number of Gold Rush



Ghost towns of the West are seldom served by U. S. highways—which may well be the reason they have survived. A seemingly happy and no doubt prosperous solution to this problem—bringing the town to the highway—is this “reconstructed” ghost town near San Jose, California.

"museums" which occupy structures of the frontier mining period has undoubtedly reached a figure of several hundred and is constantly increasing.

An outstanding contribution is being made in the field of mining history preservation by the California Division of Beaches and Parks. Among its properties are the site of the discovery of gold at Sutter's sawmill at Coloma, a substantial section of the town of Columbia, "Gem of the Southern Mines," the mining town of Shasta, and the Chinese Joss House at Weaverville. The Division is also planning for the acquisition of Bodie, one of the largest of the ghost towns in existence. The Montana State Park organization has recently acquired the ghost town of Bannack, and is presently planning for the interpretation of this notable mining town. The Nevada State Museum at Carson City preserves the U. S. Mint building where \$50,000,000 was coined, and which has full scale exhibits of mining operations occupying a 300-foot tunnel in the basement.

Many private museums have done an excellent job of preserving local mining history. The Adams Memorial Museum in Deadwood, South Dakota, contains many relics of the wild, rowdy mining era in the Black Hills. The Gold Rush museum in the Wells Fargo bank of San Francisco commemorates the close relationship between Wells Fargo and the mining frontier. The "Old Homestead" museum in Cripple Creek was once a sporting house; its "soiled doves" no doubt made an important contribution to men denied the companionship of the fair sex.

The "cultural" heritage of the mining frontier is also being preserved. At Central City, Colorado, a number of historic buildings have been restored by the University of Denver, including such notable structures as the Teller House and the Mines Hotel, and the imposing stone Opera House in which a notable group of opera stars perform each summer. During festival time restaurants and bars prosper, antique shops and art galleries attract their customary devotees, and the city for a short time quickens its tempo. The Virginia City players of Montana State University stage melodramas every summer at Virginia City, Montana, as does the College of Pacific at the Fallon Theater in Columbia, California. Among the many famous newspapers of the era the Territorial Enterprise of Virginia City, Nevada and the Tombstone Epitaph of Tombstone, Arizona, are still being published, largely for the benefit of tourists.

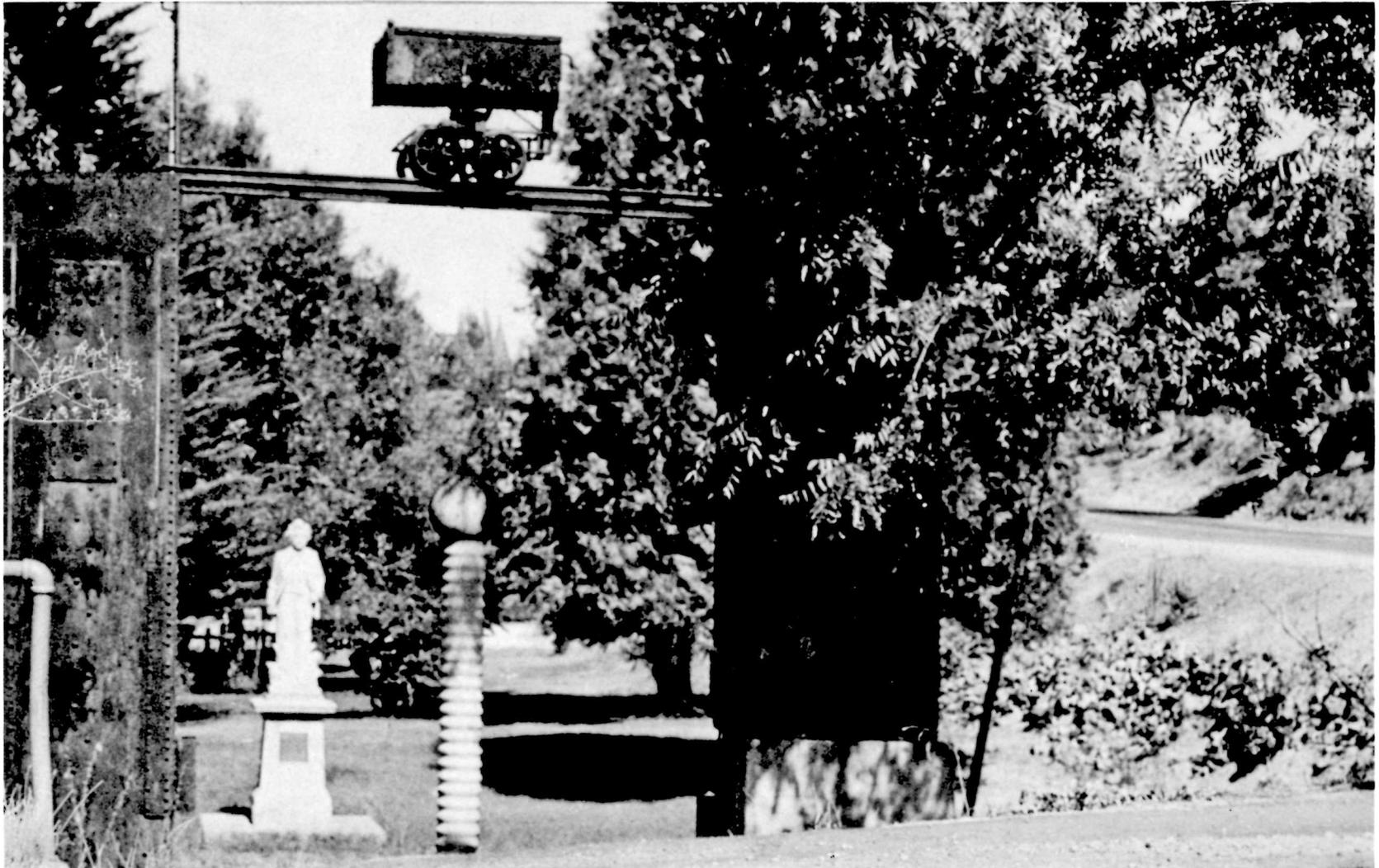
One of the best examples of restoration is at Virginia City, Montana, which contains a substantial number of original buildings and whose streets are now complete with false-fronted stores, wooden sidewalks and street lamps. Store after store is stacked with merchandise of the period, the Wells Fargo office is ready for business, as are the nickelodeons and peep shows of the Bale of Hay Saloon. In many towns, of which Virginia City, Nevada, is a notable example, the preservation of the buildings is for the purpose of commercial exploitation. Here the buildings are tenderly, if shrewdly preserved, and with the aid of Nevada's gambling laws and the well-publicized efforts of Lucius Beebe,

the tourist is confronted with a town not completely different from Virginia City of the Bonanza days.

## MINING FRONTIER ARCHITECTURE

Some attention should be given to the architecture of the mining frontier. Most ghost towns today look quite similar, as though all were built by the same hands. This was inevitable, considering each gold rush was similar to others, composed of men who had been in previous rushes, and having much the same materials to work with. The recognizable architectural style was probably developed in California, simply because it was the first gold boom, and is sometimes given the rather pretentious label of "Mother Lode architecture." However, it is a style which excites the interest of architectural historians. In a recent "Survey of Building Structures of the Sierran Gold Belt--1848-1870," published by the State of California, of some 165 buildings discussed, 125 had been surveyed by the California Division of Mines Building Survey and 40 by the Historic American Building Survey.

Although brick was a favored building material for the miners, signifying both permanence and prestige, it was frequently unavailable. Most of the buildings at Columbia, California, an architectural showplace, are of brick. Mexican and Chinese miners often used adobe, an economical material, and many of these structures survive at Hornitos and Chinese Camp, California. Stone buildings were put up by New Englanders, accustomed to constructing with stones cleared from the fields, and Middlewesterners continued this technique. The style of these buildings was uniformly plain. Except for door and window trim, perhaps with fanlights above, there was little adornment. The iron shutters over doors and



Angels Camp, California. Mark Twain came West with the mining frontier. Although unsuccessful as a prospector, his droll story, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," set in Angels Camp, launched his career as an authentic American humorist. The town, determined not to let the world forget this historic association, has erected a statue of Twain in the local park.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

windows, to protect against fire and larceny, have become an identifying feature because they have lasted so well.

The familiar frame buildings were also without embellishment--fancy fittings were unavailable at any cost in the remote mining camps. The modest but beautiful cast iron balcony grill of the Wells Fargo office in Columbia, California, had to be shipped around the Horn from Troy, New York and hauled to Columbia by mule train. Most towns were in desert country and even whip-sawed lumber had to be laboriously freighted in from great distances.

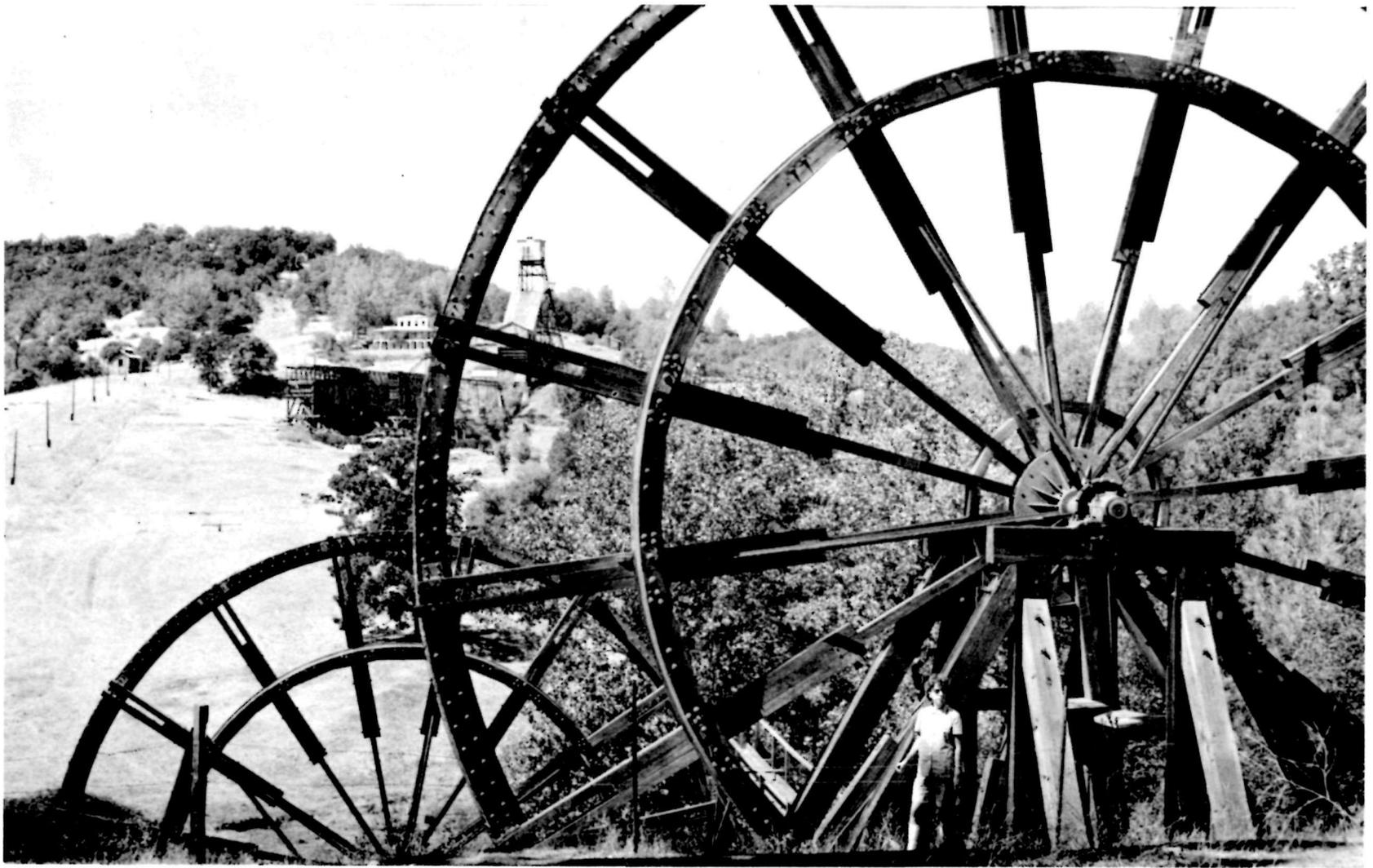
Stores followed a pattern--high, false front, wooden sidewalks, and a sheet-iron awning to shelter prospective customers from the sun. Inventive builders, remembering the gable roof, gothic window, spindle porch architecture left behind in Ohio or New York, were sometimes able to introduce these stylish features into their dwellings. Excellent examples of this are found at Jacksonville, Oregon, a town which would not be out of place in New England with its white-painted houses, picket fences, carved gateposts and high-steepled churches, and at Georgetown, Colorado, where Victorian homes built by miners for their families have survived.

The architecture of the mining camps is admirably illustrated today by many outstanding landmarks of the period. Some obviously reflect the pretentious ambitions of the suddenly wealthy, the desire to erect a showy monument; many display the good taste and skilled workmanship brought to the mining camps by a fair percentage of the Argonauts; some are remembered in part

because of their connection with the vivid life of the era--the Teller House Hotel in Central City, Colorado, for example, where President Grant walked from his stagecoach to the hotel over a path of silver bricks. Examples of the above might include: a selection of Colorado hotels, such as the Grand Imperial in Silverton and the Vendome in Leadville, with their mansard (or quasi-mansard) roofs; gothic churches such as the Community Church in Fairplay, Colorado, and St. James in Sonora, California; impressive courthouses such as those in Tombstone, Arizona, Aspen, Colorado, and Mariposa, California. Less famous, but perhaps more typical, are the numberless express and assay offices, I.O.O.F. halls and Bucket of Blood saloons.

#### SUMMARY

All of the above is not to say that mining town remains are so numerous that no plans for their preservation are needed. Actually, the amount of damage and destruction to the remaining buildings is extensive; it is a general rule that as visitation increases, vandalism and destruction likewise increases. Some of the best surviving mining towns are being systematically destroyed by souvenir hunters. An excellent example is Silver City, Idaho, which during the past decade has been looted, the buildings cannabalized for their lumber and robbed of interior fixtures and furnishings. Much of this town has vanished in this period. No less deadly are fires, against which there is almost no protection.



One of the spectacular sights of the California Mother Lode is at Jackson. These great wheels, 68 feet high, were built to lift tailings from the Kentucky Mine, shown in the background.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

But at present it can be said that mining frontier remains are widely distributed throughout the mining frontier states of the West. The opportunities for preservation of important sites associated with this vital phase of Westward Expansion are excellent. However, a carelessly thrown match or cigarette by one unthinking visitor can wipe out completely a ghost town which has stood for a century. It can be anticipated, therefore, that with the increased popularity of mining towns and with the steady increase in tourist travel, the destruction of unprotected sites will also increase.

MINING SITES OF EXCEPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

## BODIE

Location: Mono County, California

Ownership: In private ownership

### Historical Significance

Bodie is one of the most notable ghost towns of the West. It was not one of the most important mining camps in terms of total wealth, its history was not markedly different from a great many other gold rush towns, nor could it be said that the strike at Bodie changed substantially the history of the mining frontier.

Nevertheless, Bodie is of outstanding significance today. Its location, setting and total isolation make it almost the prototype of the Western ghost town; in terms of the number of buildings which have survived and their unusually good condition, Bodie is one of the best preserved of the old mining camps; its history, while typical of the strike, boom and decline cycle, was unusually long and colorful, and in a period when desperados and hard cases were a dime a dozen, a "Bad man from Bodie," was universally recognized to be a particularly unpleasant individual. Few gold towns of the West today so aptly typify the life and times of the mining frontier.

After the decline of the California Mother Lode in the Fifties, disappointed prospectors crossed the Sierra in search of "color" on the east slope. Although the first strike at Bodie was in 1859, mining activity was restricted for some time, due in part to the difficulties of transporting supplies



A street in Bodie, California, a ghost town far from civilization or a paved road. The buildings of this former gold camp are unusually well preserved because of the dry, desert air.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

and equipment over mountains and desert. In the middle Seventies a mineralized zone "Bigger than the Comstock," two and one-half miles in length and nearly one mile in width, was discovered which precipitated the boom. From a few shacks the town rapidly grew to 10,000 or more persons, with the usual assortment of gambling dens, breweries, saloons, and the nightly shootings, stabbings and brawls, from which it received the title of "Shooters Town." While the boom lasted some thirty companies produced \$400,000 of bullion per month; the Standard mine yielded nearly \$15,000,000 over a twenty-five year period.

The quartz mines began to peter out by the middle Eighties, but mining continued intermittently up to World War II. The total output of the Bodie mines has been estimated at \$70,000,000. Since the war the town has been deserted.

#### Condition of Site

Today Bodie is a true ghost town situated in high desert country near Mono Lake. Within a few miles are mountain peaks of 10,000 feet elevation. Across the treeless bleak expanse of lake and desert, only fifteen miles away rises the sheer wall of the Sierra Nevada. A visitor to Bodie in 1865 gave the following description:

...surmounted by a range of reddish-colored cliffs, very rough, jagged and picturesque; a capital looking place for a den of robbers or a gold mine. This was the famous Bodie Bluff. The entire hill as well as the surrounding country, is destitute of vegetation, with the exception of sage-

brush and bunch grass--presenting  
even to the eye of the traveler...  
a wonderfully refreshing picture  
of desolation.<sup>1</sup>

From a distance, Bodie seems to be a small village, with buildings lining the streets. There are probably well over one hundred dwellings, almost all of wood, weathered a dust-brown color. But only the dust rising behind an occasional tourist's car disturbs the serenity. The California State Division of Beaches and Parks hopes to acquire Bodie as a State Historical Monument.

Site Documentation: Ella M. Cain, The Story of Bodie (San Francisco, 1956); Muriel W. Wolle, The Bonanza Trail (Bloomington, 1955), 130-134.

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<sup>1</sup>Wolle, Bonanza Trail, 131

## COLOMA

Location: El Dorado County, California

Ownership: State of California

### Historical Significance

In the year 1849 Argonauts from the ends of the earth converged on California in a frenzied search for gold that is generally held to be the greatest of all mining rushes. The discovery of gold at Coloma in 1848 touched off the great gold rush of the following year; it was responsible for the establishment of California as a state only two years later; it created one of the epic figures of the American frontier; the "Forty-niner," and, with succeeding discoveries, it helped stimulate the great surge of the American population westward. The discovery at Coloma was one of the historic milestones of Westward Expansion, an event which decisively changed the course of American history.

Sites other than Coloma must of course be included in the gold rush story, repeated many times in many places throughout the West, and many other towns produced far more gold. But Coloma was the beginning. The movement of people to California and Oregon prior to 1849 was scarcely more than a trickle compared to the rush of the Forty-niners, one of the great migrations of history. Certainly any list of the most significant events of Westward Expansion must include the discovery of gold at Coloma.



The James Marshall statue at Coloma. Marshall points to the site of his discovery, one of the most consequential events of Western history.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

John Sutter, the great land baron and master of Sutter's Fort, was responsible for the discovery at Coloma. Seeking a permanent supply of lumber for his thriving settlement of New Helvetia, Sutter had sent James Marshall to construct a sawmill on the American River, some forty miles distant. On January 24, 1848, Marshall was inspecting the tailrace of the nearly completed mill when he saw something glittering beneath the shallow surface of the water. Tests proved it to be gold.

Sutter realized the disastrous effect which a gold strike would have upon his labor force and attempted to keep the news secret. But in May the Mormon merchant Sam Brannan promenaded the streets of San Francisco holding high a glistening quinine bottle of gold dust and shouting "Gold! gold! gold from the American River." Within a few days San Francisco was deserted, offices closed and the newspaper suspended, as the townspeople raced for the diggings. The other California cities soon joined the stampede and by fall two-thirds of Oregon's able-bodied men had departed. Although Sutter profited temporarily from increased trade at his fort, which became an important objective for overland pioneers, his empire at New Helvetia collapsed as his workmen joined the quest for gold.

Gradually the excitement spread to the East and to Europe. When President Polk in his December message to Congress declared, "The accounts of the abundance of gold in that [California] territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the

authentic reports of officers in the public service...."<sup>1</sup> the country--the whole world--went mad. The gold rush of the Fortyniners had begun. Within a month sixty leaky ships packed with Argonauts had left Atlantic ports; by spring 12,000 wagons with 40,000 men were reported en route to the California diggings by way of the Oregon Trail. In 1848 there were but a few thousand Americans in all of California, in 1849 the population jumped to 100,000; the following year California was admitted as a state. "Gold, without any question," declares Caughey, "has influenced the state's history more than any other single factor."<sup>2</sup>

#### Condition of Site

The town of Coloma, which grew up around Sutter's Mill, was the first white settlement in the Sierra Nevada foothills. It was the first strike, and it became the distributing center from which other camps were founded to the north, east and south, but like many other placer camps, it died quickly. Today only a cluster of dilapidated buildings and two churches remain, and the town is inhabited principally by tourists. Although the saw-mill had fallen into ruin within a few years, the site was an object of considerable interest even then, with pieces of the mill

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<sup>1</sup>Caughey, Gold is the Cornerstone, 42.

<sup>2</sup>Caughey, California, 255.

being made into souvenirs. As early as 1854, a Coloma editor with an obvious feeling for history wrote of the mill site:<sup>3</sup>

As time progresses, this spot will become more attractive, and consequently numerous visitors will congregate here, to examine the place where gold was first discovered, and to take a look at the Mill. Who will dispute its claims to being classic ground?

An heroic statue of James Marshall, in rough miner's garb, pointing to the spot where gold was discovered, was erected by the State of California in 1890, about one-half mile from the mill site. In 1924 low water in the river revealed the foundation timbers of the original mill; an excavation at that time uncovered a considerable amount of artifacts. The present stone monument, of smooth-worn river rocks and concrete, eighteen feet high, was erected at that time. In 1947 an archeological investigation, sponsored by the University of California, the California State Park Commission and the National Park Service, established the dimensions and structural details of the mill and produced several hundred artifacts. The gold discovery site, the Marshall monument and cabin, a Chinese bank and store and several other structures are included in the State Historical Monument.

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<sup>3</sup>From Coloma Empire County Argus, May 13, 1854, in Neasham, "Sutter's Sawmill," 39.

Site Documentation: John Walton Caughey, California,  
2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, H. J., 1933), 238-56 and Gold Is The  
Cornerstone (Berkeley, 1948), Chapters I-X; Aubrey Neasham,  
"Sutter's Sawmill," National Park Service typescript (San Francisco,  
1947).

## COLUMBIA

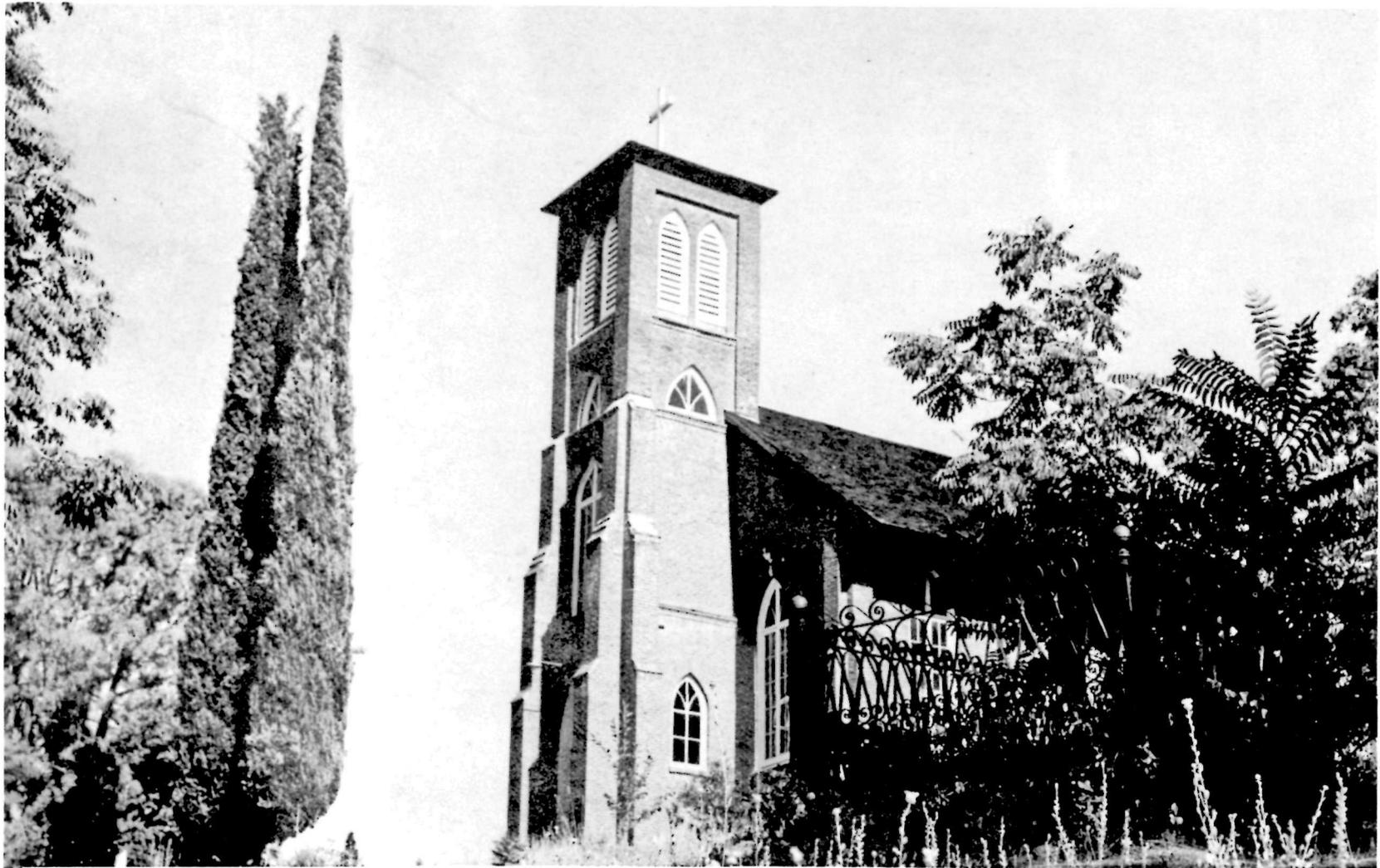
Location: Tuolumne County, California

Ownership: Partly private, partly State of California

### Historical Significance

A fortunate set of circumstances have combined to make of Columbia, the "Gem of the Southern Mines," the architectural showplace and the best preserved mining camp of the California Mother Lode. Excellent brick-making clays locally available enabled the early residents to build permanent structures. Because the town was never abandoned, the buildings were continuously occupied and maintained; because it never experienced the growth which obliterated historic structures in other mining towns a considerable number of original buildings have survived. It was recently created a State Historical Monument and an extensive restoration and rehabilitation program is now being carried out. Columbia today probably has more ancient and fewer modern buildings than any town in the Mother Lode. It is perhaps the best place to obtain a vivid impression of life in the first and most fabulous of all the gold rushes, the one to the California Mother Lode, a movement of enormous significance to Westward Expansion.

The strike at Columbia was made comparatively late, in 1850, by Mexicans who were soon driven from their claims by Americans. The site proved phenomenally productive, and within a few weeks several thousand miners had taken up claims. The placers, although rich, were dry diggings, and production did not



St. Anne's Catholic church at Columbia, California. A handsome example of gold country architecture, fronted by tall Italian cypresses. The church contains unusually fine altar murals, a work of love by the sign-painter son of Columbia's hotelkeeper, and ornamentation covered with gold leaf from the mines.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

reach its peak until after 1852 when ditch companies constructed miles of flumes and canals to bring water to the mines; one aqueduct wound sixty miles through the mountains to Columbia.

By 1853 Columbia had become the third largest city in California, with a population, some say, of more than 10,000, and was known as the "Gem of the Southern Mines," because of its position as the wealthiest and largest mining camp in the southern Mother Lode. The Columbia gold district is believed to have yielded about \$90,000,000. A great fire in 1854 destroyed a large part of the town, much of which consisted of flimsy frame shacks. In the rebuilding, a considerable amount of brick was used, and many of these structures survived a second great fire in 1857, which wiped out all frame structures in an area of thirteen square blocks; the town was saved by opening the water supply ditches and flooding the streets.

Mining and business were on the decline by 1860, and most of the miners and their followers drifted away. But unlike the majority of such camps, Columbia never was completely deserted and its population has remained at about five hundred through the years.

#### Condition of Site

Although containing a substantial number of private residences and businesses today, many of which are of more modern construction, Columbia gives an impression of quiet, dreamy languor, unshaken by the busy clatter of the tourists. Most of the historic section of the town and surrounding area is included

within the boundaries of the State Historical Monument, and these shaded streets are lined with buildings which date to the period when Columbia was a busy gold rush camp. On the fringes are the ruins of old fandango halls and Chinese stores. Surrounding the town are the naked rocks and weed-grown pits and hummocks where monitors washed away the earth.

The Park folder lists thirty-nine important surviving structures, mostly stores, saloons, firehouses, churches and residences, of which some are still privately owned. Many of these structures have been restored and some commercial establishments cater to the tourist trade. The State Park Commission hopes eventually to acquire the remaining private holdings. The intention of the State is not to relegate Columbia to the status of a ghost town, but to encourage such civic activities as will perpetuate the living town and retain the historic atmosphere.

Site Documentation: Rodman Paul, California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West (Cambridge, 1947); Elizabeth G. Potter, "Columbia, Gem of the Southern Mines," in California Historical Society Quarterly, XXIV (September, 1945); Muriel W. Wolle, The Bonanza Trail (Bloomington, 1955), 122-128.

## NEW ALMADEN

Location: Santa Clara County, California

Ownership: In private ownership

### Historical Significance

At New Almaden, a few miles south of San Jose, was discovered the first quicksilver deposit on the North American continent. The mines developed there constitute one of the four great sources of mercury in world history, and the largest of these mines--the New Almaden--is the oldest mine in the State. It has yielded metal of greater total value than any mine in California, producing almost one-third of the entire production of mercury in the United States. During the boom days of the Mother Lode and the Comstock Lode, more than 60% of the quicksilver which was essential to the mining process came from New Almaden.

The original discovery of the bright-red, eye-catching mineral known as cinnabar was probably made long before the white man first visited California. According to legend, the Santa Clara Valley Indians came to a "red cave" from which they obtained vermilion to paint their bodies. In 1824 a Mexican came upon the ore deposit, believed it to be silver, rather than quicksilver, and made an unsuccessful attempt to extract the metal; but in 1845 a Mexican army officer, Andreas Castillero, proved the ore contained mercury. This confirmed the first discovery of quicksilver ore on the North American continent.



The mines at New Almaden, California, constitute one of the four greatest sources of quicksilver in world history. A number of residences of the miners, such as the two in this photograph, still stand at New Almaden, although mining operations have largely ceased.

N. P. S. photograph, 1959

Capital finally was obtained from an English firm for the development of the mine, given the name New Almaden after the world's greatest quicksilver mine in Spain. The discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848 and the resultant exploitation of the vast gold deposits of the Mother Lode enormously expanded the demand for quicksilver. With the mining techniques then employed, quicksilver, which has the property of amalgamating with gold and silver, was essential for the extraction of gold. For the early placer mining, using pan or cradle, sluice box or Long Tom, mercury was thrown on the riffle bars or cleats to amalgamate with the small particles of floating gold. In the quartz mining which followed the depletion of the placer deposits, the powdered ore was mixed with mercury and water and the metal separated by gravity process.

As the Forty-niners established more and more camps along the Sierra foothills, long pack mule trains loaded with heavy flasks of mercury were driven from New Almaden to waiting ships at San Francisco Bay. In 1850 more than 7,000 flasks (a flask contained 76 pounds) of quicksilver were produced, this was increased to nearly 30,000 flasks in 1851. When the Comstock Lode was discovered in 1859, it too was dependent upon New Almaden for much of its quicksilver needs. Although the production of New Almaden did not equal that of the Almaden mine in Spain, it outranked other great world producers such as the Idria in Austria and Huancavelica in Peru.

Over the years, mine production fluctuated as new "pods" or ore pockets were discovered and exhausted, and shafts up to half a mile in depth were sunk. In 1927 no production was recorded for the first time since 1849, but the mine was re-activated during World War II. Although it is today inactive, with many of its shafts and adits caved in and the machinery removed, the U. S. Geological Survey suggests that there are still untapped ore bodies in Mine Hill. However the twin obstacles to most modern mining operations--low prices and high mining costs--seem likely to prevent any further operations at New Almaden.

#### Condition of Site

There are numerous remains today in the former mining town of New Almaden. On Mine Hill where nearly 2,000 Mexican workers and their families lived, along with a colony of Cornish miners trained at the Almaden mine in Spain, a few of the original wood and adobe structures are still standing, along with office buildings, mine structures, and old furnace buildings. A number of residences of the miners are located along the main street of the town. The palatial "Casa Grande," formerly occupied by the mine superintendent, is now a clubhouse.

Site Documentation: Edgar H. Bailey, "The New Almaden Quicksilver Mines," in Geologic Guidebook of the San Francisco Bay Counties, Bulletin 154 (San Francisco, 1951), 263-270; Donald C. Brown, "The New Almaden Quicksilver Mines, 1824-1890," unpublished M. A. thesis, San Jose State College, 1958; Henry W. Splitter, "Quicksilver at New Almaden," in Pacific Historical Review, XXVI (February, 1957)

## SAN FRANCISCO OLD MINT

Location: Fifth and Mission Streets

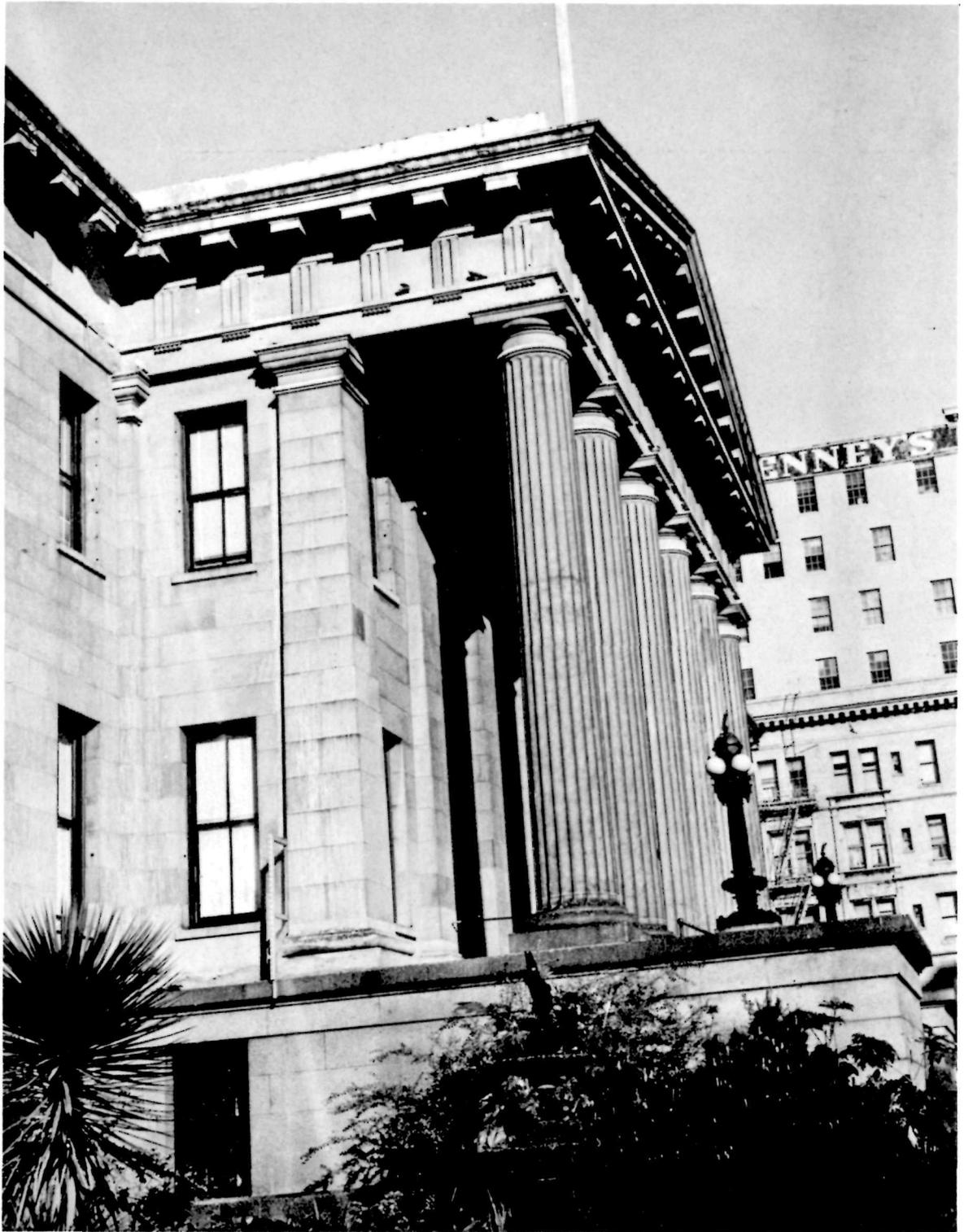
Ownership: U. S. Government

### Historical Significance

The Old Mint in San Francisco is intimately associated with and was an integral part of the history of the mining frontier in the Far West. It was during this period the principal mint in the United States, and to its receiving rooms for coinage went most of the gold and silver produced by the great mining districts of the West. Additionally its architecture is outstanding and the building is generally held to be one of the finest examples of nineteenth century Federal architecture in the United States.

As a result of the enormous gold bullion production of the California Mother Lode beginning in 1849, a branch United States Mint (a subsidiary of the Philadelphia Mint) was established in San Francisco in 1854. The flood of silver from the Comstock Lode in the late 1850's and early Sixties swamped the branch mint's facilities and in 1869 construction of a new mint (the present "Old Mint") was begun. When completed in 1874, at a cost of more than \$2,000,000, the massive size and elaborate interior design made it an outstanding building of its time.

The new San Francisco mint was placed on an independent basis and it shortly became the principal mint in the country. It was the main Federal depot for the gold and silver produced in the western United States, surpassing the output of other mints



The Old Mint, San Francisco, built in the classic tradition of the mid-nineteenth century. During the period of the mining frontier the San Francisco mint was the principal mint of the United States and to it for coinage went most of the gold and silver bullion produced in the West.

N. P. S. photograph, 1959

at Philadelphia, New Orleans and Carson City. In 1877 more than \$50,000,000 worth of coins were produced, and in 1934 one-third of the entire gold reserve of the nation was housed in the San Francisco Mint. Minting operations were continued until 1937 when it was replaced by a new mint building.

A dramatic episode in the career of the Old Mint occurred during the earthquake and fire of 1906. Standing in the heart of the devastated area, it was surrounded by flames but, thanks to its sturdy construction, an independent water supply and the heroic efforts of employees and soldiers, the building was saved with little damage. The gold on hand--about \$200,000,000--did much to stimulate the economy of the city after the great crisis. It is today one of the few structures in downtown San Francisco which survived the 1906 disaster.

The Old Mint was constructed in the classic, public building tradition of the mid-nineteenth century. It was the work of the noted architect, A. B. Mullet, and has been classed by Dr. Richard Howland, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation "one of the finest examples of nineteenth century Federal architecture in the West." Architecturally it ranks with such structures as the Old Patent Office and the Treasury Building in Washington, D. C., as among the most impressive and dignified examples of Federal Government buildings of the nineteenth century.

### Condition of Site

Although some damage to the exterior stonework has taken place over the years, the building is undoubtedly as sound as the day it was completed. It is two stories high, above a raised basement, 220 feet by 160 feet, enclosing a courtyard (now covered). The foundations are of concrete, five feet thick; the walls are of brick, three feet thick, faced with one foot of granite at the basement level and with one foot of sandstone at the upper stories.

After construction of the new mint building in San Francisco, the Old Mint was in 1939 remodeled for government office quarters. At present the basement is occupied by the Western Museum Laboratory of the National Park Service. The rest of the building is unoccupied. The building has been the cause recently of considerable controversy. It was declared surplus by the General Services Administration, and recommended for disposal. The Mayor and Board of Supervisors of the City of San Francisco have asked that the building be sold for demolition and private development of the land, in order that the property be placed on the city tax rolls. In 1956 the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments declared it to be of national significance. In early 1959, at the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, a public meeting was held in San Francisco, presided over by the Director of the National Park Service, to determine the opinion of the general public on the question. The future of the building now will be determined by the Secretary of the Interior.

Site Documentation: A History of Public Buildings

Under the Control of the Treasury Department (Washington, 1901);

Report on Production of Precious Metals (Washington, 1880);

John A. Hussey, "Old United States Mint Building," National Park Service typescript (San Francisco, 1956).

## VIRGINIA CITY

Location: Storey County, Nevada

Ownership: In private ownership

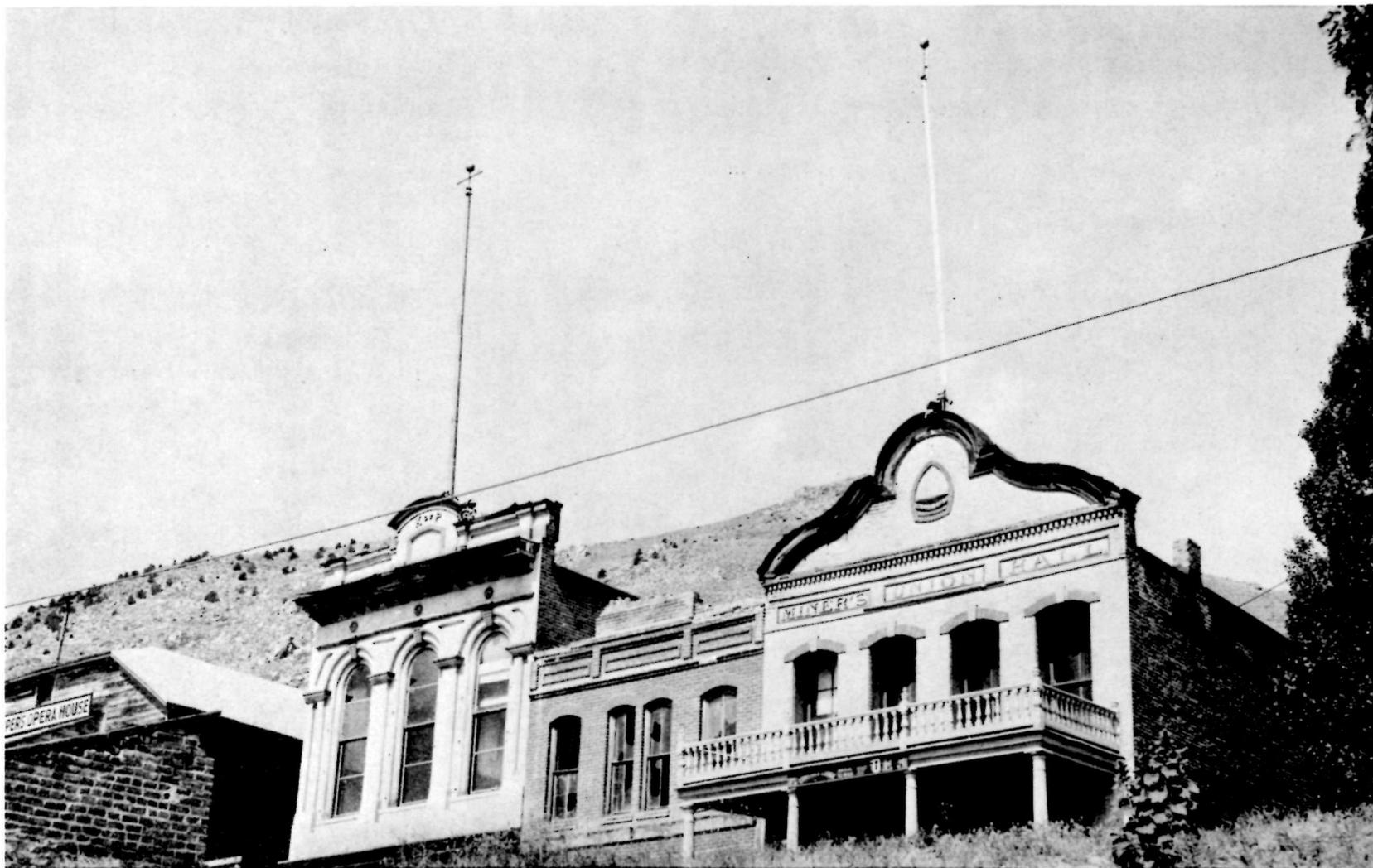
### Historical Significance

Virginia City is probably unique among all surviving mining towns. In its feverish heyday, Virginia City became the prototype for all boom towns of the mining frontier, and for a time seemed likely to achieve its boast of becoming the most cosmopolitan city on the Pacific Coast. It was the only city on the Comstock Lode, that incredibly rich vein of silver whose wealth had international consequences, and life in Virginia City reflected the dazzling wealth of the mines and the frenzied search for still another Big Bonanza. And while most mining camps have turned into ghost towns or have been overwhelmed by modern construction, life in Virginia City today, thanks to Nevada's gambling laws, retains much of its original flavor.

In the western Nevada desert country the Washoe Mountains extend eastward into the Great Basin from the Sierra Nevada. About two thousand feet below the summit of Mount Davidson lay a great vein of decomposed quartz, extending for nearly five miles and with only a few surface outcroppings. One of these outcroppings was discovered by prospectors in 1859, "the most dramatic mining discovery in America's history, for the vein was the fabulous Comstock Lode, which was destined to yield \$300,000,000 in gold and silver during the next twenty years."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Billington, The Far Western Frontier, 251.



A group of deserted buildings along "B" Street in Virginia City, Nevada. On the left, the Piper Opera House, where performers received solid silver bricks from appreciative audiences. Also shown are the Knights of Pythias building and the Miner's Union Hall.

Although the original discovery, later the Ophir Mine, was initially disappointing because of the troublesome "black stuff" which clogged the cleats of the cradle, an assay showed it to be three-fourths pure silver. The rush to the Washoe from California was immediate, Virginia City was laid out in the fall of 1859, and by early 1860 some 20,000 hopefuls had arrived.

Unlike the placer districts which were easily mined by the inexperienced with few tools, the Comstock minerals were locked in quartz veins which required expensive machinery to extract. This helped create the unique climate of Virginia City. Unable to mine, men turned instead to speculation; staking claims, organizing mining companies, floating stocks, these were the popular activities. Every miner was a potential millionaire, although few had sufficient cash to pay his grocery bill. In the first season thirty-seven companies were organized with stock values exceeding \$30,000,000, and in 1861 forty-nine more were incorporated. Yet fewer than a dozen of some 3,000 mines staked out were profitably worked.

But as capital flowed in, as roads were laid out over the Sierra from California, and as machinery to construct quartz mills was hauled in, Virginia City boomed as did few other mining camps. Within three years ore was being processed at eighty mills. Out of the sagebrush hills rose a desert metropolis, complete with gas and sewer pipes. The newly rich Bonanza Kings of the Comstock constructed pretentious mansions, and as the steadily deepening shafts struck richer and richer veins, theaters, restaurants and saloons to rival those of San Francisco were constructed by the evermore optimistic

citizenry. But the real wealth of the Comstock had not yet been tapped.

Testing a theory that deep in the earth the Comstock Lode grew wide and deep, the "Big Four" silver kings, Fair, Mackay, Flood and O'Brein, who owned the Consolidated Virginia and California mines, in 1873 began driving a shaft into the rock of Mount Davidson. At 1,167 feet they struck the "Big Bonanza," a lode of gold and silver fifty-four feet wide, "the richest find in the history of mining."<sup>2</sup> The impetus to prospecting, stock speculation and business expansion dwarfed all that had gone before. But even the fabulous wealth of the Comstock Lode played out eventually. In 1775, at the peak of the boom, Comstock stocks were valued at \$300,000,000; within five years, in 1880, they were worth but \$7,000,000.

The chief characteristic of Virginia City life was speculation. San Francisco, which also prospered from the Comstock, organized a stock exchange in 1862. With no restrictions on banking or the issuance of stocks, and as the Comstock vein unpredictably widened or played out, stocks soared and plummeted, fortunes were made and lost, and in the struggle for power among financial giants the Bank of California was only one of many casualties. The character of this remarkable era in Virginia City has been immortalized in Twain's Roughing It.

The influence of the Comstock Lode was enormous. Wealth was poured into San Francisco and fortunes based on the Comstock were prominent in subsequent chapters of California's and the nation's

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<sup>2</sup>Billington, Westward Expansion, 626.

history. The great influx of silver, which prompted the government to establish a branch mint at Carson City, altered the ratio of gold and silver and probably caused European nations to demonitize silver. Nevada became a Territory in 1861 and a state in 1864. Freighting was greatly stimulated and the construction and location of the first transcontinental railroad was affected. Some of the most important technological achievements of the mining era were made on the Comstock: Deidesheimer introduced the square-set system of timbering, the Washoe Process for reducing ores was devised and Sutro successfully constructed his 20,000 foot tunnel to drain the mines.

#### Condition of Site

Virginia City possesses to a considerable degree the atmosphere and appearance of its boom period. The visitor approaches by a new highway which climbs and twists from the Carson River Valley, until Virginia City suddenly appears, clinging to the side of Mount Davidson. The spire of St. Mary's in the Mountain rises above the substantial scattering of buildings interspersed with yellowing mine dumps and the ruins of mine works.

Both high above and far below "C" Street are parallel streets; above are the fine (but unpainted and often crumbling) mansions of the past, a few of which still retain their decorative urns and finials. Main Street is "C" Street, lined with two- and three-story brick structures and rough board sidewalks. These buildings were once ornate houses of chance, saloons and restaurants; today many have retained their original function, making lurid bids to attract the throngs of visitors with window displays of

faded photographs, chunks of Comstock ore and similar curios.

A considerable number of the homes, saloons and public buildings have survived, so many that the list would be a very long one. Many are occupied, principally as tourist attractions, others, such as the Piper Opera House are deserted, a few are museums. Interest in Virginia City is considerable, in part due to the publicity work of its leading citizen, Lucius Beebe, and his newspaper, The Territorial Enterprise.

Site Documentation: De Quille, Dan, The Big Bonanza: An Authentic Account of the Discovery, History, and Working of the World-Renowned Comstock Lode of Nevada (San Francisco, 1876); Lillard Richard G., Desert Challenge: An Interpretation of Nevada (New York), 1942); Smith, Grant H., The History of the Comstock Lode, 1850-1920 (Reno, 1943); Twain, Mark, Roughing It (Hartford, 1871).

## TOMBSTONE

Location: Cochise County, Arizona

Ownership: In private ownership

### Historical Significance

One of several important mining camps that sprang up over the rich mineral deposits of Arizona, Tombstone was probably the most celebrated and widely known boom town on the southwestern mining frontier. Site of numerous rich silver mines, among them the Graveyard, Tough Nut, Goodenough, East Side, and West Side, it became one of the chief mining centers of Arizona in the 1870's and 1880's. Its fame rested, too, on an unrivaled reputation for lawlessness and violence that made it a scene of frequent gunplay between famous frontier characters. Today it is one of the best preserved specimens of the western mining town.

Tombstone grew up around the mining claim of Ed Schieffelin, who discovered a wealthy silver mine on the site in 1877. The mineral riches of the locality quickly attracted hundreds of miners, gamblers, gunmen, and other professional people. By 1881 Tombstone was a booming town of 7,000 people. In the early 1880's, when Wyatt Earp served as deputy United States Marshal in Tombstone, the famous Earp-Clanton feud made the town a battleground of warring factions. The feud culminated in the gunfight at the O K Corral. Thereafter, John Slaughter became Sheriff and made progress in cleaning up Tombstone. With the discovery of water in the mining shafts, the town began to decline



The main street of Tombstone, Arizona, in the Eighties a rip-roaring, lawless silver camp with 110 liquor licenses, and 14 gambling halls that never closed. The Bird Cage Theatre, shown at left, was opened within a few weeks of the notable gunfight at nearby O K Corral, in which the Earp brothers and Doc Holliday decisively reduced the cowboy population of Arizona territory.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

as a mining center, and by 1890 it was well on its way to oblivion. The Phelps Dodge Company took over the mining properties in 1914 and still extracts some ore from the shafts.

#### Condition of Site

With the slogan "The town too tough to die," Tombstone has attempted to make a comeback as a tourist attraction. Except for the addition of neon signs and paved streets, it retains much of its frontier flavor and, under the auspices of the Tombstone Restoration Commission, is trying to recapture even more. Many buildings dating from Territorial days are still standing. Among the more important are the Bird Cage Theatre, the Tombstone City Hall, the Cochise County Courthouse, Schieffelin Hall, the office of the Tombstone Epitaph, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Other buildings famous in the early days now house local businesses. The site of the O K Corral, where the Earp-Clanton feud reached a climax, is marked, and plans are under way for restoring it to its appearance of 1881. Boot Hill Cemetery is another attraction, although the crosses seem to be periodically refurbished for the tourist trade. The Bird Cage Theatre houses a museum containing relics of Tombstone's early days.

Although historically significant in its own right, Tombstone's claim to national recognition lies in the survival, in good condition, of most of its early buildings. Not only do they individually typify the architecture of other mining camps, but collectively, together with abandoned mine works and ore dumps outside of town, they enable one to recreate the total picture

of towns elsewhere on the mining frontier. (Tombstone was considered by the Advisory Board, with postponed action.)

Site Documentation: Walter Nobel Burns, Tombstone: an Iliad of the Southwest (New York, 1929); John M. Myers, The Last Chance: Tombstone's Early Years (New York, 1850); L. D. Walters, Tombstone's Yesterdays (Tucson, 1928); Aubrey Neasham, Special Report on the Proposed National Historic Site of Tombstone, Arizona (Region Three, National Park Service, 1941).

## CENTRAL CITY

Location: Gilpin County, Colorado

Ownership: Opera House, Mines Hotel and First National Bank owned by Central City Opera House Association. Other buildings in private ownership.

### Historical Significance

Central City was the center of the first great mining boom in Colorado. The Pike's Peak rush of 1859 was one of the largest migrations of the mining frontier, involving some 100,000 miners, but it also proved one of the greatest fiascoes. However, a wandering prospector, John Gregory, did find gold at Gregory Gulch, along which the town of Central City meanders, and the real boom to the Pike's Peak country began. Within a short time after the discovery that place was flooded with thousands of gold seekers. Other camps such as Blackhawk, Gregory Point, Mountain City, Missouri City and Nevadaville sprang up in the immediate vicinity, but Central City gradually outstripped these other camps and absorbed several of them.

Although the placer beds in the vicinity were soon depleted, Central City maintained a fairly stable population for two decades. In 1873 it ranked next to Denver in size and was the cradle of much of Colorado's mining law. The gold boom of the Sixties was followed by the silver boom of the 1870's and 1880's. During the 1890's gold still continued to be mined in the region, and Central City was not so adversely affected by the panic of 1893



The Opera House in Central City, Colorado. Erected in 1878 by popular subscription of the townspeople, it has been restored by the University of Denver. Each summer, during festival time, the Central City Opera House Association presents notable operatic and dramatic works in the historic theater.

N. P. S. photograph, 1955

and the depression of the silver market as other Colorado mining towns. By 1919 production at Central City had, for practical purposes, ended.

Several persons who were later to become prominent figures in the political and financial worlds came from Gregory Gulch. These included Henry M. Teller and Jerome B. Chaffee, first United States Senators from Colorado. Teller served in Congress for twenty years and later became the Secretary of the Interior in the cabinet of President Chester B. Arthur. Another was Henry R. Walcott, later Senator and long a Republican leader in Colorado; George Pullman, who became the "sleeping car king," and W. A. Clark who later went to Montana where he became one of the famed copper kings of the United States. James B. Belford later became a Representative in the United States Congress where he helped shape the mining laws of the country.

Central City became the cultural center for the region. During the 1870's and 1880's the Opera House drew to its stage the finest talent which the country afforded. Among those actors and actresses who appeared there were Emma Abbot, Lydom Janauschek, Edwin Booth and Joseph Jefferson.

#### Condition of Site

Central City is the best preserved of the old mining towns of Colorado and for that reason is perhaps the best known. Although a fire in 1874 destroyed Central City by reducing it to only six buildings, the town later rebuilt more solidly. It now contains a number of those more substantial buildings which were

constructed after the fire. These include: the St. James Methodist Church, begun in 1864 and completed in July of 1872; the restored Teller House, which President Grant visited in 1873; the restored Opera House which was completed in 1878 and which was the center of Central City's cultural activities; the Mines Hotel, built in 1874; the old Armory erected in 1875, which was occupied by the Belvidere Theatre; the St. Paul's Episcopal Church, constructed in 1874 and consecrated in 1876.

Denver University has been largely instrumental in preserving and restoring a number of the historic buildings. During the festival each year plays are given in the Opera House which draw critics and audiences from all parts of the country. The town still retains much of the atmosphere of the old mining town.

Site Documentation: Muriel S. Wolle, Stampede to Timberline (Denver, 1949), 10-40; Caroline Bancroft, Historic Central City (Denver, 1953); Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago, 1889), Four volumes, I, 186-205.

## CRIPPLE CREEK

Location: Teller County, Colorado

Ownership: The Railroad Station is now a municipally owned museum. All other buildings are privately owned.

### Historical Significance

In the declining years of the Colorado silver boom, one of the world's largest gold fields was discovered along Cripple Creek, near Pike's Peak. Among all the rich gold strikes of the mining era, Cripple Creek ranks near the top, for the total amount of gold recovered and for the number of people involved in the boom. It is estimated that nearly \$400,000,000 in gold has been mined in the Cripple Creek district since 1891 and that at its peak the population of the district reached 50,000 and was served by five railroads. No picture of the frenzied activity at this unbelievably rich camp can be conveyed, although the statistics are impressive--at its height Cripple Creek contained 41 assay offices, 46 brokerage houses, 14 newspapers and 70 saloons.

The Cripple Creek discovery was made in 1891 by a cowhand turned prospector. Development of the placer deposits was comparatively slow, until the following year when the great lodes were tapped and Cripple Creek suddenly had a population of 4,000, partly resulting from the collapse of the silver boom in that year which sent many silver miners into the gold fields. At Cripple Creek it was discovered that the deeper the mines were developed the richer the veins became, and both population and gold production



A modern view of Cripple Creek, Colorado, center of one of the world's great gold and silver producing districts. At the peak of the boom, in the 1890's, Cripple Creek had a population of 18,000, and the district has produced some \$400,000,000.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

steadily increased. The Cripple Creek district eventually comprised a number of satellite gold camps, as well as the town of Cripple Creek. In 1899 nearly \$20,000,000 was produced by some 475 mines.

Unlike most mining districts, Cripple Creek continued to prosper over the years. The treasure continued to pour forth for almost two decades, with declines checked by new strikes. Following World War I, a long period of stagnation ensued, but in the Thirties production rose again, to over \$5,000,000 yearly.

#### Condition of Site

In 1906 an overturned stove started a fire which destroyed most of the original town structures. As a result comparatively few buildings from the early boom period remain. The railroads have abandoned the town and the old depot now serves as a municipal museum. At the Imperial Hotel plays of the 1890's are produced each summer. All that remains of a sizable red light district is the "Old Homestead," a former house of pleasure now seeking redemption as a museum.

Site Documentation: Muriel S. Wolle, Stampede to Timberline (Denver, 1949), 450-482; American Guide Series, Ghost Towns of Colorado (New York, 1947), 95-114; Marshall Sprague, Money Mountain: The Story of Cripple Creek (Boston, 1953).

## LEADVILLE

Location: Lake County, Colorado

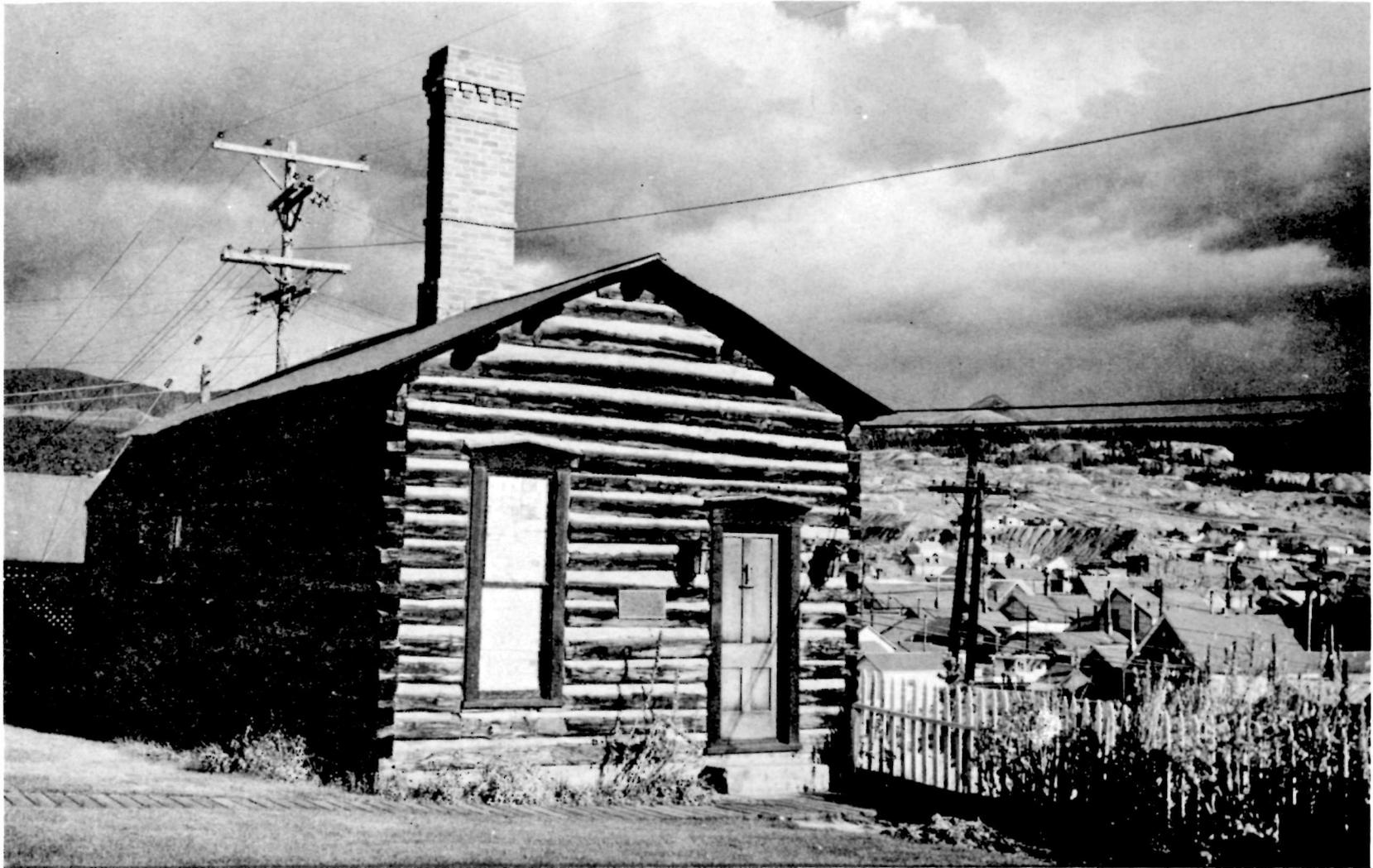
Ownership: The Healy House and Dexter Cabin are owned and administered by the State of Colorado. All other historical structures are in private ownership.

### Historical Significance

Leadville was in its day renowned as the world's greatest silver camp. It was also the center of one of the important Rocky Mountain gold rushes, and it has produced a greater number of minerals over a longer period of time of greater total value than most any other mining region in the United States. For this reason, it has maintained over the years a greater stability than most mining towns. Leadville also contains an unusually large number of structures which typify the city as it was during its heyday.

The first Leadville boom took place in the early Sixties with the discovery of rich gold placer diggings in California Gulch, but the surface deposits were quickly exhausted. The second boom, in the Seventies, ushered in the silver era, one of the most spectacular and lurid in Colorado mining annals, beginning with a series of almost incredibly rich strikes along California Gulch, deserted since the gold rush days. The silver rush began with the discovery that the red sands which had clogged the gold miner's sluices were actually carbonates of lead with a high silver content.

Almost overnight a desolate pine flat just below timber-line sprouted into a rowdy, rugged mining camp with the usual



The Dexter cabin (now a State museum) in Leadville, Colorado. It is a typical miner's cabin, built in 1879 by James B. Dexter who eventually became a rich mining magnate.

N. P. S. photograph, 1958

assortment of pine bough shelters, tent hotels, banks, grocery stores, beer gardens and mine dumps--the town of Leadville. The nabobs of Leadville were the "Carbonate Kings," and their wild extravagance and gaudy taste equalled or surpassed that of "Bonanza Kings" in other mining camps. Perhaps the best known was Horace Tabor, a Vermont stonecutter, who had unbelievable luck in making strike after strike. Duped into purchasing a "salted" mine, he ordered his men to continue digging, and within a few feet they struck a vein which netted Tabor \$3,000,000. Although finally reaching his goal, the U. S. Senate, he died in poverty.

By 1880 Leadville had a population variously estimated at from 25,000 to 40,000, and for a time all of Colorado followed the pace set by the "Magic City," as Leadville christened itself, proud of its reputation as a wide-open mining town with 100 licensed saloons and a dozen gambling houses in full blast night and day. One historian estimates that the district produced some \$136,000,000 in silver from 1879 to 1888.<sup>1</sup> But silver production soon began to decline, and the panic of 1893 sent silver prices toppling, and in the crash the silver boom ended abruptly and disastrously. However, below the carbonate strata quartz veins heavily seamed with gold were discovered and to the end of the century Leadville prospered once again as a gold camp. Since that time lead, zinc, manganese and molybdenum have been mined in the Leadville district.

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<sup>1</sup>Hall, History of the State of Colorado, II, 478-479.

### Condition of Site

Leadville, still an active town, contains a considerable number of historic structures which illustrate the once tempestuous life of the "Magic City." The surviving buildings range from honky-tonks and saloons to residences and churches. Some of the outstanding remains of the mining frontier days are: the Vendome Hotel, with its false mansard roof, built by Tabor in 1886; the Elk's Opera House, scene of many notable performances, built also by Tabor, in 1879; the Old Pioneer Bar, which boasted the title of "the toughest spot in town;" the Healy House, once a showplace of Leadville; the Dexter Cabin, a typical log cabin of the period, built in 1878-79 by James Dexter who became one of the "Carbonate Kings;" the St. George Episcopal Church; and the Tabor House, home of H.A.W. ("Haw") Tabor.

Site Documentation: Muriel S. Wolle, Stampede to Timberline (Denver, 1949), 41-71; State Historical Society of Colorado, "Healy House, State Museum and Dexter Cabin, Leadville, Colorado," (1951); Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago, 1889), Vol. I, 186-205, Vol. II, 429-479.

## VIRGINIA CITY

Location: Madison County, Montana

Ownership: In private ownership

### Historical Significance

The strike at Alder Gulch was one of the memorable episodes of mining frontier history, and Virginia City, the camp established there, became the center of the Montana gold rush. Its period of greatest significance was from about 1865 to 1875 during which it served as Territorial capitol of Montana. At its peak, Virginia City had a population of about 10,000, and produced an estimated total of \$70,000,000 in gold.

In 1863 the great Montana gold rush began, partly because the newly opened Mullan Road, a military highway between Walla Walla and Fort Benton, provided easy transportation into the Montana area. Early finds were made at Bannack, an important gold town, but the most fortunate prospectors stumbled upon one of the richest placer beds of the mining frontier--at Alder Gulch, a tributary of the Gallatin River. Virginia City became the center of a number of camps lining the Gulch--Centerville, Nevada City, Adobe, Junction, Ruby and Central City. Within the year Virginia City had a population of 4,000 and in three years more than \$30,000,000 in gold and nuggets was taken out of Alder Gulch.

Virginia City is closely associated with one of the most famous Vigilante associations of the mining era--and with



Virginia City, Montana, showing lower Wallace Street, now restored. The fabulously rich Alder Gulch is shown in the background.

N. P. S. photograph, 1951

one of the most notorious road agents. The two gold rush camps, Bannack and Virginia City, and the ninety-mile stage road between, were the areas in which the Henry Plummer gang plundered ore shipments at will and murdered scores of men. The gang was well organized, with officers and spies, and Plummer himself served as Sheriff. Driven to desperation by the incessant robberies and murders, the citizens formed a Vigilante group. Within two months twenty-four bad men had been executed, including Plummer, and a reasonable facsimile of law and order had been established.

#### Condition of Site

Present day Virginia City may be divided into sections. One part, lower Wallace Street, which is the historic section, has been restored by millionaire-rancher Charles A. Bovey. This is one of the outstanding restorations of a mining camp in the West. It has numerous false-fronted stores, wooden sidewalks and old-fashioned street lamps. The various stores are stocked with antique merchandise. Some of these structures, such as the Wells Fargo Express Office and the dressmaker's shop, contain life-size figures dressed in the fashions of the time when Virginia City had its heyday, and the barber shop, built in the 1870's, appears to be ready for business.

Among the older buildings which are built of brick and native stone are the Territorial Capitol and the building that housed the Montana Post, both of which have gothic windows set in their massive walls. At the Bale of Hay Saloon are

nickelodeons, peep shows and large clanging music boxes. Beyond the Bale of Hay Saloon stands the old stone barn which is now used as a theater. Here melodramas are presented during the summer months by the Virginia City Players, a group of students from the Montana State University. Nearby is the famous Boot Hill Cemetery where the graves of several Henry Plummer road agents may be found. The newer section of Virginia City in 1950 had a population of 323.

Site Documentation: Merrill G. Burlingame, The Montana Frontier (Helena, 1942), 86-88; Thomas J. Dinsdale, The Vigilantes of Montana (Norman, 1953); Muriel S. Wolle, The Bonanza Trail (Bloomington, 1953), 181-189.

## BUTTE

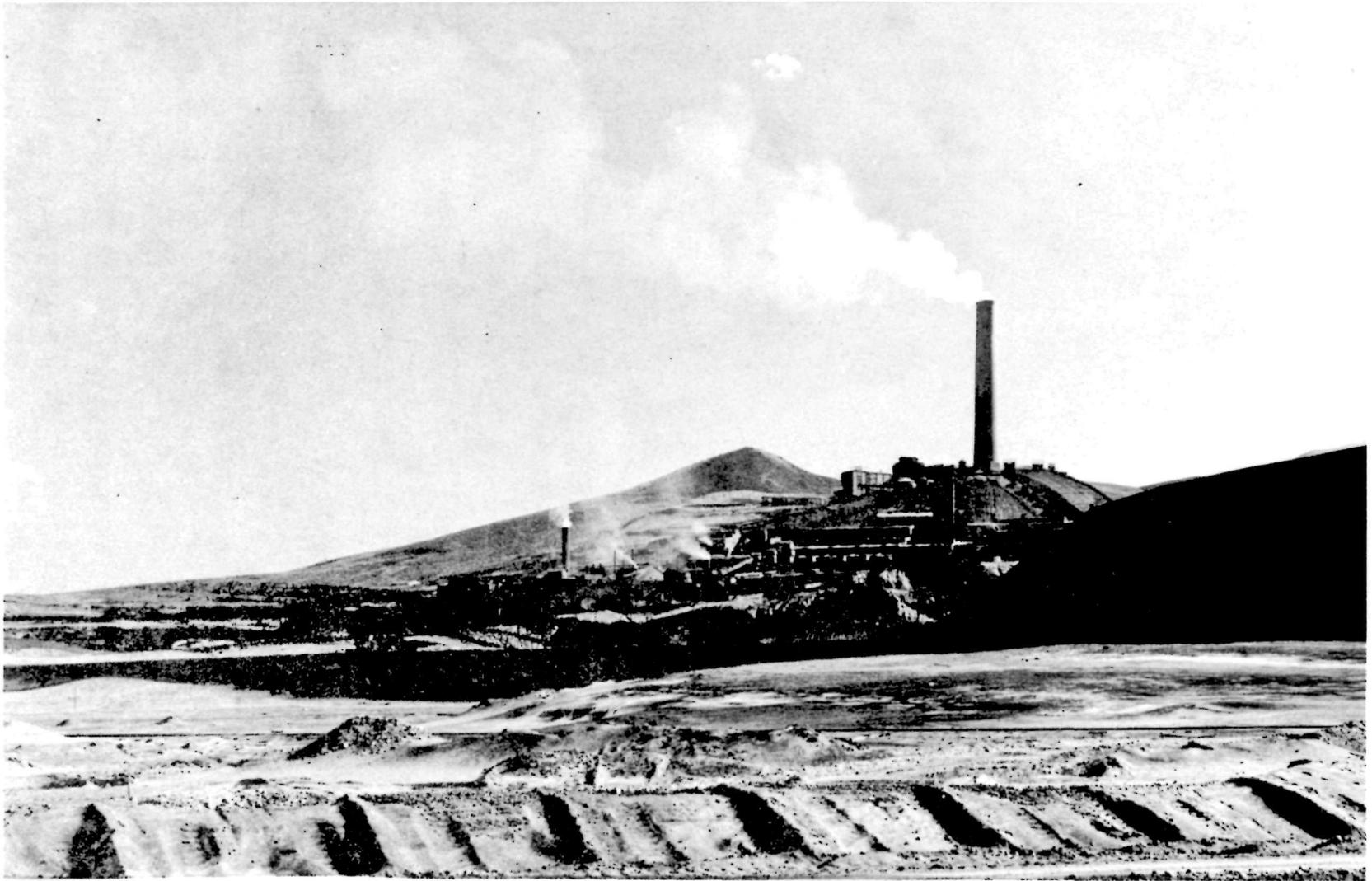
Location: Silver Bow County, Montana

Ownership: In private ownership

### Historical Significance

Butte is the center of the largest copper mining region in the world. An area less than five miles square beneath Butte has produced more than two billion dollars worth of mineral wealth since 1864. One of the most colorful chapters of Western annals was the epic struggle between powerful protagonists for control of this enormous wealth, headed by the legendary copper king, Marcus Daly, who "landed in America with nothing in his pockets save his Irish smile," who eventually controlled the world copper market, and who built much of Butte and founded Anaconda.

Mining was first begun in Butte in 1864 when miners from the Virginia City area found placer deposits in the Silver Bow Creek and began operations there; however, shortage of water forced some of the people to abandon this settlement by 1870. Rich deposits were found in 1874 and as a result miners rushed into the camp and the silver boom began. One of the miners who came to Butte at this time was Marcus Daly. While exploring for silver he struck copper, a vein fifty feet wide and of unparalleled richness. In less than twenty years Daly became the founder and the head of one of the world's most powerful monopolies, the Anaconda Copper Company.



The Anaconda Smelter near Butte, Montana, a symbol of modern mining methods, and over the years one of the major copper producing smelters of the nation.

N. P. S. photograph, 1951

The town site of Butte was laid out in 1876 and with the building of the first railroad into Butte in 1881, the great copper boom was on. By 1885 the city had a population of 14,000, and by the end of the century it had become the copper metropolis of the Americas. In addition to being the center of the famed wars between the copper kings, Marcus Daly, William A. Clark, and Frederick A. Heinze, it was also the scene of violent labor wars between labor unions and the operators.

#### Condition of Site

Butte is today, as it was during the nineteenth century, a rough-and-ready mining town, a melting pot with colonies from most of the European countries, surrounded by enormous yellow and gray ore dumps and gallows frames marking mine shafts. It has been described by Howard as "sprawling and slovenly, a bully of a city, stridently male, profane and blustering and boastful. The biggest mining camp in the world."

In 1950 the population of the city was 33,000. Settled early by the Irish, Welsh and Cornish miners, it soon acquired other nationalities, notably from the Balkan countries, and there is a Chinatown, an Italian colony and a Finnish district. Among the historic structures is the W. A. Clark house, home of the man who was elected to the U. S. Senate three times before being seated. The suburbs of Centerville, Walkerville and Meaderville contain most of Butte's mines and the homes of the miners-- weathered frame structures clinging to steep hillsides, sagging picket fences and grassless yards, the whole tenement area

pock-marked by the random surface workings and structures of the world's richest copper mines. Ore from the Butte mines goes to the giant Anaconda Copper Company smelters at Anaconda, twenty-six miles away.

Site Documentation: Joseph Kinsey Howard, Montana High Wide and Handsome (New Haven, 1943), 85-101; Merrill G. Burlingame, The Montana Frontier (Helena, 1942).

## DEADWOOD

Location: Lawrence County, South Dakota

Ownership: In private ownership. The Homestake Mining Company provides guided tours of its mine at Lead.

### Historical Significance

The Black Hills region of Dakota was the last stronghold of the mining frontier, and there the eastward advance of the mining frontier ended with the rush to the Black Hills. Tales of great gold deposits, substantiated by the Custer expedition of 1874, ended the government's last hope of preserving the Black Hills for the Indians, and in 1875 the area was thrown open to all comers who cared to risk attack by the Sioux. By the following spring Deadwood was founded, a ramshackle town catering to the uninhibited appetites of 7,000 miners.

As well as most, perhaps better than any other, Deadwood has come to typify the wide-open lawlessness of the frontier mining camp, in addition to achieving fame by possessing one of the most fabulously productive gold mines in all history. Much of Deadwood's present renown stems from the exploits of such notorious individuals as Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, Poker Alice, California Jack, and the legendary Deadwood Dick. Billington has declared that "Deadwood's place in the criminal sun was brief, but during those hectic years no other spot in the nation could



Deadwood, South Dakota, where the Wild West made its last stand. In Saloon No. 10 the discreet gunman Crooked Nose Jack McCall closed the spectacular career of frontiersman Wild Bill Hickok, who foolishly sat at a gaming table with his back to an open door. Still in fast company, Wild Bill occupies a grave adjoining that of another beloved citizen of Deadwood, Calamity Jane.

N. P. S. photograph, 1954

boast such unrestrained lawlessness as that famous mining camp."<sup>1</sup>

Some 50 mines were discovered in the vicinity of the town of Lead in 1876. In that year several miners uncovered a ledge which became the greatest mine of them all--the Homestake. In 1877 several California capitalists became interested and sent a mining expert to investigate the property. As a result George Hearst purchased the mine and the Homestake began operations. The Homestake eventually acquired more and more mines, and has become the biggest and the most profitable gold mine in the United States. Most of the \$550,000,000 which has been produced in the Black Hills since 1875 has come from the Homestake.

#### Condition of Site

Of the early mining towns in the Black Hills, Deadwood is one of the few that has survived. It owes its importance primarily to Lead, several miles distant, which is one of the great gold producing areas of the world. Lead is a city of contrasts since many of the old and new buildings are side by side. Deadwood still retains much of the atmosphere of the old mining town, and a number of the original buildings have survived. A large number of buildings which comprise the Homestake property dominate the scene. Nearby are old two- and three-story frame houses propped up on the gulch to keep them from slipping down to the water's edge.

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<sup>1</sup>Billington, Western Expansion, 632.

Site Documentation: Muriel S. Wolle, The Bonanza Trail (Bloomington, 1953), 459-470, 472-476; Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion (New York, 1949), 630-632; George W. Kingsbury, History of Dakota Territory (Chicago, 1915), Vol. I, 903-930.

## OTHER SITES CONSIDERED IN THE SURVEY

(The list which follows includes sites which are of considerable interest but which do not meet the criteria for national significance.)

### ARIZONA

Bisbee: Founded in 1877, Bisbee was the center of lucrative copper mining operations in southern Arizona and is still a copper producer.

Jerome: In addition to being an important copper mining center, Jerome is one of the most famous and picturesque mining towns of the Southwest, and today vividly recalls the atmosphere of the early boom town.

Mowry Mine: This mine, near Nogales, was one of the earliest silver mines in the Southwest to be developed by American capital. The mine was opened by Sylvester Mowry in 1859; extensive remains of the early works and equipment are still in evidence.

### CALIFORNIA

Angels Camp: Although a thriving gold camp beginning in 1848, Angels Camp today is remembered as the locale of Twain's "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." The town is annually the scene of that world-famous sporting event, the International Frog Olympics.

Chinese Camp: Named for the thousands of Chinese who mined gold in the area in the 1850's, the town was also the scene of the "Chinese War," a dispute between rival tongs, in 1856. The Chinese tree of heaven grows about many of the remaining buildings.

Copperopolis: In its day Copperopolis was the most important copper producing area in the United States. Only a few brick structures remain, along with the workings of the Copper Consolidated Mining Company.

Grass Valley: The largest city in the Mother Lode today, Grass Valley has been a great and consistent gold producer since the discovery in 1849. The Empire mine has been worked continuously since 1850; the total production of the Empire-Star combine has probably been more than \$120,000,000. Among the early buildings in Grass Valley is the home of Lola Montez, an almost legendary figure of gold rush days.

Hornitos: Founded by Mexican miners who had been "voted" out of a neighboring camp, Hornitos contains a number of structures which reflect Mexican influence more than any other town in the Mother Lode.

Mariposa: The town was once a part of the tract belonging to John C. Fremont and his office building is still in use, along with California's oldest courthouse, built in 1854. Mariposa was one of the earliest and is the southernmost town of importance in the Mother Lode.

Murphys: With quiet, tree-shaded streets and slow-paced life, Murphys, a Mother Lode town which dates to 1848, seems a page from the past. A number of brick and limestone buildings survive, including the famous Murphys Hotel, which lists among its distinguished guests U. S. Grant, Mark Twain, J. Pierpoint Morgan and Horatio Alger.

Nevada City: This gold town is important architecturally as well as being a rich mining camp. Throughout the town are brick and stone structures dating to the 1850's; the National Hotel is still one of the better Gold Country hotels after a century of service.

North Bloomfield: Nowhere in California was hydraulic mining conducted on such a gigantic scale as at North Bloomfield; monitors delivering 30,000 gallons of water a minute carved the "badlands" of the Malokoff Diggings--cliffs 600 feet high and pits which compare favorably in size with open pit iron and copper mines excavated by modern methods. Debris from the hydraulics, which choked waterways and ruined towns in the Sacramento Valley, brought about passage of the Anti-Debris Act of 1883 and ended hydraulic mining.

Placerville: First called Dry Diggings, the town was christened Hangtown in 1849 as a result of the hanging of a number of desperados. Although Placerville presents a modern face, its Main Street contains a considerable number of buildings built in the early years. Here three great figures of the era began their careers: Mark Hopkins operated a grocery; J. M. Studebaker built wheelbarrows for Hangtown's miners; and Philip Armour ran a butcher shop.

Shasta: Now a State Historical Monument, the town contains a number of brick structures, most of which are only shells. Shasta was one of several gold camps in the Trinity Mountains of northern California.

Sonora: A prosperous trading center, with modern facades covering a number of old buildings, Sonora was an early and rich Mother Lode camp, named after the Mexicans from Sonora who made the first strike. Architecturally outstanding is St. James Church, built in 1859.

Volcano: Nearly \$100,000,000 was taken from the country surrounding Volcano, both by placer and hydraulic washing. The colorful town, with its many stone buildings, is a favorite objective of Mother Lode tourists.

Weaverville Joss House: One of the few surviving examples of its kind, this Chinese joss house (now a State Historical Monument) is unusually well preserved and contains the original furnishings of the place of worship which was used by the Chinese miners.

### COLORADO

Aspen: Now a popular tourist resort, Aspen was during the Eighties and Nineties, a highly productive silver camp which in one year produced nearly \$10,000,000. The Hotel Jerome and the Wheeler Grand Opera House are among the surviving structures.

Fairplay: The gold mining center of the South Park region of Colorado during the Seventies, Fairplay is one of the better-preserved mining towns of Colorado. A restoration project is underway and several buildings from nearby towns have been moved into Fairplay and are being restored.

Georgetown: An outstanding silver producing area during the Seventies, Georgetown is today one of the most picturesque of the mining camps, containing excellent examples of Victorian architecture.

Kokomo: Now almost a ghost town, Kokomo was one of the most important towns in the Leadville district, with a population in 1881 of 10,000.

Silverton: Located in a spectacular mountain setting, Silverton is an old but still active mining center. Once an important silver town, it contains a number of original buildings, including the Imperial Hotel.

Victor: Calling itself the "Core of the Rich Cripple Creek District," Victor contained one mine, the Independence, which yielded a gross of more than \$23,000,000 between 1891 and 1915.

### IDAHO

Idaho City: The enormously rich gold deposits discovered in the Boise Basin in 1862 brought in more than 15,000 miners within two years, and Idaho City became the metropolis of the Basin. It is estimated nearly \$100,000,000 has been taken out of the district.

Pierce: The stampede to Idaho was touched off by the discovery of gold on the Clearwater in 1860, and from Pierce prospectors moved out in all directions, making a series of strikes in succeeding years.

Silver City: One of the most impressive and best preserved of the Western ghost towns, Silver City was the center of the Owyhee silver district in southwestern Idaho. The town is located in the mountains far from a paved road and contains an unusually large number of early structures.

#### MONTANA

Bannack: The site of the first gold strike in Montana, Bannack was a steady if unspectacular producer, perhaps more famous for its association with the Henry Plummer gang. Now a State monument, Bannack is an excellent example of the Western ghost town.

Elkhorn: This ghost town was never a significant producer of minerals, but because of its many surviving buildings Elkhorn possesses much of the atmosphere of an early mining camp.

Marysville: Site of one of the famous Western mines, the Drumlummon, Marysville today has streets lined with numerous false-fronted buildings which were abandoned many years ago. The town was one of the great gold-producing areas of Montana.

Wickes: Little remains of this mining camp near Helena, except for a row of abandoned coke ovens and the stacks of once-active smelters. More than \$32,000,000 in gold, lead and silver was mined here after 1877.

#### NEVADA

Carson City Mint: Constructed to meet the tremendous silver output of the Comstock Lode, the Carson City Mint, from its construction in 1870 to 1893, coined some \$50,000,000. It is now operated as a museum by the State of Nevada.

Sutro Tunnel: In an era and a region which produced astounding feats of financial sleight of hand and technological achievement, the Sutro Tunnel was an outstanding accomplishment. Despite towering obstacles--financial as well as engineering--Sutro drove his tunnel 20,000 feet through the mountains to drain hot waters from the lower levels of the Comstock.

Tonapah: This camp is a symbol of the "modern" rush, beginning in 1900, which attracted silver hunters from Alaska to South Africa. Tonapah, still active as a trading center, produced more than \$125,000,000 before its decline in the Twenties.

#### NEW MEXICO

Elizabethtown: A boom town from 1868 to about 1875, and now a ghost town, Elizabethtown was the most important gold mining center of the Sangre de Christo Mountains.

Pinos Altos Mines: A rich center of gold mining in southwestern New Mexico from 1860 to about 1900, the Pinos Altos Mines were a cause of long conflict between miners and the Apaches.

Santa Rita Copper Mines: This is the oldest active mining center in the Southwest. First exploited by the Spanish in 1800, Santa Rita has produced almost continuously since that time.

#### OREGON

Auburn: The Auburn gold fields were discovered in 1861, and Auburn became for a time a roistering mining camp and the second largest town in Oregon.

Jacksonville: California prospectors pushing north just across the Oregon line struck gold at Jacksonville in 1851. Quietly prosperous, the town contains many original buildings and, with its white houses, picket fences and sheltering trees, resembles a New England village.

#### UTAH

Bingham Canyon: Although the initial discovery was made here by Mormons in 1848, the gold and silver deposits were not worked until the Sixties. Bingham Canyon has been a large copper producer from 1893 to the present.

## WYOMING

Atlantic City: A thriving gold mining town from about 1868 to the 1890's, Atlantic City was more permanent than most mining camps, continuing to produce until the 1930's.

South Pass City: The most important mining town in Wyoming, South Pass City in 1872 was the second largest town in the Territory. About one block of the original town has survived.

## Appendix A

### SITES ALSO NOTED

The general practice of the National Survey has been to include in each theme study a group of sites under the general heading "Also Noted." These are sites which were studied, but which were found to have relatively minor importance.

In the case of the Mining Frontier, such a list would be enormous and very probably meaningless, for there are hundreds and hundreds of sites with surviving remains. All would doubtless qualify for mention because the stories are for the most part quite similar. For this reason, no attempt will be made to compile such a list.

## Appendix B

### SPECIAL STUDIES RECOMMENDED

The California Mother Lode is perhaps the outstanding single gold area of the entire mining frontier, in terms of the size of the lode and its wealth, in its extremely significant effect upon all phases of the mining story, and in the very considerable extent of the surviving physical remains. A description of the present condition of mining camp sites along the 175 miles of the "Mother Lode Highway" has been included in the "Survey of Sites and Buildings" section of this report.

The Mother Lode mines and mining camps offer probably the best and certainly the most extensive opportunity in the United States for preservation of an integral chapter of mining frontier history. The number of towns dating to the gold rush days which lie on or convenient to this highway number in the hundreds. At the present there is no program aimed at preserving or interpreting this important and colorful region.

The California State Division of Beaches and Parks, an outstanding State Park agency, has preserved a few of the most important sites in the Mother Lode country, including sites at Coloma and a large portion of Columbia. At various places along the Mother Lode, local and county organizations have preserved buildings and established museums. However, in most cases structures are crumbling into ruin, are being torn down, or are being converted for various purposes. A comprehensive plan is

needed looking both to the preservation of as many of the Mother Lode sites as possible and detailing methods by which the Mother Lode story could be interpreted in some unified fashion.

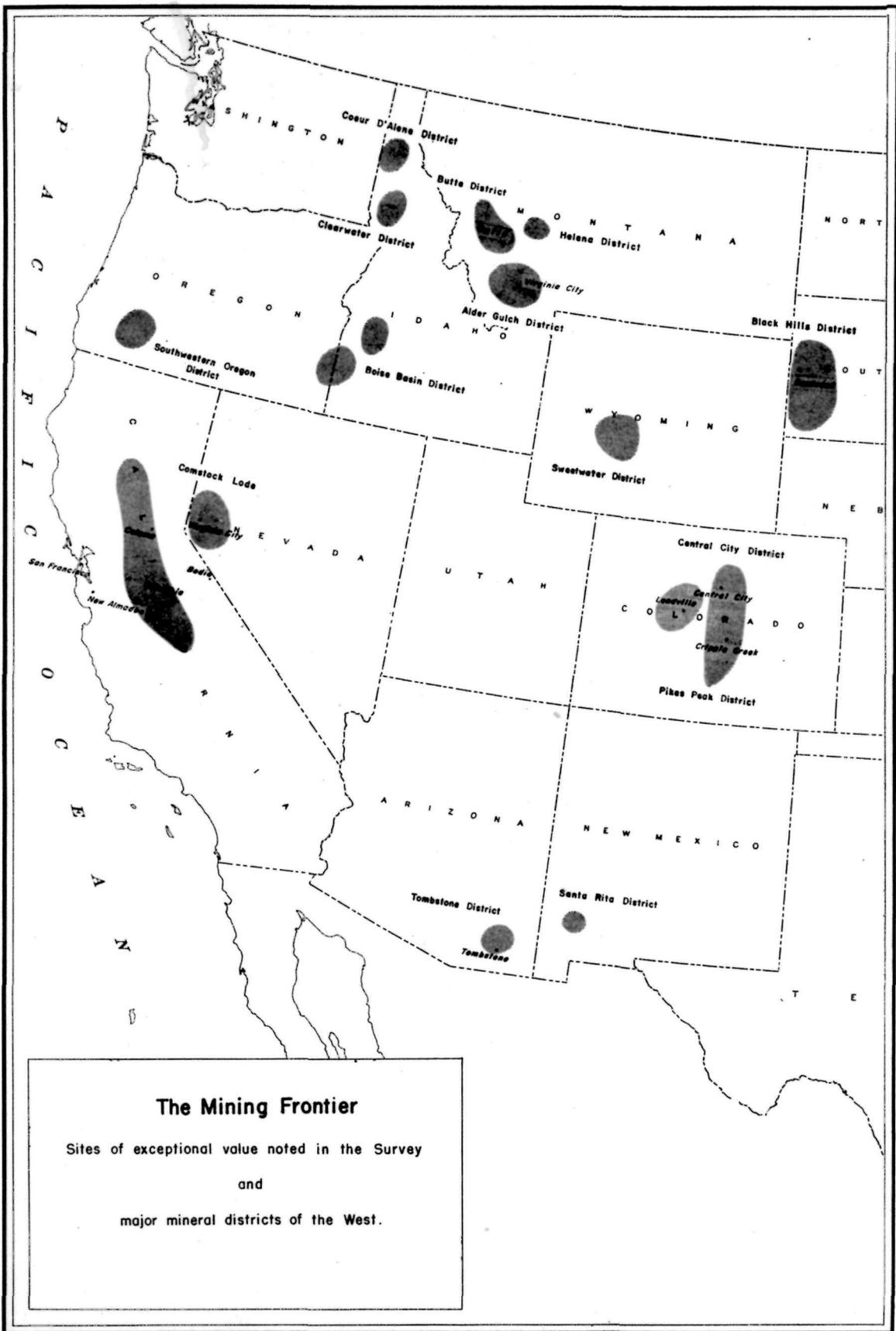
Previous study by the National Park Service of the Denver and Rio Grande (Narrow Gauge) Railroad included specific reference to the former mining town of Silverton. It seems advisable that a full-scale study should be made to determine the advisability of preserving the Narrow Gauge section and that Silverton be included in the study as representing an important phase of the railroad story.

## Appendix C

### CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SITES

The National Park Service has adopted the following criteria for selection of sites of exceptional value:

1. Structures or sites in which the broad cultural, political, economic, military, or social history of the Nation is best exemplified, and from which the visitor may grasp the larger patterns of our American heritage. Such sites are naturally the points or bases from which the broad aspects of prehistoric and historic American life can best be presented.
2. Structures or sites associated importantly with the lives of outstanding historic personages.
3. Structures or sites associated with important events which are symbolic of some great idea or ideal of the American people.
4. Structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, exceptionally valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction; or a notable work of a master builder, designer, or architect whose individual genius reflected his age.
5. Archeological sites which have produced information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have produced or which may reasonably be expected to produce data which have affected theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree. (This criterion is applicable only in the aboriginal themes produced by the National Survey.)
6. All historical and archeological sites and structures in order to meet the standards of exceptional importance should have integrity, that is, there should not be doubts as to whether it is the original site or building, original material, or workmanship, and original location. Intangible elements of feeling and association, although difficult to describe, also may be factors in weighing the integrity of a site or structure.
7. Structures or sites of recent historical importance, relating to events or persons within 50 years, will not, as a rule, be eligible for consideration.



### The Mining Frontier

Sites of exceptional value noted in the Survey  
and  
major mineral districts of the West.

