LIFE IN THE EARLY MINING CAMPS OF COLORADO

APPROVED:

C. A. Bridges
Major Professor

Robert B. Toulouse
Minor Professor

Frank H. Gafford
Director of the Department of History

Jack Johnson
Dean of the Graduate School

LIFE IN THE EARLY MINING CAMPS OF COLORADO

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Charles O. Smith, Jr.

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CHAPTER I

THE DISCOVERY OF GOLD

Introduction

The story of the advancing American frontier has unending interest. Perhaps one of the most colorful and unusual frontier developments was that of the mining frontier in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. During the years following the discovery of gold in 1858 and the early 1880's occurred an almost unprecedented evolution from a primitive pioneer society to complex industrial development.

Throughout this period the numerous gold discoveries that were made resulted in the formation of mining camps and towns each of which was amazingly similar in development to the others. Each discovery resulted in a rush to the region by hundreds of prospectors hoping to strike it rich, and a typical booming, boisterous camp came into being. After the easily acquired supply of gold was exhausted, the camps began to decline. Other methods of mining led to industrialization. The life and growth of the mining towns and camps during this brief period of twenty-five years demonstrates the transition from primitive beginnings to a highly organized society.

Region of the Gold Discovery

"Our fortune!" echoed the cry, "Our fortune is made."[1] These were the words with which the Green Russell prospecting party heralded their discovery of gold on the south fork of the Platte in the summer of 1858. Their fortunes were not made for the diggings proved to be but a pocket which soon played out, but the news of this first American discovery of gold in the Rocky Mountains caused the great rush to Pike's Peak in search of gold and not only laid the foundations for the settlement of the region, but established a pattern for its development.

Before 1858, the Rockies had been but a barrier to those who sought the gold of California, the fertile lands of Oregon, or the trade of Santa Fe. Settlement had not extended past eastern Kansas and Nebraska. The region of the Great Plains was known as the Great American Desert and was thought to be uninhabitable. Equally unattractive to the settler was the mountainous region of which the area is largely made up. This great pile-up of mountain ranges contains fifty-two peaks which reach an altitude of over 14,000 feet and hundreds which rise to over 12,000 and 13,000 feet.

How the prospectors ever managed to find ways through the intricacies of this forbidding country

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[1]George F. Willison, Here They Dug the Gold, p. 8.

> to where the pockets of gold lay, continues to excite the imagination. Even when these men reached a vein or pocket of gold, you still wonder how they maintained the supply lines for food, clothing and tools. Their courage and endurance appalls you, not only when you drive over a main highway and see mine shaft houses perched on top of inaccessible crags but even more so when you force a car over an old abandoned road, up grades that would now be considered intolerable, or reach a place where the road disappears, forcing you to leave the car and go on into these mountain fastness on foot.[2]

Pike's Peak is perhaps the most famous of all the Colorado peaks. It is exceptional in its relative altitude, rising as it does to 14,147 feet above a rolling upland which is here but little above 9,000 feet.[3] It served as a landmark for two mining excitements. In the rush to California, after 1848, the adventurers that came westward across the plains shaded their eyes to catch the first glimpse of the beacon mountain, which Lieutenant Zebulon Pike had reconnoitred in the first years of the century. Ten years later the rumor of gold being found in this part of the country caused the celebrated Pike's Peak gold rush.[4]

Rumors of Gold Before 1858

The rumors of gold which touched off the Pike's Peak gold rush were nothing new. Rumors of the presence of gold

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[2]Muriel Sibell Wolle, Stampede to Timberline, p. 1

[3]Nevin M. Fenneman, Physiography of Western United States, p. 98.

[4]T. A. Richard, A History of American Mining, p. 141-42.

had circulated throughout the Rocky Mountain Region for more than two centuries. The first stories of gold lured Coronado far to the northern interior of North America in search of Cibola and Gran Quivira. He found no gold but the Spaniards did not give up their quest for the precious metals, and at infrequent intervals entered Colorado. In 1595 Onate explored the San Luis valley in Colorado and reported the finding of gold a short distance above Fort Garland, but if any attempt was made to establish a settlement there, no record of it has been preserved.[5] Perhaps the first prospecting expedition in Colorado was led by Juan Maria de Rivera in 1765. This expedition, sent by the governor of New Mexico, explored the southern base of the San Juan Mountains and the valleys of the Dolores and Gunnison. Ore was found on the South Platte, but only in small quantities.[6] New Mexicans also did a little mining on the western slopes of the Sangre de Cristo mountains, but the date of discovery has not been determined.[7]

The French, too, were interested in the numerous stories told by the Indians concerning the gold deposits west of the Mississippi. In 1702 some twenty Frenchmen left Cahokia, Illinois, in search of these fabulous mines.

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[5]Weston Arthur Goodspeed, The Province and the States, p. 368.

[6]LeRoy R. Hafen, Colorado: The Story of a Western Commonwealth, p. 105.

[7]LeRoy R. Hafen, Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guide Books of 1859, p. 22.

Although no gold was found the French persisted in believing that the mines did exist. In 1758 the History of Louisiana was published in Paris showing a gold mine on the Arkansas River and telling of a rivulet whose waters rolled down gold dust.[8]

The English also brought stories back of gold mines in the West. An English geographer, Herman Moll, wrote across his map of North America (Published in 1720), "This country is full of mines." As more English explorers pushed westward, they brought back more vague stories of gold. Some of these were so exaggerated as to have little basis in fact. Jonathan Carver, making a journey into the interior in 1766-68, wrote, "Some of the nations who inhabit those parts that lie to the west of the Shining Mountains, have gold so plenty among them that they make their most common utensils of it."[9]

The first American report of gold came from James Purcell, who had wandered about as a trader in the trans-Mississippi country from 1802 to 1805. Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike, who met Purcell in Santa Fe, told the following story:

> . . .he assured me that he had found gold on the head of La Platte, and had carried some of the virgin mineral in his shot pouch for months; but, that being in doubt whether he should ever again behold the civilized world, and losing in his mind all the ideal value which mankind have stamped on the metal, he threw the sample

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[8] Ibid., p. 23.

[9] Ibid., p. 24.

> away. He had imprudently mentioned it to the Spaniards, who had frequently solicited him to go and show a detachment of cavalry the place; but, conceiving it to be in our territory, he had refused, and was fearful that the circumstance might create a great obstacle to his leaving the country.[10]

Pike apparently paid little attention to the story, but the placer mines developed in South Park of Colorado in 1859 substantiate Purcell's story.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, when the region was inhabited only by Indians and a few traders and fur trappers, many rumors of precious metal deposits were spread. Most of these stories of gold, silver and pearls to be found in the West had no factual basis.

Perhaps the first American party to enter Colorado for the purpose of finding a fortune in precious metal was led by a trapper, James Cockrell, who thought that he had discovered silver near present Trinidad. The prospecting party found what they supposed to be valuable silver ore, but an assay proved that their energies and privations in bringing the ore back to St. Louis were wasted for the ore was valueless.[11]

An adventurous traveler, Rufus B. Sage, claimed to have found mineral which he believed to contain gold while

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[10]Elliott Coues, The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike, II, pp. 758-59.

[11]Hafen, Pike's Peak Guidebooks, p. 26.

traveling throughout the Rocky Mountain Region in 1843-44.[12] Sage, who wrote two books about his travels in the Rocky Mountains from 1841 to 1844, had heard many tales of the gold to be found there.[13]

Rumors had circulated of the bullets made of gold used by the Arapahoes. This somewhat fantastic story was repeated by Sage, who explained it as follows:

> Some twenty years since, while the Arapahoes were at hostilities with the whites, a war-party of that tribe advanced against the Pawnees, led by a noted chief called "Whirlwind." Three only of them had guns, and they soon expended their stock of bullets in shooting small game, there being no buffalo upon the route. Finally, left without anything to eat, they became discouraged.
>
> During the conference, several small pieces of glittering yellow substance were discovered upon the surface, which proved soft and easily worked into any shape. From these a supply of bullets was procured, and resuming their course, they soon after met the Pawnees, with whom they fought, and were victorious--every bullet discharged killing an enemy.[14]

Perhaps the most disappointing story told was one of a trapper, Eustace Carriere, who became separated from his companions and wandered about for several weeks. During his wanderings he discovered some grains of gold on the surface of the ground, taking them with him to Mexico and exhibiting them. A party was formed with Carriere as

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[12]Hafen, Colorado, the Story of a Western Commonwealth, p. 9.

[13]Rufus B. Sage, Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, Californmia, New Mexico, Texas and the Grand Prairie p. 94.

[14]Ibid., pp. 334-35.

a guide, but he was unable to find the exact location of his discovery and was severely beaten by his companions, who supposed that he did not wish to reveal his secret.[15] The trappers were apparently so intent on their search for furs they paid little attention to the search for gold. These wanderers who had the opportunity to achieve fame and fortune in Colorado left the gold for others to develop.

Others passing over the Rockies stopped occasionally to prospect the streams in the valley of the South Platte as a matter of curiosity. In 1850 groups of Western Cherokees enroute from the Cherokee Nation to California found minute quantities of gold in the form of pieces of quartz on the banks of Ralston Creek, which was named for one of the members of the party. They continued to California. When they returned to Georgia they brought with them stories of gold in the Rockies. This find at Ralston Creek was incentive that produced the famous prospecting expedition of 1858.

Throughout the fifties, stories of gold continued to circulate and a little flurry of excitement occurred when a man named Norton appeared with gold dust which he said that he had washed in the Pike's Peak region. Norton had

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[15]John Warner Barber and Henry Howe, All the Western States and Territories, p. 518.

accompanied a California-bound party to the Rockies in 1853 that had ascended the Arkansas and turned north to Fort Laramie.[16]

The Russell and Lawrence Parties

Among those particularly interested in the tales of the Cherokee Indians was Green Russell, a resident of Dahlonega, Georgia. In 1857, the Russell brothers moved from Georgia to Kansas, locating on or near Rock Creek.[17] Upon hearing of the Cherokee project, Green sold his farm and returned to Georgia to organize a party. Through exchange of correspondence between the two groups, a rendezvous was arranged on the Santa Fe Trail in Kansas in May and June, 1858. With the addition of others, the combined party totaled one hundred and four and included Georgians, Indians and whites from the Cherokee nation, led by Captain Beck, men from Ray and Bates Counties, Missouri and a few Kansans.[18]

Continuing up the Santa Fe Trail they passed Bent's Fort, turned northwestward to Fountain Creek, and reached their destination on Ralston Creek in the latter part of June. Here the company prospected for several days, but

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[16]Jerome C. Smiley, History of Denver, p. 182.

[17]Lewis Cass Gandy, The Tabors: A Footnote of Western History, p. 29.

[18]Junius Henderson and others, Colorado: Short Studies of Its Past and Present, p. 102.

found only a small quantity of gold. According to William McKimens, a member of the party: ". . .we prospected on our way finding drift gold in all the creeks averaging from one cent's worth of dust to the pan of gravel."[19] Since very little success had met their efforts, the majority of the company became discouraged, and in spite of Russell's efforts to dissuade them, returned to their homes, leaving the determined Russell and twelve others to carry on the search.[20] This small company prospected along the South Platte and its tributaries, finding gold in varying quantities. Cherry Creek was most frequently mentioned in their reports and therefore became the most prominent.

The first gold of paying quantity found by the remaining members of the party was found on Dry Creek, several miles above the mouth of Cherry Creek, on the South Platte. By the end of summer they had examined a large area, ascending the South Platte and panning its affluents as far north as Cache La Poudre Creek.

Reports of the gold in Pike's Peak spread rapidly and in exaggerated form. Among these reports is one given to the Weekly Kansas Herald of June 24. "On the head of

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[19]Hafen, Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guide Book of 1859, p. 307, quoting William McKimens in a letter from Aurariа, 1859.

[20]Henderson, op. cit., p. 102-03.

the South Fork of the Platte, near Long's Peak, gold mines have been discovered and 500 persons are now working there."[21] In addition to these stories, the appearances in Lawrence, Kansas, of gold bearing Indians served to arouse excitement. In the late spring, Fall Leaf and Little Beaver displayed gold dust which they said was found in the region of Pike's Peak. A prospecting party was organized by citizens of Lawrence, consisting of some fifty men led by John H. Turney. Fall Leaf, who was employed as a guide, was injured in an accident and was unable to accompany the party, which left Lawrence the last of May. Following the southern route, the route the Russells had taken, they arrived at Bent's Fort on the 28th of June. On the third of July they met two wagons of the Russell Company deserters and learned from them the discouraging results of the first expedition. The party proceeded to Colorado and celebrated the ". . . Fourth of July near the present city of Pueblo, the first time that Independence Day was ever observed on Colorado Soil."[22] During the months of July and August they prospected in the southern part of the reputed gold region. Hearing of the moderate success of the Russell party on Dry Creek, they moved northward and arrived at the new

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[21] Ibid., p. 103.

[22] Goodspeed, op. cit., IV, p. 374.

diggings on the second of September. William B. Parsons, one of the company, tells this story:

> There we found five or six men engaged in mining, and, although they had very inferior tools, they were making respectable wages. We immediately went to work and found that, although things had been considerably exaggerated, we could do well, and had a good prospect for the future.[23]

The Lawrence party decided to remain, organized a town company, and on September 7, laid out the town of Montana City on the east bank of the South Platte, five miles south of the present capital of Colorado. At this point the company disbanded, and a portion abandoned Montana City for a better location. A portion of the same party organized a second town company and laid out the town of St. Charles on the east bank of the Creek, at the site of the present Denver. The majority of the party returned to Kansas for the winter leaving only one man in charge of the mushroom settlement.[24] Montana City and St. Charles were the first towns established by gold seekers in Colorado.

Gold Reports of 1858

During the summer of 1858 while the early prospecting parties were looking for gold in Colorado, a number of ill-founded and exaggerated reports were published in the news

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[23]Henderson, op. cit., p. 103.

[24]Hafen, Colorado, The Story of a Western Commonwealth, pp. 109-10.

papers of the country. These first reports were received with the skepticism which they deserved, but throughout the months of July and August many newspapers continued to print these exaggerated and fictitious stories. The return of members of the Russell and Lawrence parties had provided the impetus for these stories. They brought with them minute quantities of gold which were more tangible evidence than letters or rumors. John Cantrell, and other mountain traders, also brought back some of the yellow dust in their pouches. The sight of gold, even in small quantities, was enough to excite the imaginations of hopeful Easterners. The contagion of the Gold Fever rapidly swept the country.

Reports appeared in newspapers of the richness of the gold. In the Wyandotte Kansas Gazette of September 18, the following notice appeared:

> Yesterday ten thousand dollars in gold dust arrived from Pike's Peak. One man brought in $6000 as the result of a few weeks work. A small boy had $1000, which he says he dug down and found and the little fellow says he can get all he wants.[25]

These reports may appear somewhat fantastic, but the reliability of the stories was attested.

The towns located in the Missouri Valley immediately began a propaganda campaign to advertise themselves as the

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[25]Hafen, The Colorado Gold Rush, 1858-1859, p. 64.

best starting point for the Pike's Peak. Undoubtedly, each route and each town had its own peculiar advantage, and probably on the whole there was not a great difference in any of them, but with each wagon load of emigrants, there was a sale of mining tools, wagons, teams, and large stores of groceries. This natural boom in the city's business was enough to initiate a large scale publicity campaign in favor of the fortunes to be had in the Rockies.

A letter from Columbus, Nebraska, appearing in the Omaha Times of November 25, 1858, stated:

> It is interesting to look over the papers, published at different towns on the Missouri, below Omaha. Every town that can boast of three houses, a well and a smoke house, are showing up their advantages as a place for outfitting; most of them have a military road leading to mines, and each one shorter than that of its neighbor--some of them save about one-half the distance. Well, now, that may be well enough if they can make it win.[26]

Whether founded or unfounded, the reports spread. Even people in England became interested in the gold region.

> We have seen a letter from some parties in England, asking information concerning the gold region of Kansas. The fever seems to have spread across the old Atlantic, as well as to embrace all the states in the Union. We hear of companies being organized all through the country, who are preparing to try their hands in the new El Dorado as soon as spring opens. We can confidently assure those who propose trying the new region that the auriferous deposits are a verity--that the

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[26] Ibid., p. 120.

> mines will richly reward all who devote their energies to the work.[27]

The above notice appeared in the Leavenworth Times, in December, 1885. Whether it was the truth or another effort to arouse local interest in the West is a matter of conjecture.

Not all the reports of the gold in Colorado were good, however, as the balloon that was being blown so high was bound to be punctured sooner or later. Reports on the Eastern Seaborad were not so enthusiastic. An example of the discouraging reports is found in the New York Tribune:

> Gold-digging is the very last resort to which we would impel industrious young men, especially those who have good trades. . . . There are brilliant prizes in the gold-digging lottery, but there are many blanks to each of them; and the young man who can earn $100 per annum over the cost of his board and clothes should do it rather than court the risk of gold hunting.
> . . .That there is much gold this side of the Rocky Mountains is scarcely questionable; but you are quite likely to acquire a share of it more easily in almost any other way than by digging it.
> As to proceeding to Pike's Peak this season, it is not worth a moment's consideration. You would meet bitter blasts from snowy mountains ere you could reach it, and find neither food nor shelter at your journey's end. Too many have started already.[28]

Of course, skepticism was not limited to Easterners. There were those who preferred to put their capital in Kansas soil over a wild chase to the Rockies for an untested and unproved goldmine. This is indicated by the September, 1858, issue of the Leavenworth Times, which in the same issue not

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[27] Ibid., p. 124. [28] Ibid., p. 73.

only gave unfavorable reports of the gold in the West, but listed the cost of the supplies for the trip to Colorado at $740, adding: "We should rather invest the money in one hundred acres of Kansas soil, which will be sure to realize a rich reward."[29]

A premature gold fever, unfounded reports of the richness of Colorado, and the gullibility of the ever hopeful easy-money makers were responsible for what was to prove a headlong rush to Pike's Peak in the spring of 1859. This was the beginning of the Pike's Peak Gold Rush, which was destined to end in disappointment for a large portion of the gold seekers, many of whom returned to the East before the end of the summer.

Life on Cherry Creek, 1858-1859

In 1858, the first steps in the settlement of Colorado had been made. Hundreds of miners, not wishing to wait until spring, had made the long trip across the plains in the fall and winter of 1858. Only the fear of winter prevented a larger rush, although the gold discoveries were in reality of trivial importance and confined largely to the regions near the confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte. Those who did arrive made several different settlements.

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[29] Ibid., p. 65.

These early emigrants, true to the speculative spirit of the frontier, were interested not only in gold, but in the establishment of towns as well. Town companies were organized, town sites laid out, and places of business were set up. Most of the arrivals came to the vicinity of Cherry Creek, but other settlements were established at strategic points on streams and at the entrances to mountain passes.

In September groups of the Lawrence party laid out the cities of Saint Charles and Montana City. Although the town of Saint Charles was staked off, no buildings were erected and the party returned east to get a charter and advertise. However, meeting others coming west, they sent back Charles Nichols to build a cabin and hold the claim. The site was jumped by a Kansas town company, but the original members of the Lawrence party were later admitted to the new company. At the site of Montana City about twenty houses were built of log, but the city was overshadowed by Denver and Auraria and was eventually abandoned in 1859.

In late October, the Russell party returned from their prospecting expedition in the north, crossed to the west bank of Cherry Creek, combined with a party from western Iowa, and began the town of Auraria, the real foundation of the present Denver. Green Russell and other members of his party returned to the East for supplies, encountering

on their way a combined party of Kansans from Leavenworth, Oskaloosa and Lecompton.

In December, 1858, Pike's Peak City was laid out fourteen miles from the south fork of Cherry Creek. It numbered thirty-eight cabins and eighty-two men and one woman.[30] The city was in a good location and became a very prosperous little town.

Life of the miner in early Colorado was not considered luxurious, but in some cases it was not uncomfortable:

> You have no idea how nice Will and I are fixed up. . .
>
> We have a nice door with an old fashioned wooden latch, with the string on the outside of course. The fireplace, as is the custom in this country, is made of sod. In the southeast corner is the bunk, in the northwest corner the window, four panes of glass with sash. On the north side between the end of the bed and the fireplace we have two shelves and a bench, all made with a nice slab. We cut the meat on the bench and set water buckets on the other two shelves. . . On the northeast side and corner we hand our coats, guns and things. I have a nail box, shovels, and old boots and buffalo overshoes under the bunk. . . I am writing on a table I have my books and papers, ink stand and all the other nice things, together with a light. Will scoured up the candlestick today; it looks clean and nice.[31]

The men who lived in the above described cabin apparently had some respect for the niceties of life and of course

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[30]Hafen, Colorado Gold Rush, p. 179.

[31]Willison, op. cit., pp. 18-19, quoting William Larimer.

this was not the rule. Fritz describes the typical cabin as being:

> . . . a log cabin. The cracks between the logs were chinked with saplings and adobe mortar. The cabin might be either single or double. The door was usually located at one end and the fireplace at the other. There were no windows. The roof was made of logs and thatch. Or perhaps it was covered with canvas which they had brought along for that purpose. Later it might be covered with corrugated sheet iron over the rough board slabs. It was not long before sawmills were erected and then many buildings appeared, built out of milled lumber.[32]

The winter of 1858-1859 was unusually mild, enabling the settlers to live in these primitive abodes with little discomfort. "The cabins were very dark, very warm, and in the latter part of the winter, and in spring, when the snows melted and the rain fell, very wet; the rain usually continuing three days in-doors after the weather cleared up outdoors."[33]

Although the cabins were rough and unfinished, they had become the home of the miner. The settlers in 1858 were single men, or married men who had left their families in the States, entertaining no thought of permanent settlement. As in regions where the sobering influence of organized government or family life is lacking,

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[32]Percy Stanley Fritz, Colorado, The Centennial State, p. 169.

[33]Henry Villard, The Past and Present of the Pike's Peak Gold Regions, p. 14. (quoting the Rocky Mountain News, January 18, 1860).

the forces of lawlessness and vice soon made their appearance. Brawls were frequent--many of the settlers were regular patrons of saloons and gambling dens.

> The principal amusement here during the winter has been card playing, telling yarns, and drinking most execrable whiskey. The latter is worth $10 per gal.; in St.Louis it would cost 20¢.[34]

Social life was humdrum--the primitive existence afforded few attractions. Hunting was about the only pastime. Occasionally there were dances and sometimes a "free-for-all" fight. Participation in the former was limited to a few mountaineers and their squaws, while in the latter many joined "with a will."

These pioneers did not neglect religion. As early as November 21, 1858, services were held at Auraria. Young William Larimer described the meeting as a very small morning meeting:

> There were no church bells to ring, no finely draped ladies, no choir, no pews to sit in. But seated on buffalo robes spread on the ground, with both the Jones and the Smiths squaws present (there were no other women present), Fisher [the preacher], father, myself and perhaps six or eight others held the first religious service ever held in the country. . . In the opposite end of the cabin I could hear the money jingle where the gambling was going on at the same time that Mr. Fisher was preaching.[35]

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[34]Hafen, Colorado Gold Rush, 1858-1859, p. 219.

[35]Hafen, Colorado, the Story of a Western Commonwealth, p. 127.

Supplies, at first were seemingly unimportant to the gold-seekers. Food became scarce in the spring, and in April supplies were brought from the Missouri Valley. In the fall and winter, several mercantile establishments were begun in Denver and Auraria. In late December, Richard "Uncle Dick" Wootton arrived from New Mexico with several wagon loads of flour, sugar, and other merchandise. He had previously traded with the Indians in this region, but decided to remain permanently, moved into a log cabin in Auraria, and began business without waiting for shelving or counters. Particularly popular with the settlers was "Taos Lightening," a raw Mexican whiskey. He had several barrels with him, which he rolled together and used as counters. Wootton later erected a two story log building for business. Other business houses were established--a bakers, a watchmaker's shop, a carpenter shop, a blacksmith shop, several hotels, gambling houses and saloons.

Early in 1859, William Byers and others arrived from Nebraska, bringing with them a printing press. The second floor of "Uncle Dick" Wootton's Store was used as a newspaper office and two days later the first number of the Rocky Mountain News was issued, containing among other things the following burst of pioneer oratory:

> We make our debut in the Far West, where the snowy mountains look down upon us in the hottest summer day as well as in the winter's cold; here, where a few months ago the wild beast and wilder Indians held undisturbed possession--where now surges the advancing wave of Anglo-Saxon enterprise and civilization--where soon, we proudly hope, will be erected a great and powerful state, another empire in the sisterhood of empires.[36]

To the first settlers of Colorado the problem of transportation and communication with the States was uppermost. The location of Denver and Auraria between the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails was unfavorable for mail facilities. The nearest post office was Fort Laramie, over two hundred miles north of the Cherry Creek settlements. In November an express line to Fort Laramie was established by Jim Saunders, a trapper. The first trip was made by Saunders the last part of November. His charges were fifty cents for letters and twenty-five cents for newspapers. The Saunders Express was replaced in the early spring of 1859 by the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express.

Another problem facing the early settlers was that of government. Remote from civilization and, until 1858, lying within the boundaries of four territories, these people could not wait for court decisions to be carried twice across the continent nor could they be sure that

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[36]Ernest Ingersoll, Knocking Round the Rockies, pp. 10-11.

their claims were legal under the laws prescribed by the territorial governments of their particular locale. The section west of the Continental Divide was a part of Utah; south of the thirty-eighth parallel, east of the Divide, and west of one hundred and three degrees west longitude the authority of New Mexico held sway; the remainder of Colorado was part of the territories of Kansas and Nebraska, with fortieth parallel as the dividing line.[37]

The region was also considered Indian territory, although there had been no treaty made with the Indians giving the gold seekers the right of settlement. In 1855 Governor Denver of Kansas Territory had organized western Kansas as Arapahoe County and had appointed officers. Obviously the government of Kansas was unable to govern such a wide area because of the vast distances and difficulties in communication and transportation. However, it had chartered some of the earlier settlements of Colorado.[38] The settlers took matters in their own hands, organized their own local government, and paid little attention to the authority of territorial government or the rights of the Indians. An informal election was held

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[37]Hafen, Colorado, the Story of a Western Commonwealth, p. 137.

[38]Frederick Logan Paxson, The Last American Frontier, p. 246.

on November 6, accompanied by much irregularity in voting, and Hiram J. Graham was elected to represent the people in Congress and A. J. Smith in the legislature of Kansas. Neither of the delegates accomplished much and governmental moves were abandoned until spring.

Although the primary interest of these first settlers was in digging gold, they spent most of the winter in establishing the foundations of a civilization in Colorado. Their homes were rough, their entertainment limited, their government crude, and their transportation and communication difficult, but they had made beginnings in widening their horizons and in alleviating the hardships. It was these pioneers who prepared the way for the great rush which was to begin in the early spring.

Winter Mining Activities

Actual gold mining during the fall and winter of 1858-1859 was confined mostly to Cherry Creek and other lesser tributaries of the South Platte in that vicinity. Free gold found in the beds of the streams was known as "dust," "scale," "shot," or "nuggets." Through the discovery of these minute traces of gold in many places, the miners were convinced that the deposits of the precious metal at the heads of the streams were extensive and rich. Consequently, they impatiently awaited spring and the thawing of the ground and rivers.

Mining activity is best designated by two names--"placer" and "lode." Since placer mining is simpler, requiring very little equipment and no machinery, it was the method used exclusively in the winter of 1858-1859. There are two methods used in placer mining, both of which were used by early settlers. The simpler method of placer mining was "panning," which required only an ordinary shovel, a strong pick and a pan. The miner dug down to bedrock, and shoveled the sand and gravel into a pan, diluting the mixture with water. The pan was shaken, the heavy gold settled to the bottom, and was gathered when the lighter sand and gravel were poured out. Panning was very slow and required much labor, but it was the most economical method.

In the second method of placer mining, "sluicing," the miner used what was known as the sluice box. The sluice consisted of a long, flat, wooden trough (ten to one hundred feet in length and one or two in width), with strips of wood nailed cross-wise across the bottom and quicksilver between them. The sluice was placed at an angle, a stream of water of considerable force, furnished ordinarily by the diversion of the stream from its natural channel, was directed into it, washing out the sand and lighter gravel, allowing heavy gold to settle to the bottom where it was caught between the crosspieces and stuck to the quicksilver.

One of the handicaps which hampered mining operations extensively was the lack of water. Sometimes it was necessary to carry the mixture of gold, sand and gravel as far as three hundred feet from the "diggings" in order to obtain water, which was scarce in the dry streams during the mining season.

Easy money, the miner soon learned, was not as easy as it appeared to be. Mining required extraordinary physical exertion. The miner worked from morning to evening, continually, panning or wielding pick and shovel to supply the sluices. On the average, the proportion between the amount of labor and the profit was perhaps smaller than in any other occupation. A few of the more fortunate obtained large profits--the majority either tried their luck elsewhere, or gave up mining in disgust and turned to a less laborious and more profitable occupation.

Since many of the reports concerning gold taken from Colorado during that first winter are contradictory, and since no official record was kept, it is almost impossible to give an accurate report. Reports varied from one dollar as high as fifty dollars per day.

W. W. Spalding wrote from Pike's Peak City in January, 1859, that the largest nugget that he had seen, "weighed" just $11.10, but that the gold in the country was very fine scale gold.

> . . .When I say the miners are doing well, I mean that they are making about $5.00 per day; for if a miner starts out prospecting, and cannot average $5.00 per day, he says he has done nothing. But the largest strike that has been made by one man in this part of the mines was $75. in one day with pick and pan. The lucky man was J. W. Stanley from Mineral Point, Wisconsin.[39]

McKimens wrote from Auraria in November: "I am satisfied that an industrious man can make from $2½ to $15 per day, according to the richness of his claim and the chances of getting water on the same. . ."[40]

The late winter months were spent in preparation for the spring rush to the mining district. Promising diggings had been discovered farther up in the mountains. But before these could be explored, it was necessary for the ground to thaw and mining was at a near stand-still. Sluice boxes were prepared and tools repaired. The first arrivals in the state of Colorado were ready for warm weather and the pot of gold they were sure was waiting for them.

Rumors of the gold to be found in the Rockies had set explorers searching as early as the sixteenth century. Prospecting in the first half of the nineteenth Century had aroused the interest of Green Russell and others of his kind who had substantiated these rumors with actual

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[39]Hafen, Colorado Gold Rush, 1858-1859, pp. 20-22.

[40]William McKimens, "Letters from Auraria, 1858-59," Colorado Magazine, XII (September, 1936), 170.

discoveries of gold. All these happenings led settlers to make the long trek across an arid plain in the spring and summer of 1858 to claim the reported gold. The winter of that year was spent in establishing towns and building homes in Colorado. The foundations had been laid; the stage set. The stampede that was to follow was inevitable.

CHAPTER II

STAMPEDE TO THE MOUNTAINS

Preparations for the Rush

The stampede to the gold of Colorado was an emigration almost unparalleled in American history. The reports of the gold-seekers of 1858 created excitement throughout the rest of the country and especially among the western settlements along the Missouri River. Throughout the winter of 1858 many companies were organized to make the six hundred mile trip across the great plains to the Pike's Peak area. The emigrants had to await the coming of spring grass before undertaking the arduous journey. An editorial in the New York Tribune, January 29, 1859, stated:

> There is soon to be an immense migration, especially from our western states, to the new El Dorado. The extensive failure of crops in 1858, the universal pressure of debt, the low prices realized or promised for the fruits of the husbandman's labors, the deadness of enterprise, the absence of thrift, render such migration inevitable. There is scarcely a village west of Ohio in which some are not fitting for and impatiently waiting the day when a start may be prudently made for the neighborhood of Pike's Peak. We shall be disappointed if less than fifty thousand persons start for the new gold diggings within the current year.[1]

During the winter, merchants in the Missouri River towns laid in their supplies--sacks of flour, sugar, beans, and

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[1]Hafen, Colorado Gold Rush, 1858-1859, pp. 254-55.

coffee; stacks of bacon sides and ham; bales of overalls and shirts; large boxes of boots and shoes; shovels, picks and pans. Newspapers were full of sage advice upon the proper tools for mining, outfits for travel and routes to be taken. Guides and maps were published in different parts of the United States. Along the border towns which served as outfitting stations business was booming.

Choice of Routes

The vast emigration could scarcely have been possible without the knowledge and experience gained in crossing during the preceding fifty years. Travel no longer was across trackless, unknown wastes. Many official expeditions had been made; the Oregon, Santa Fe, and Mormon Trails had been established; and fur trappers, traders, and settlers had crossed the plains.

Three distinct routes of travel were available to the emigrants. Keen competition developed among Leavenworth, Atchinson, Westport and other Missouri River towns, each claiming to be at the head of the best route and consequently the best outfitting place. The guide book of Parker and Huyett said that "each route to the New Eldorado had its firm friends and its active enemies--their opinions depending principally upon the location of their residence and their interests."[2]

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[2]Hafen, Pike's Peak Gold Rush Guide Books of 1859, p. 267.

The three main routes were up the Platte River, up the Arkansas River, and up the Smoky Hill River. Fort Riley and Fort Kearney were the assembling points for the three routes. There was much doubt among those planning to travel to the gold fields as to which of the routes was the best one to take. Reliable information was difficult to get.

The northern route followed either bank of the South Platte River to the point where Cherry Creek flowed into it and then directly up Cherry Creek to the newly founded towns of Denver and Auraria which were located on its banks. The guide book written by Luke Tierney described the northern route as being the best for the emigrant to use. He stated that among other advantages that by far the greater portion of the distance between the mouth of the Platte and Cherry Creek was over a regular and much traveled emigrant road. The way could not be mistaken, and travelers could be met almost every day. Other advantages of this route which he listed are: sufficient wood and buffalo chips for cooking, ample water supply, abundant grass for cattle and horses along the entire distance, and generally friendly Indians along the route.[3] Omaha, Atchinson, and St. Joseph favored the northern route.

The Smoky Hill route followed the Kansas River and the Smoky Hill Fork. Then it cut directly across the plains

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[3] Ibid., pp. 130-132.

to Cherry Creek. This route was the shortest, but it was the most difficult. Much of the country was uninhabited and from the points of departure on the Republican and Smoky Hill Rivers; there was much uncertainty about the trail. The shortage of wood, water and grass across the plains was also a big handicap. Much of the suffering of the emigrants in the early spring of 1859 was caused by their choice of this comparatively unknown route.[6] Leavenworth and Lawrence were the chief advocates of the Smoky Hill Route. Leavenworth became one of the chief outfitting centers and it increased in importance after it became the eastern terminus of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express.

The Southern Route followed the mountain division of the Santa Fe Trail to the vicinity of Fountain Creek and turned northwest toward the gold fields. This route was favored by Kansas City. The Southern Route was the best road, but the longest. Because of its more southerly latitude, grass grew along this route two or three weeks earlier, and grass, timber and water were plentiful.[7] Much of the country was comparatively well settled. Another difficulty common to both the Northern and Southern Routes was the spring rain which flooded the streams, frequently delaying the crossings.

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[6]Villard, op. cit. p. 170. [7]Ibid., pp. 159-160.

The Pike's Peak Gold Rush

People were in a receptive mood for news of gold in 1858. In 1857, a nationwide panic had swept over the country, bringing about a severe depression. The growing west was particularly affected. Crop failures had also plagued many parts of the West. A wave of emigration was, therefore, the natural result of news of gold.

People were ready to accept the widespread reports which circulated throughout the country. The chief propaganda agents for the gold rumors were the western newspapers. Since the prosperity of the border towns depended on a large emigration, these towns directed intensive efforts to publicizing the gold discoveries. Stories of gold were printed and reprinted in the newspapers. The pages of the newspapers bore startling or attractive Pike's Peak advertisements of all sorts. In Leavenworth and elsewhere, hotels, saloons, and other establishments, by their signs and placards, tried to draw the attention of the gold seekers.[8] Land speculators and promoters also did their share in advertising the new "Eldorado."

The East did not feel the wholesale emigration as did the Middle West where thousands filled the various channels of westward travel in the first months of spring. Steamers on the Missouri from St. Louis to Kansas City, and trains

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[8]Henderson, op. cit., p. 108.

enroute to all towns on the river jammed. In April, W. T. Sherman, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, wrote:

> 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 regions.
> . . .Although probably twenty-five thousand people have actually gone, we are without authentic advices of gold.[9]

In reaching the border towns, the emigrants used almost all modes of travel. After leaving there, the trip overland was limited to the feet of either the emigrant or his beast of burden. Methods were generally dictated by the wealth of the traveler. Since a large number of them were ignorant or foolishly optimistic, they left hopelessly unprepared for the trip, adopting the cheapest mode of transportation. Many traveled on foot, pulling handcarts or pushing wheelbarrows. Others carried their belongings in packs across their backs or in knapsacks slung from the ends of poles across their shoulders. A few started with little more than a mining shovel and a small bag of provisions. Villard wrote that he had met two individuals, one fifty, the other sixty-two years old, who had left Leavenworth City provided with just twenty pounds of cornmeal and $168 in money.[10] A few men pushed wheelbarrows with all their worldly goods stacked on them.

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[9]Paxson, op. cit., pp. 143-44.

[10]Villard, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

There are at least two references to light wagons drawn by dogs.[11] The most curious conveyance invented was the Westport Wind Wagon. The wheels were some twenty feet in diameter, the large sails were to provide the power of locomotion. Its omnibus body was to accomodate over twenty people. Needless to say, it was not a success. One writer states:

> Those who observed the character of the emigration this spring, must have noticed the vast number who were totally unprepared for an expedition of this kind. A black carpet-bag, an extra pair of boots, and a substantial suit of clothes, with, in every case almost, a rifle and gun, and perhaps a six-shooter, generally constituted their outfit for the trip of one thousand miles. Of mining implements, or anything, to aid in separation of the particles of gold from the earth, the exhibition was a scanty one.[12]

The draft animals used for the journey were oxen, mules and horses. Oxen were capable of pulling the heaviest loads, but were slower than mules which, although very expensive, were better for steady work and speedy travel. Horses were poor draft animals, incapable of bearing the hardships of travel on the plains. Within a few weeks, the trails were whitened by the bones of these animals.

The trip to the gold region was a test of the mettle of the emigrant. His advance planning and choice of

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[11] Henderson, op. cit., pp. 108-09.

[12] Ibid., quoting the Missouri Republican, (April 21, 1859).

outfit was in a large measure responsible for the comfort with which the trip could be made. The formation of companies was recommended for cheaper and safer transportation. The purchase of supplies for six months was generally advisable as provisions were scarce in the gold fields. Certain necessities recommended in almost every list included the following: oxen, wagon, flour, bacon, sugar, coffee, beans, whiskey, mining tools, rifle, gunpowder, and cooking utensils. Estimates of the cost of a minimum outfit for a party of four men for six months ranged from $250 to over $600.

From five to seven weeks were required for making the journey. Rising early and traveling as far as possible before selecting a campsite for the night, the traveler found that in the spring the days stretched into endless hours of intermittent rain, hail, sleet or snow. In the summer, though the daylight hours were longer, the heat was blistering. Also, in choosing the season for the trip, the grass available for grazing was to be considered. If the traveler chose the early spring, he chanced getting out before the grass came in; while if he chose the summer, he risked finding that most of the grass had been tramped or grazed by the animals of earlier Peakers.

Because travelers attempted to make the trip as quickly and painlessly as possible, underhand methods were frequently successful in swindling them. Such organizations

as the "Gold Mine Emigration Company" of Chicago, offered to transport gold seekers across the plains for as little as $50 to $75.[13] To ease the transportation problem, the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak express was organized in May. The original owners of the enterprise failed to meet their obligations and the firstwas taken over by new owners with the e astern terminus changed from Leavenworth to Atchison. The express company did succeed in alleviating part of the transportation problem, eventually making the trip in six days.[14]

Despite the hardships to be encountered, the costs of the trip and the uncertainty of the fortunes to be found on arrival, the rush of '59 swept on. By conservative estimates, more than a hundred thousand fortune-hunters left the security of home for the golden mountains. Not more than forty thousand of these ever reached Cherry Creek, for many turned back or stopped to settle along the way. According to Villard, never were there more than fifteen thousand in the gold fields at any one time.[15]

When the emigrants arrived and discovered that the rich mines they had heard so much about did not exist, the

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[13]Willison, op. cit., p. 34.

[14]Carl Rister, The Southern Plainsman, pp. 49-50.

[15]Villard, op. cit., pp. 116-17.

second stampede began. This time, it carried the gold-hunters back East. The streams of returning wagons seemed to be as strong as those of the advancing pioneers. "Across the plains stretched a double line, some going out to the mines, others returning, uttering maledictions upon the heads of all who had influenced them to seek wealth at Pike's Peak."[16] Down the routes went disappointed and angry men who spread the bad news as they traveled.

> . . .To the men on their way to the mines the news they received from the returning miners spelled disaster and many gave up long before they came in sight of the mountains. . . The month of May seemed, therefore, to mark the beginning of the end of the gold excitement. Even the optimistic editors of the papers in the river towns began to doubt the richness of the mines and some were convinced that the Pike's Peak bubble had "busted."[17]

So embittered were the returning Pike's Peakers that they were militant in their attempts to halt those on their way to find the gold fields. Thayer quotes an emigrant who said:

> . . .We had fought our way against the current that had turned back, who told us that the country was a barren land; that we would starve to death; that Green Russell had not found anything; and that the reports that we had heard were lies. We dared not oppose them nor declare that we intended to come on to the end, because they were so determined not to allow anyone to sacrifice himself, as they called

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[16] Joseph L. Kingsbury, "The Pike's Peak Rush, 1859," Colorado Magazine, IV (January, 1927), 1-6.

[17] Henderson, op. cit., p. 112.

> it, that they were ready to mob and hang us if we did not yield. We had to steal away from them to go on.[18]

Men had left their homes to go West to find fortunes in gold mines they learned did not exist. Throughout the summer of 1859, wagons and footmen paraded through the Cherry Creek region. Some stayed; some went farther into the mountains; some returned home.

Mining Operations

It was immediately apparent that the first extravagant statements of gold discoveries had been but mere supposition. Denver and Auraria were nearly deserted--about a third of the long cabins were occupied. Business was at a standstill and a dreary future was in prospect. Even a general abandonment of the country was a subject of frequent discussion.

The effect of the news of rich discoveries in the mountains was to sustain the reputation of the gold fields. Before the coming of the warm weather, many prospectors had worked in the mountains, especially in the region of Clear and Boulder creeks. George A. Jackson had discovered a considerable amount of gold at the present site of Golden, on January 7. In late December, he followed Clear Creek to Chicago Creek, ascended Chicago Creek, camped and began to prospect. After maintaining a fire on the bank of the

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[18]William M. Thayer, Marvels of the New West, p. 355.

creek for several hours, he was able to thaw out the frozen ground and to pan about nine dollars worth of gold. Having no tools and seeing that the ground was too hard anyway, he returned to his winter camp after marking the location of his discovery. Through his use of gold dust payment for supplies, his secret leaked out and there was an immediate rush to the spot which became known as Chicago Bar, or Jackson Diggings. At about the same time, gold was discovered in Boulder county at the mouth of the little stream that later took the name of Gold Run. The diggings were opened toward the last of January and as a result of these discoveries, the town of Boulder was founded. The vein was not a rich one and was almost abandoned until July when a quartz lode was discovered on the side of Gold Hill .

The richest lode ever discovered in Colorado was uncovered by John H. Gregory on May 7. This vein of gold-bearing quartz is located near the present site of Central City. Gregory ascended the north fork of Clear Creek for some seven miles, coming to a narrow gulch whose sides were streaked with veins of quartz. After penetrating the surface to a depth of several feet, he came to a dirt-like substance which yielded nearly half as ounce of gold, or the equivalent of four dollars. When the find became known, claims were staked off and sluicing began. The inhabitants of Denver were inclined to skepticism when news of the

strike reached them. After several days the story was confirmed beyond doubt and in the rush that followed, Denver and Auraria were nearly depopulated. Villard says:

> On the following day, a universal exodus took place in the direction of North Clear Creek. Whoever could raise enough provisions for a protracted stay in the mountains, sallied forth without delay. Traders locked up their stores; bar-keepers disappeared with their bottles of whiskey, the few mechanics that were busy building houses, abandoned their work, the county judge and sheriff, lawyers and doctors, and even the editor of the Rocky Mountain News, joined the general rush.[19]

The hill on which the Gulch was located rose to a height of 1,600 feet in little more than a mile, the ascent for most of the distance being more than one foot in three. The average time spent in the ascent was an hour and a half. The wagons, loaded with ten or twelve hundred pounds of mining tools and provisions were lifted up the giddy precipice by four or five men at the wheels of each.[20]

Within a month, despite the inaccessibility of the gulch, four or five thousand had arrived, with hundreds pouring in daily.[21] Tents were pitched, pine huts erected, sluices put into operation, covering the narrow gulch to the extent of five miles.

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[19]Villard, op. cit., p. 37.

[20]Ibid., p. 42, citing a letter from Horace Greeley to the New York Tribune.

[21]Ibid., p. 48.

Other quartz veins were discovered in Gregory and adjoining gulches. Green Russell, John Gregory and other expert miners made from one hundred to two hundred dollars per day detecting lodes for newcomers. Horace Greely visited the gulch in June and after his report, a second rush began. "There were at one time, at least ten thousand people crowded into an area of less than four square miles."[22]

Many of the miners did not strike enough pay dirt in Gregory to stay long. They prospected for a few days and then returned to Denver and Auraria or to the States. Others stayed to explore the mountains and ravines adjoining the region of Gregory Gulch where Green Russell struck gold in the bed of a mountain stream on June 1. Hundreds of miners then made their way to the site of the Russell discovery which later became known as Russell Gulch. In four months Russell and his company washed out over one hundred pounds of gold. The diggings also became known as Leavenworth, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Nevado, Eureka, Pleasant Lake, and Dry Gulches.[23]

In July, the Continental Divide was crossed and prospecting was begun in South Park, along the South Platte and its tributaries. Reports of the gold discoveries in this region brought another rush. Hundreds of prospectors

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[22] Ibid., p. 56.

[23] Ibid., pp. 61-62.

with wagons passed through Denver and Auraria, enroute for the South Park. Scale gold had been discovered on a tributary of the South Platte, with the name "Tarryall" applied to both the creek and the diggings. By the time the late arrivals reached the diggings, the choice claims were taken by a few men, much to the disgust of the late arrivals, who gave it the name, "Grab-all." Later discoveries on the south fork of the South Platte were named "Fairplay," in reproach to the injustice of the miners in Tarryall.

In the fall, discoveries were made at Buckskin Joe, near Mosquito Range, and at Spaulding's, Independent Pollard's and Illinois Districts, and French and Negro Gulches, all near Blue River.

According to reports made in the year 1859, the areas of the mining country were described as follows:

> The area of the country deemed to be within mining limits, and upon which more or less gold has been found, extends from fifty miles north of Long's Peak to a line drawn west from Pike's Peak and from the site of old Fort St. Vrain to the valley of the Grand River of the West, embracing in length by one hundred and fifty miles, in breadth, or an area of thirty thousand square miles.[24]

The discoveries in 1859 were marked by rich veins of decomposed quartz, although placer deposits of gold were found. The veins of quartz ran in any direction beneath the surface, varying to some extent in width and richness.

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[24]House Misc. Doc., N. 10, 36 Cong., 1 Sess., p. 6.

In many of them, clefts or crevices, known to the miners as pockets, appeared at certain depth, enclosed by a wall of sandstone, and filled with a yellowish substance rich in gold. The largest quantities of gold came from this pay dirt. Early in the summer the miners used placer methods, mostly sluicing, in the lodes because of the more or less advanced state of decomposition of the quartz in the rock.[25] By July the pockets were beginning to disappear and the veins were followed more deeply beneath the surface. The ores became refractory, necessitating a method of reducing the quartz veinstone. Numerous quartz crushers of crude design were introduced, such as the Arrastre, and the stamp mill.

The Arrastre, which was of Mexican design, crushed the quartz between two millstones, the upper one being burned slowly around by a mule or water power. The grinding action of the two stones surfaces would pulverize the disintegrated granite just as the ancients used to grind their grain.

The stamp mill, a plain, substantial, old fashioned mill was operated by spring water. The stamps were set up along one side of the mill in two sections. Each section had five rows of five stamps each. The first stamp mill operated by steam was used in the Gregory district.[26]

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[25]Villard, op. cit., p. 58.

[26]Ovando J. Hollister, The Mines of Colorado, p. 91.

The principal difficulty that slowed down mining, particularly after the placer lodes began to play out, was the miner's lack of tools. Because these tools had to be transported such distances and partially because the gold seekers had thought to pick up the particles from the ground, tools were set at a high premium. A story showing the ignorance of the miner regarding the easy availability of the gold was current in the days of the gold rush. It tells of a Dutchman in Council Bluffs who was collecting a large number of meal bags.

> . . .When asked what he intended to do with them, he replied, "Fill them with gold at Pike's Peak." When his friends told him that would be impossible--that he could never fill so many sacks, he answered "Yes, I will if I have to stay there til fall."[27]

The seven week journey could be made only with the minimum amount of equipment and supplies. The first miners were fortunate if they had a pick, shovel and pan.

Another thing that slowed down the processes of mining in that year of discovery was the growing pains of the new communities. This growth brought a number of pressing problems. Ditches had to be dug, bridges erected, and road conditions improved.

Gold was not of uniform value in Colorado. The differences in value were established on the basis of the original location (quartz lodes collected in mountain gulches,

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[27]Fritz, op. cit., p. 152.

basin-like gulches or amalgamated sluice gold). The variation ran from $14 to $19 per ounce. This variation in value was a great inconvenience to merchants and dealers in gold dust, especially since the miners tended to appraise their metal too highly.

Since no definite record was kept of the mining done in 1859; no mints nor express companies handled all the gold; and the estimates of miners and bullion shippers did not coincide, there can be no accurate report of the mines output during that year. Fossett says that the estimate of $500,000 in coin value for the gold output in 1859 is not far off.[28] Villard estimates the gold crop up through April, in 1860 at $700,000.[29] It is possible that the variation in figures is accounted for in the first three months of 1860.

Law and Order

In the beginning, the new mining regions had no organized governments. Some form was especially necessary for the legal protection of the miners, since there were no laws to meet mining requirements. Therefore, the miners took matters into their own hands, organizing governments, laying off mining districts, and enacting laws. On May 8 a meeting of miners was held in Jackson Diggings, at which by-laws

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[28]Frank Fossett, Colorado, p. 246.

[29]Villard, op. cit., p. 92.

were enacted regulating the size of a claim and methods of marking it. Officers were also elected. On June 8, the miners of Gregory Gulch met, defined the boundaries of their district, and passed resolutions relating to claims, water rights, and the settlement of disputes.[30] A more formal set of laws was adopted on June 16. Miners' courts were created, embracing in their jurisdiction both mining disputes and criminal cases. Other districts generally followed the same type of procedure. Later laws gradually became more complex and technical as the need for more exacting regulations arose.[31]

When the rate of crime began to grow, law enforcement became the business of the Vigilance Committee which was organized in the summer. Simple democratic methods, a fair trial and speedy justice were the laudable features of these pioneer processes of law and justice.[32]

During the mining season outrages on persons were more numerous in the town than depredations upon property. As food and supplies became more scarce during the winter, however, thieving became common. Shooting frays also occurred frequently. Four murders were committed during the first

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[30]Henderson, op. cit., p. 115.

[31]Thomas M. Marshall, "The Miners Laws of Colorado," American Historical Review, XXV (April, 1920), 426-40.

[32]Hafen, Colorado, The Story of a Western Commonwealth, p. 137.

year; three of the perpetrators were punished with hanging under the lynch law. In September one Vanover was lynched at Golden Gate for various minor offences.[33]

The miners' courts functioned with remarkable efficiency, dispensing impartial justice to all. These tribunals were composed of the people of the district, who elected a presiding officer. The public jury heard evidence and passed on the case. Commenting on these courts, Frank Hall says:

> They didn't need any law in the mountains--they were a law unto themselves, and we have yet to hear of a single instance, wherein any man was unfairly tried or punished, or, if guilty, acquitted by any of these impromptu tribunals, probably because lawyers were prohibited from practicing before them.[34]

Life in the Mining Camps

The population of Colorado during the year of 1859, saw constant shifting. With the Pike's Peak Rush, the towns of Denver and Auraria were suddenly flooded with new settlers--and as suddenly drained. These changes had a profound effect on the prosperity of the region.

The new population of Cherry Creek included all kinds. Anglo-Americans, Germans, Frenchmen, Irishmen, Mexicans, Indians--all had come west in large numbers. Nor was the former occupation of the miner limited to any one category.

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[33] Villard, op. cit., p. 26.

[34] Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado, I, p. 200.

> The next man you meet driving an ox-team, and white as a miller with dust, is probably an ex-banker or doctor, a broker, merchant, or manufacturer from the old states, who has scraped together the candle-ends charitably or contemptuously allowed him by his creditors on settlement, and risks them on a last desperate cast of the dice by coming hither. . . .All these blended with veteran mountainmen, Indians of all grades from the lowest to the wildest, half-breeds, French trappers and voyageurs (who have generally two or three Indian wives apiece).[35]

Richardson wrote: "Denver society was a strange medley. There were . . . trappers, gamblers, desperados, broken down politicians and honest men."[36]

The population was remarkable heterogeneous. It was predominantly composed of men, although many who came in 1859 came to stay, bringing with them their wives and children. The first child was born in Denver on March 8, 1859. An estimate in January, 1860, placed the total population at nearly 8,000.

Many new towns were laid out and established in the summer and fall of 1859. Mountain City, Black Hawk, Mount Vernon, Nevadaville, Golden, Golden Gate, Colorado City--all these sprang up. Denver and Auraria continued to grow with amazing rapidity.

"In the early part of the mining season, life in the mountains was characterized by an absolute want of both

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[35]Horace Greeley, An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859, p. 159.

[36]Albert D. Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi, p. 186.

physical and intellectual enjoyments."[37] The earliest arrivals slept in the open air or in tents, with nothing but blankets for covering. These miners led a dangerous existence, exposed to the elements, falling rocks and forest fires. With the advance of the season, conditions improved as log cabins were erected. Very little change was to be seen in the log cabins of 1858 and 1859. The floors were made of dirt; the holes in the walls were daubed with mud; the doors were wooden slabs.

By October, log cabins were beginning to give way to frame houses, and even a few structures of brick were erected. Villard lists the number of buildings in Denver and Auraria at that time, as "about three hundred and fifty frame, one hundred and forty log, nine brick and a few adobe houses."[38] Wagon paths became city streets and by early winter, there was a three-story business block on the corner of Blake and G. Streets in Denver.

Life in Denver and Auraria had assumed a decidedly fast character. Saloons and gambling halls were patronized by the majority of the inhabitants who partook plentifully of liquor or became ready victims for the gambling halls. Races were a popular sport with all. They even had a play. As early as October, a troupe from Leavenworth, directed by R. C. Thorne, staged a performance of Cross of Gold, or

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[37]Villard, op. cit., p. 132. [38]Ibid., p. 79

the Maid of Crosiary.[39] Public and private dances and theatricals continued throughout the remainder of the year.

A number of small children in Denver necessitated the opening of a private school there. The first school building was a rented cabin holding a total of thirteen children on the first day of school. The school, which was opened on October 3, was taught by A. J. Goldrick, a colorful character who had come into Colorado in a high silk hat and a broadcloth frock coat. His salary was paid by the students' tuition. Goldrick also organized a Sunday School, which included all sects and denominations.

Papers and periodicals generally arrived in Denver at least two weeks from publication. The only papers reaching the reader soon after their publication were the Rocky Mountain News, published in Denver and the Western Mountaineer, published in Golden. Early in 1859, Spalding wrote: "If the people in the states took such an interest in newspapers as they do here, there would be no delinquent subscribers." [40]

Life in Colorado had become easier in the year after the Russell discovery. People lived in better homes;

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[39] Ibid., p. 123.

[40] Hafen, Colorado Gold Rush, 1858-1859, pp. 202-03.

communication with the world outside was improved; varied entertainment was available in the mining towns; and miners laws were established. The prospectors had spread over the mountains, making new discoveries such as those at Tarryall, Fairplay, Buckskin Joe, Hahn's Peak and California Gulch. The primitive exploitation of the gold placer deposits was underway.

CHAPTER III

THE MINER AND HIS RECREATION

People in the Early Camps

Life in the mining camp followed the same unique pattern of any other frontier town in an exaggerated form.[1] When the news of a strike was made hundreds of hopeful people rushed to the scene. There were few visible signs of the diversity of those who came. Men with shady backgrounds mingled with the preacher and the deacon. The college graduate and the illiterate worked side by side over the sluice boxes. All walks of life were represented. They came from everywhere, but a common desire united them--the desire to strike it rich. It was in these surroundings that frontier democracy and provincialism were developed to the degree required by unusual conditions.

> In proper character as a frontier boom town, early Denver was lusty and lawless. The auspices were hardly otherwise. . . . The first steam sawmill in the gold fields was stolen from a flatboat on the Missouri River five hundred miles away. Denver had an even dozen murders before it was two years old; and since there was no jail, the murderers and lesser criminals were either banished or hanged from a convenient cottonwood limb.[2]

The attitudes of the people themselves, were influenced by new surroundings, or by hopes they held on coming.

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[1]Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion, pp. 620-21.

[2]Ray B. West, editor, Rocky Mountain Cities, p. 295.

> Men of culture and education are plenty, yet not always to be distinguished by their dress or appearance. Society is still agreeably free and unconventional. People are so crowded together, live in so primitive fashion for the most part, and are, perhaps (many of them), so glad to escape from restraint, that they are more natural, and hence more interesting than in the older States. Owing to the latter cause, no doubt, it is sometimes difficult to recognize the staid New Englander in the sunburnt individual in sombrero and riding boots, who smokes his pipe, carries his pocketflask, and tells any amount of rollicking stories. He has simply cast off his assumed shell and is himself; and I must confess I like him all the better.[3]

Richardson noticed the differences between the newcomers going into the mines and the stampeders returning home. The newcomers, he said, were "sanguine and cheery, climbing with elastic step, and beguiling the way with song and laughter. But the stampeders. . . left their picks and shovels behind, and trudged mechanically with downcast woe-begone faces."[4]

The pioneer miners or prospectors were a class of characters in themselves. They were not really miners. They came to find gold, establish a claim and move on. "Men of intelligence, often cultivated, generally handsome, mostly moral, high toned and gallant by nature," came with hardly a penny but hoped in terms of millions.[5] They scorned the tedious work of digging and developing

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[3]Bayard Taylor, Colorado, A Summer Trip, p. 58.

[4]Richardson, op. cit., p. 201.

[5]Samuel Bowles, Our New West, pp. 194-95.

a mine, but endured tremendous hardship while looking for it. Walking alone, with a pack mule or burro, or with a pony, the prospector took with him a pick, shovel, gold pan, canteen, great horn spoon, an ax, blankets, a few pans and cooking utensils, a blackened coffee pot, and a battered tin pail. He was wise in mineral experience if not in mining school knowledge. He knew a great deal about mining laws and regulations in different districts and understood that they changed from time to time.[6]

They chanced death from starvation or thirst or from the "desert varmint," but they were wise to the ways of the desert and could find hidden water in twisting canyons or avoid the poisonous animal. "They suffer much and yet enjoy it a great deal. Faith is comfort, and that is theirs; they will 'strike it rich' someday."[7]

When a strike was made, the prospector sometimes stayed on with a few men he had hired and set up a small camp. If the strike proved to be rich, miners soon rushed to it and the boom town was built. "First, came the prospectors, then came the miners, gay ladies, preachers, gunmen, cardsharps."[8] No one needed special training in economics to know that when gold or silver was discovered a boom town would spring into being. Nor did the most

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[6]Richard G. Lillard, Desert Challenge, pp. 171-73.

[7]Bowles, op. cit., pp. 194-95.

[8]Duncan Emrich, It's and Old Wild West Custom, p. 59.

stubborn miner doubt that when the gold vein was exhausted, the town would become the ghost town commonly seen in the mountains of Colorado.

In these early boom towns, the larger portion of the inhabitants were young men from twenty-five to thirty years of age. Respectable women were fewer in number than the dance hall girls and prostitutes.[9] Some writers have pointed out that to the mining communities of Colorado came three general classes of people. In the first place, there were the professional or habitual miners who were a rough, heterogeneous lot, but who were intent on their main occupation. The second large class was made up of men who were not professional miners but who were attracted to the mining camps by the desire to make a quick fortune either in mining or in other businesses and professions. Finally, there were the hangers-on who sought to obtain the miner's gold at the gambling tables, or in the dance hall, or by the more direct methods of murder and robbery.[10] It was said of California Gulch in 1866:

> Most of the claims paid very rich. . .little of which did any good to the original owners of the claims. . . the men and women were mostly bad who were not mining, and they managed to get most of the miner's dust and skip.[11]

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[9]Everitt Dick, Vanguards of the Frontier, p. 270

[10]Dan Elbert Clark, The West in American History, p. 612.

[11]Wolfe Londoner, "Western Experiences and Colorado Mining Camps," Colorado Magazine, VI (March, 1929), 65-72.

The early prospectors and miners were usually improvident spending today's earnings without thought of tomorrow.

Surroundings of the Early Miner

Finding a place to live and protecting themselves from the weather was the individual problem of each miner. Some dug little caves in the hillside, roofing them over in front with a makeshift porch and door-way; others put up a frame work of poles and stretched their tents over the dirt.

All camps followed about the same pattern. First, tents and then log cabins with square hewn timbers housed the avid prospectors or merchants. After the arrival of a sawmill, frame houses were built. Many of these had false fronts which hid the one-story store behind them and helped the miners believe in the enterprise and elegance of their pioneer surroundings, even though they wallowed knee deep in the mud everytime they walked up the street.

Remembering her home in 1862, Mrs. Daniel Witter wrote:

> Our cabin consisted of two rooms, the front one, being the post office and the living room. Dirt roof, board floor--all the other cabins had dirt floors--but a dirt floor in the post office, two windows, one door. . .

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[12]Ingersoll, op. cit., p. 30.

> The mail only came once a week and the men were so anxious for news from home, they would get up on the roof to see if the stage was in sight.[13]

Since the towns were built during the Victorian Period, the architecture followed Victorian tendencies with Greek Revival and Gothic thrown in. Blackhawk and Central City were rich in elaborately carved bargeboards and gabled windows. Georgetown was New England transplanted, especially in its carved wooden posts and picket fences.[14] The area the miner left to come in search for gold greatly influenced the type of home he built.

The natural setting of Golden City was described in 1876 as beautiful, if difficult to reach. The city was located in what had been a beautiful mountain region, but the immediate area had been blighted by mining operations.

> Golden City by daylight showed its meaness and belied its name. It is ungraded, with here and there a piece of wooden sidewalk, supported on posts, up to which you ascend by planks. Brick, pine, and log houses are huddled together, every other house is a saloon, and hardly a woman to be seen.[15]

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[13] Mrs. Daniel Witter, "Pioneer Life," Colorado Magazine, IV (December, 1927), 167.

[14] Wolle, op. cit., p. 6.

[15] Isabella L. Bird Bishop, A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains, pp. 212-13.

The mining camps were generally drab and unsightly. A contemporary reported in 1866 that the road between Blackhawk and Central City was dirty, unpleasant and unkept. The Presbyterian Church, on the other hand, was white, tasteful and charmingly placed high on a hillside. It was about the only pleasant sight on the whole road. Bayard Taylor, a famous traveler and writer, described Gregory Gulch as it appeared in 1866.

> We mount Gregory Gulch by a rough, winding, dusty road, lined with crowded buildings; hotels with pompous names and limited accommodations; drinking saloons,--"lager beer" being a frequent sign; bakeries, log and frame dwelling-houses, idle mills, piles of rusty and useless machinery, tumbled by the wayside, and now and then a cottage in the calico style, with all sorts of brackets and carved drop-cornices.[16]

Leadville, the scene of the greatest rush of them all, experienced more difficulty than any other camp in building to meet its needs. Thousands of people poured into this camp in 1878 and 1879. One observer, writing in 1878, wrote:

> Before the town was built, shaft holes had been sunk in many places on its site, but unsuccessfully. These are now used in some places as wells and stand right in the street with little sheds over them like shrines. There are no sidewalks except along the business streets, and as these are built by each owner to suit the level of his own door. The result is a very uneven line.[17]

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[16]Taylor, op. cit., p. 87.

[17]Don L. and Jean Harvey Griswold, The Carbonate Camp Called Leadville, p. 126.

Leadville was a town of ceaseless activity. It was extremely difficult to make one's way along the street during the day. At night the streets were no less crowded. Miners drifted into the town in swarms. Everywhere bands were drumming up audiences for the theaters and the variety shows. Scores of saloons and gambling places were in full blast. The everyday appearance of the place was of that of a holiday.

In 1879, Chestnut Street, named after Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, was the center of all activity in Leadville. The city was handicapped in laying out new streets as it continued to grow, because during the first burst of excitement, the rushing silver seekers had erected their tents and cabins on any convenient location. The fact that the location might be in the middle of the street was of no concern to the newcomer. Finally, however, by late 1879, many streets and alleys had been cleared and in 1880, Harrison Avenue began to take its place as the most important street. It was on this street that, in 1880, was erected what was advertised as the most elegant hotel west of St. Louis. So successful was this hotel, The Clarendon, that it paid for itself within the first thirty days.[18] Perhaps the most famous building located on Harrison Street was the Tabor Opera House, which was completed in 1879. It

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[18]Griswold, op. cit., p. 126.

was built by H. A. W. Tabor, the greatest of the silver kings.

Any group of prospectors who found a good sized pay-streak of ore called their cluster of tents and cabins a camp or a town, and gave it a name. A year, or ten years later their town might have died or it might have reached proportions that necessitated incorporation. When incorporated, it might retain its original name or select a new one. Since thousands of such mining camps were established, flourished and then died, the history of Colorado's mining is dotted with many towns which are no longer existent.

Since the productivity of the land determined the length of the life of the town, it also determined the location of the town. Wherever gold or silver was found, there a town grew. The camp, or mining town, might be bunched up into deep canyons, ravines, and gulches. Sometimes a mountain valley was wide enough and flat enough to accommodate the town, but more often the houses staggered, one over the other, up a steep hillside, one street level with the rooftops of the houses on the street below.[19]

Access to these mining towns was also very difficult. Roads did not go through them, but had to be built to them. The town frequently was located at the end of the road,

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[19]Emrich, op. cit., p. 53.

since the town existed not as a stopping point on the road to the town beyond, but by itself alone. In some instances a road would appear to go through a town, but closer observation would prove that the town, instead, had two roads entering it from the same general direction. Central City was a town of this kind.[20]

Women of the Mining Towns

Throughout the early days of the mining camps, men always outnumbered women. The population figures for 1860 show a large predominance of men. In that year there were 34,277 people in Colorado. Of this number, 32,654 were men and 1,490 were women.[21] The 1870 census showed a large increase in the per centage of women, but by 1880, following the sensational silver strikes, the per centage of men greatly increased.

In reading about the women of the boisterous mining camps, it is easy to receive the impression that practically all the women were dance hall girls and prostitutes. It is true that any situation of this type attracts the undesirable group of women. In the early days of every camp, this type of women greatly outnumbered all others. There were many courageous, noble women who accompanied their men struggling with the elements to help him in any way they

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[20]Emrich, op. cit., p. 53.

[21]U. S. Bureau of the Census, Eighth census of the United States: 1860, Population, Vol. I, p. 547.

could. Their life in the mining camp was not easy. In traveling to reach the camp they underwent all the hardships of pioneer emigration. Augusta Tabor is, perhaps, the most famous of women like these. Writing of her life, she said:

> Really the women did more in the early days than the men. There was so much for them to do, the sick to take care of. I have had so many unfortunate men shot by accident, brought to my cabin to take care of.
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> I weighed all the gold that was taken out of the upper end of the gulch that summer. There was many a miner who did not know one thing about weighing gold. I never saw a country settled up with such greenhorns as Colorado.[22]

Some writers have expressed the idea that the mountain climate was not good and women lost their youthful appearance early in life. Even young women grew "crow's feet," because of the harsh light of the country.[23]

Perhaps it was women like Molly Brown who fostered the popular notion of the lack of grace of Colorado's women. Known as the "unsinkable Mrs. Brown," she spent a life time trying to crash Denver's society. Despite the fact that her husband had made one of the richest strikes in Leadville, this breezy extrovert with a barroom vocabulary was shunned by the "turn-of-the-century" society of Denver. Undaunted, she went to Europe where she acquired

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[22]Mrs. H. A. W. Tabor, "Cabin Life in Colorado," Colorado Magazine, IV (March, 1927), 72.

[23]Marion Foster Washburne, "Women of the Great West," Harper's Bazaar, IX (May, 1906), 404.

a long list of titled and talented foreign friends. She later won national fame and recognition by her courage and resourcefulness during the disastrous sinking of the Titanic. However, she was never accepted by Denver society.[24]

Throughout all the mining camps prostitutes were openly introduced. The parlor house was the euphemism by which the houses of ill-repute were known. In the early days in Denver the madames supported for their customers the publication of Denver's Redbook. They advertised parlor houses with "23 Rooms, 3 Parlors, 2 Ballrooms, and 15 Boarders."[25] The book guaranteed a cordial welcome to strangers and announced that the parlor houses served only the finest wines, liquors and cigars to gentlemen seeking relaxation.

Mrs. M. B. Hall, the wife of a miner in Independence, tells of the coming of a parlor house to that camp.

> A woman from the underworld at Leadville built a house in the camp and when it was finished, one evening the stage came in with a capacity load of girls, who announced to the crowd gathered round the stage, "We are here, boys."[26]

Many of the girls operated independently without the backing of the madames and without the luxury of parlor

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[24]Roger Angell, "Denver," Holiday, VI (August, 1949), 110.

[25]Emrich, op. cit., pp. 113-14.

[26]Mrs. M. B. Hall, "Experiences in Leadville and Independence," Colorado Magazine, X (March, 1933), 65.

houses. Eventually in most mining districts, they were segregated into little cabins or "cribs" which were illuminated by red lamps and red curtains. Since there were no street numbers, their names were posted in windows or glass doorfronts--Jackie, Billie, Jane, Caroline and Suzie.

Seldom did these women receive much attention in the press. But an outspoken writer for the Central City Miners Register, in 1864, spoke plainly about Madam Wright, whose crib was just below the new Methodist church. "Perhaps such creatures should be permitted to live in a community, but they certainly ought to be severely treated for their offenses against morality and law, and compelled to remove to some remote locality where their presence will not be so annoying."[27]

Language and Humor of the Miner

The language and humor of the people of the frontier towns was naturally flavored with the occupations of the people. Common forms of expression were rough and unique to the newcomer, whose own language usually quickly identified him as new to the camps. To master the miner's dialect was one of the first things a "pilgrim," or "tenderfoot," attempted to do. One needed to be versed in the

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[27]Muriel Sibell Wolle, The Bonanza Trail, p. 398.

miner's terminology to understand his language. For example, if a miner said, "I have panned that fellow out and couldn't get a color," he meant that the person he was talking about was no good or a scamp. A man fortunate in any business was a man who had "struck pay-dirt." Everything viewed in the aggregate, as a train, a family, or a town was an "outfit."[28]

> A hundred expressions of this kind are in common use in a mining camp. Common parlance has long ago wrung the humor from all these oddities of expression; but every now and then something new springs up which as it runs through mining communities as a bit of fun, before its final incorporation into the epidemic vernacular.[29]

The language was also not without the profanity common in a society without women.

> Golden City rang with oaths and curses, especially at the depot. Americans are given over to the most atrocious swearing, and the blasphemous use of our Savior's name is peculiarly revolting. . . . Formerly, even the most profane men intermitted their profanity in the presence of women, [and indeed] a driver of the stage never spoke without an oath, and though two ladies were passengers, cursed his splendid horses the whole time.[30]

Humor, often raw, was found in ludicrous and sometimes painful situations. It was in itself a necessity, for the

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[28]Nathaniel P. Langford, Vigilante Days and Ways, p.330.

[29]Ibid., p. 331.

[30]Bishop, op. cit., pp. 220-21.

miner without a sense of humor or a relish for it, was very rare. The spirit of humor displayed itself on practically all occasions.

Richardson points up some of the situations in which trouble was avoided by the frontiersmen's willingness to laugh.

> One day I heard the bar-keeper politely ask a man lying upon a bench to remove. The recumbent replied to the request with his revolver. Indeed firing at this bar-tender was a common amusement among the guests. At first he bore it laughingly, but one day a shot grazed his ear, whereupon, remarking that there was such a thing as carrying a joke too far and that this was about played out, he buckled on two revolvers and swore he would kill the next man who took aim at him. He was not troubled afterward.[31]

Another way in which the miner expressed himself was in the naming of the mining camps. Many of the names were merely whimsical titles applied to what would probably be a temporary camp. "Fairplay" was named as an expression of disapproval for the greed of the miners at "Tarryall." California Gulch received its name because one of the miners in his surprise at finding so much gold said it was just like California.

There was variety and imagination shown, too, in the naming of the mines. Many mines are known simply by their initials because some of the words were unprintable. Some of these mines were located in nearly every camp. Often

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[31]Richardson, op. cit., p. 186.

mines were named for the women in the prospectors' lives--Stella, Laurel, Lady Allice, Minnie Mae. Others showed the hope and dispair of the miner, such as Last Chance, Matchless, or Hopewell.

Inhabitants of the mining camps showed their feeling for the region and the times by remarking on their surroundings tongue-in-cheek. An entry from the diary of George Clark for June 15, 1880, laconically states, "Quite warm this forenoon. About 3 o'clock went down to see the 'German' hung. . . .There was a great crowd and a good many ladies present. . . .Everything about the hanging went off quiet. Took a walk after tea."[32]

Recreation

In 1860 the principal forms of entertainment in the mining camps were found in the vice areas. In Denver play at the Corral, a hotel and saloon, was described as going on day and night to a repetitious series of tunes offered by a screechy orchestra sitting within a small enclosure at one end of the hall. The orchestra which was found in all the better gambling halls usually consisted of four pieces, fiddle, cornet, piccolo, piano, with occasionally a banjo. Some of the popular songs of the day

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[32]George F. Clark, "Across the Plains and in Denver, 1860," Colorado Magazine, VI (July, 1929), 131-140.

were "Lily Dale," "Yellow Rose of Texas," "Twenty Years Ago," and "Sweet Betsy from Pike."[33] When these were mingled with the clink of glasses at the bar and the noisy call-song of the gamblers at the tables an unusual medley resulted.

Social life in Arapahoe in 1860 was described in much the same way.

> Every fifth building is a saloon, every tenth a gambling hall. There were few brothels as yet. The twin camps together, in fact, contain scarcely a half dozen white women. In want of more the men take freely to the charms of Negresses and squaws. Altogether, it is a male society, seeking its diversions in gambling, drinking, fighting, racing and shooting.[34]

The hurdy-gurdy was one of the popular attractions in the early mining camps. Richardson, the newspaper correspondent, described the hurdy-gurdy in operation:

> "Take your ladies for the next dance!"
> Half-a-dozen swarthy fellows fresh from the diggings, selected partners from the tawdry, bedizened women who stood in waiting. After each dance the miners led their partners to the bar for whisky or champagne; then after a short pause, another dance; and so the sorry revelry continued from nine o'clock until nearly daylight, interrupted only by two fights. For every dance each masculine participant paid one dollar, half going to his partner, and half to the proprietor. This latter functionary who was dealing monte, with revolver at his belt, assured me that his daily profits averaged one hundred dollars. Publicly, decorum was preserved; and to many miners, who had not seen a feminine face for six months, these

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[33] Willison, op. cit., p. 80. [34] Ibid., p. 75.

> poor women represented vaguely something of the tenderness and sacredness of their sex.[35]

Dancing was a universal pastime. John L. Dyer, a Methodist preacher, who traveled to many mining towns, described a ball which was given at Lincoln City in 1862. After dinner at the hotel where he was staying, everyone decided that they must have a ball.

> As I was about to leave, the ladies pleasantly invited me to stay to the dance. Of course, I could not accept the invitation. But they said: "This is an extra occasion, and it will be no harm for you to dance with me; why can't you accept my offer?" The reply was: "You're a lady, but not quite handsome enough for me to dance with." She was taken aback at that, and the others laughed, and I got out, as my cabin was only two hundred feet away. They soon fiddled me to sleep.[36]

Again Dyer tells of a meeting at Buckskin Joe in 1862, held "in the face of every kind of opposition--at least two balls a week, a dancing school, a one-horse theater, two men shot--and yet, notwithstanding all these things, we had a good meeting."[37]

The sports which the inhabitants of the mining towns engaged in tended toward the brutal and were always accompanied by betting. At Central City in November, 1862, a dog-fight was held in a theater with bets of one hundred dollars a side.[38] Cocks were often armed with steel spurs and fought before cheering, betting miners.

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[35]John L. Dyer, The Snow-Shoe Itinerant, p. 145.

[36]Ibid., p. 137

[37]Dick, op. cit., p. 270.

During the Civil War, baseball began to achieve widespread popularity. It spread in to Colorado and became a popular form of diversion, arousing keen, friendly rivalry between the various mining camps.[38]

In Leadville, a typical mining town of a later period, horse racing became one of the important sports among the residents of that booming town. Few women attended the races. In August, 1879, a five day event was held in which Leadville owners pitted their pacers and trotters against entries from Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Denver, and Central City.

In general, recreation in the earlier mining camps was of a much less violent nature than those which were developed later. Camps before 1870 were relatively law-abiding communities and if a sheriff would not cope with undesirable elements, a vigilance committee would. Later camps had railroad transportation making easy transportation for all the gamblers, prostitutes and other undesirable people. In addition, many early mining camps had strict provisions against bawdy houses and gambling halls.[39]

There were other forms of entertainment. Holidays were often the occasion for general celebration in the mining camps. At Gold Hill in 1860 the Fourth of July celebration was the type of amusement in which anyone could

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[38]Fritz, op. cit., p. 178. [39]Ibid., p. 180.

participate with a clean conscience. There was speech making, outdoor luncheon, games, and races. A typical prank of the day was the presentation of a pie which looked like an ordinary pie. When it was opened it was found to contain quartz.

In Boulder the holiday festivities featured a novel form of racing. There was a race between single-jack and double-jack drillers. A fifty dollar prize was given the man or team of men who could drill deeper into quartz in ten minutes.[40]

The first theatrical performance given in Central City was performed as early as 1860 by three daughters of a couple named Wakely. Central City already had a number of gambling halls and saloons, but the Wakely sisters were the first to appeal to the amusement loving propensities of the pioneers. The hall was not large, but took care of three to four hundred people and there was no role Miss Millie (one of the sisters) would not undertake to present. Consequently, Central City was treated to a delineation of all the favorite plays of the time.[41]

The Wakeley's were followed in the theatrical business by a man by the name of Harrison. He obtained the second floor of a building on Gregory Street. The lower floor

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[40]Fritz, op. cit., pp. 177-78.

[41]Hal Sayre, "Early Central City Theatricals and Other Reminescences," Colorado Magazine, VI (March, 1929),47-53.

was used as a saloon. His theater seated seven or eight hundred. He was followed in Central City by the Langrishes.[42]

Denver also had a theater very early. At the height of the gold rush, the players performed over a saloon on Larimer Street. Two of the most famous troupers of the day decided to build a playhouse of their own. Great ceremony marked the opening of their dramatic institution when the produced a wide variety of plays from farce to melodrama to good serious drama and realistic comedy. When one of the men in this partnership, Mike Dougherty, died of drink at Central City, Langrishe established a dramatic circuit which provided Denver with six months theatrical season. Central City was given three months of theater and the other three months were divided among the communities of the surrounding area.[43] Other Theatricals, in the meantime, had set up circuits through the other mining towns.

Maurice O'Conner Morris described one of the early day theatrical performances.

> On Friday evening I repaired to the "Montana," or Mountain Theater, a rough-hewn building of pine--with a parquette and gallery--capable of accommodating a large number. There I saw Hamlet performed, and though the ghost was not very spiritual, Gertrude not very queenly, and the courtiers not courtier-like, yet the play was, on the whole, very

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[42] Willison, op. cit., pp. 113-14. [43] Ibid., p. 50.

> well put on the stage; even the Prince of Denmark, if unlike Fletcher's impersonation, was I thought, really very well rendered.[44]

The miners had their contests, their saloons and their gambling. "The inception of the theatre in Central City was but a natural consequence of the social deficiency existing in the early mining camps."[45]

Opera houses and theaters were fashionable in these mining towns. Every town of any importance built some elaborate structure of this type. In 1877, there were three theaters in Central City. None of the three were suitable for opera. When The Bohemian Girl was given in the Belvidere Theater, the inadequacy of the theater for such a performance was obvious, and an opera house was discussed and built with amazing dispatch. It opened March 4, 1878. Since both the musical and dramatic organizations of Central City clamored for the honor of opening it, there were two formal openings, with the music group appearing first. The finest talent in the country came to this opera house.

The bonanza kings were, as a rule, liberal and even extravagant in their attempts to make the mining camps of Colorado show places. One of the mightiest of these was

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[44]Maurice O'Conner Morris, Rambles in the Rocky Mountains, pp. 130-31.

[45]Lynn Perrigo, "The First Two Decades of Central City Theatricals," Colorado Magazine, XI (July, 1934), 141-152.

Horace A. W. Tabor, who acquired wealth with its attendant power and prestige from the mines of Leadville. Outstanding in his civic enterprises was the elaborate opera house at Leadville. The second floor of this structure was built for a theater, but the major part of the ornate building was designed for opera. The first floor would seat four hundred people and the gracefully curved balcony would seat four hundred more. The orchestra seats were plush, the backdrops and scenery lavish and ornate. An air of magnificent richness was maintained throughout. Tabor was so carried away by his opera house that he built one hotel at Leadville.

Then came the sequel in even more magnificence--the Tabor Grand Opera House in Denver. The new opera house had a two hundred twenty-five foot frontage on Center Street and a hundred twenty-five foot frontage on Sixteenth Street. It had five stories, surmounted by three towers. The material was Golden pressed brick with Manitou white sandstone trimmings. The lot had cost eight hundred and fifty-thousand dollars.[46] Some of his poorer and better read critics suggested that a picture of Shakespeare be hung in the foyer. "Shakespeare?" said Tabor, "What did he ever do for Colorado? I'm hanging my own portrait there."[47]

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[46]Thayer, op. cit., p. 360.

[47]Angell, op. cit., p. 110.

With these opera houses and adequate railroad facilities, the music lovers of the Pike's Peak region were able to hear many of the nation's best artists. Local music was also encouraged. The Denver Opera Club gave Pinafore continuously for a week in the new Tabor Grand in 1881. Dr. Frank Damrosch organized the Denver Chorus Club in 1883.

> When they performed Hayden's Creation on Washington's birthday, his orchestra consisted of eleven men from the Tabor Grand Opera House, ten from the Palace hall in the basement of Tabor Opera House, and twenty-five amateur players with stringed instruments. So popular became the interest in operas and choruses that the ministers objected because so many of their young people were joining troupes and church music suffered a decline.[48]

Leadville, with its tremendous boom in 1879, outshone all the earlier boom towns. Its first legitimate theater was the Schoenberg Opera House. It was opened in 1879, but this opera house soon faded out with the completion of the Tabor Opera House, which was reputed to be the finest theater west of the Mississippi.[49] The Tabor Opera House had its grand opening in November, 1879, with the ever-present Jack Langrishe and his troup presenting the comedy, The Serious Family.[50] Success after success followed. The coming of the railroad, in 1880, made Leadville accessible to stock companies who came for one and two night stands.

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[48]Fritz, op. cit., p. 445.

[49]Griswold, op. cit., p. 269. [50]Ibid., p. 260.

In Leadville, however, the variety theaters and amphitheaters enjoyed even greater popularity. Often these theaters were combined with saloons and gambling halls and the girls who were members of the troupe and waitresses were available for other purposes. The Grand Central Theater, which opened in December, 1879, was the most imposing variety theater of the mountain mining regions. When it opened on December 12, "the first nighters gaped at the two tiers of boxes, 28 in all, for they were 'boxes little less than cozy parlors, handsomely trimmed and curtained in lace and damask,'"[51] Throughout the performances, the hostesses would make the rounds of the boxes encouraging the occupants to treat them to drinks.

The amphitheaters were much like the variety theaters, except that they included attractions other than the singing and dancing predominating in the variety theater. They often offered physical endurance contests such male and female running and walking races, boxing matches and wrestling. One of Leadville's outstanding amphitheaters presented a trapeze artist with a wheelbarrow, while another thrilled the crowds with a dog fight which was to continue until one was chewed to death by the other.[52] There were other types of physical contests.

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[51]Griswold, op. cit., p. 270.

[52]Ibid., p. 271.

There was a variety of other forms of entertainment. In Eldora the Sunshine Society afforded the miners and their families the opportunity for mutual enjoyment, mostly in the form of card playing and dancing. Other societies in other towns also grew up, such as literary clubs which sponsored lectures of high caliber. Churches filled an important role outside its purpose of spreading the gospel in church women's organizations, which frequently sponsored lectures and luncheons.

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons came to Colorado in 1861, and other national brotherhoods were soon to follow.

Early Colorado was a long way from the States and civilization. The early settlers adjusted to their surroundings and soon provided themselves with all forms of entertainment, including music and drama performed by their own amateurs. With the advent of the railroad, people were able to enjoy most of the pleasures they had left in the East.

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESS IN THE MINING CAMPS

Maintaining Order

A recurring problem in each of the mining settlements that sprang up whenever a strike was made was that of maintaining order. The rapid influx of so many diverse types of people in so short a time always resulted in a situation of disorder and lawlessness that the constituted authorities, if indeed there were any, were unable or unwilling to cope with. This was a problem of the earliest mining camps, and of each of the succeeding camps. Mention has already been made of the earliest attempts of the people of Denver and Auraria to establish a system of law enforcement and the hangings that were made in those camps by the Vigilante Committee attest to their success.

The situation which existed in the earliest Colorado towns differed from that in any other pioneer situation. Hundreds of people overnight found themselves in an area where there was no law nor any agents of law or government. Other pioneer advances had been more gradual or had been to areas where government of some kind was already in force. California, for example, at the time of the great rush there in 1849, had a long history of law. The situation found in

the Rocky Mountain camps was different. There was a large movement of population from all parts of the country converging without prearrangement to a common point. They were of no one origin, habitation, or training, except that largely they were Americans.

The first acts of establishing law and order were concerned with setting up mining districts to regulate the making of mining claims. Then followed rules for the governing of social relations for there were no courts or laws in the territory. These early organizations were essentially democratic and illustrate the ability of the pioneer to operate in the absence of any fixed precedent. The miners in each locality by popular meetings established their own courts. In the open meetings there was free speech for all, a general fair discussion, and the final judgement was in the hands of the people.[1]

Even after the coming of a territorial government in 1861, and a state government in 1876, the maintenance of law and order was often the responsibility of the law-abiding elements in the community. Mass action was made necessary when life and property became unsafe and subject to the constant depredations of the thug, the footpad, the highwayman, the murderer and other members of the criminal

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[1]Henry A. Dubbs, "The Unfolding of Law in the Mountain Region," Colorado Magazine, II (October, 1926), 113.

world which were attracted in such large numbers to the boom town.

Like all frontier towns Denver had a fair share of the lawless element. One of the most retold stories of violence in early Denver is about the attempt which was made to mob William N. Byers because he denounced one of the local gang-leaders, a man named Harrison, in his newspaper. In retaliation, Harrison and a gang of cohorts made an armed assault upon the office of the newspaper hoping to shoot Byers. In the gunplay which took place one of Harrison's followers was killed but Byers escaped.

A similar report of another desperado in Denver illustrates the people's ideas of the practice of law.

> . . . Gordon killed two men and was followed by Sheriff Middaugh into the Cherokee country, where he was captured and brought back into Denver for trial. His case was tried by a people's court where he was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. The energy displayed by the sheriff in the capture of this ruffian, and the promptness with which the sentence of the court was executed, had a salutary effect upon the community. Those who believed in law and order were encouraged while the lawless saw that they must either behave or seek some other field of operations. Some reformed and others left town.[2]

During the period up to the early 1880's much of the violence can be attributed to the fact that the habit of carrying arms was universal. Pistols and knives were in evidence everywhere. Inasmuch, as a universal pastime

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[2]Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 384.

seemed to be drinking and gambling, shooting frays were common. Ordinarily, occurrences of this type aroused little attention.

The Denver People's Government was formed in October, 1860, in a determined effort to suppress lawlessness and to improve the condition of the camp. A city marshal was appointed, with eight officers as a police force. A small jail was erected and houses of ill fame were declared illegal in certain districts.[3] The people of this small camp seemed to believe even at this early date that their camp had a future somewhat more stable than that of a mere gold boom town.

In the years following 1860, vigilante committees continued to operate. The punishment of the criminal was not always in the hands of the appointed officers. A report from Central City in 1866 illustrates this rather graphically.

> The age of law and order had not yet arrived. The people pointed out to me a tree, to which one of them had hung a Mexican, last week, on account of an attempted assualt upon two ladies of the place. The criminal was taken from the sheriff's hands and lynched; and the few remaining Mexican residents, who appear to have had no fellowship with him, are ordered to leave the place. Affairs of this kind make an unpleasant impression. The improvised code of a new settlement is no longer necessary here, and it seems to exist by virtue of a lingering taste for rude and violent justice.[4]

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[3]Willison, op. cit., p. 112.

[4]Taylor, op. cit., p. 51.

Law enforcement in early Colorado, despite the vice, crime and violence found in any frontier town, was stronger than that of the later boom towns. The camps before 1870 were relatively law abiding, while the easy access provided by the railroad made camps like Leadville, Aspen and Cripple Creek more subject to crime waves. The undesirables came in such large numbers, that the sheriff and law enforcement officers were unable to cope with them.

Leadville was typical of the later town developments. It was begun with the first silver discovery in 1877. The Leadville of 1878 and 1879 was like most mining camps of this period, the scene of much excitement and a great deal of disorder. All kinds and conditions of men came to the city, but through all of them ran the desire to "get rich quick," with the least possible effort. The miner and the banker, the card sharp and the speculator, the theater manager and the owner of a saloon all had the one common aim. With riches all around them and new strikes every week; with mining claims as well as real estate increasing in value by leaps and bounds, all but a few lost their heads and shared in the general excitement. In the daytime the streets were full of men talking excitedly, and at night riotous excitement enveloped the city which lasted until daybreak. Bands played to entice the miners into the saloons and gambling houses and many were open all night.

It is reported that one theater opened at about midnight in 1879 and closed at four in the morning.[5]

Because of the skyrocketing land values, one of the most common crimes in Leadville was that of lot jumping. Often the owner of a lot would approach his property only to find a group busily constructing a building while armed guards stood by. Since great confusion existed in land titles there was little the owner could do except to try to repossess his land forcibly.

The whole area around Leadville was a maze of conflicting mining claims. Claim jumping became a common occurrence. Irving Howbert, Colorado Springs banker and Leadville mine owner, relates the following experiences in maintaining his claim.

> Owing to the extraordinary richness of the ore on our claim, it seemed to us that almost everybody in the Leadville district that ever had walked over this ground, commenced a suit against us in the next few months. For several years thereafter we were involved in a perfect maze of litigation, and for a considerable time, it became necessary for us to hold possession of the property by armed guards. We erected a small house around the shaft and in the center of it, with sacks of ore, we made a circular barricade which commanded the only entrance. This barricade was occupied by one or more of our group of partners almost every night during the spring and summer of 1859, with arms and plenty of ammunition close at hand.[6]

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[5]Henderson, op. cit., p. 118.

[6]Irving Howbert, Memories of a Lifetime in the Pike's Peak Region, pp. 250-51.

In some cases mountain warfare actually took place over the ownership of a mine. Griswold tells of the ownership contest over the Buckeye Belle. In this fracas the two contending groups of owners both build fortifications in an attempt to gain possession of the mine. Each faction was able to get warrants issued for the arrest of the other, but the combatants refused to submit to arrest. Finally, firing opened up between the two stockades. Several of the fighters were wounded but the only fatality was an onlooker.[7]

The fame of the Leadville bonanza attracted all kinds of unsavory characters, which made for extreme disorder. But much criminal violence must be attributed to hunger and necessity. There simply were not enough jobs to accommodate everyone who came.

By the middle of 1879 there was considerable activity in the organization of a Vigilance Association, for, by now, it was evident that the small eight man police force was not capable of ending what the newspapers called "The Reign of the Footpads." In addition, there was a move on by different groups to band together for their protection. Both merchants and mineowners began working together to form protective associations. The mineowners group was mainly concerned with the problem of claim jumping and was made up of

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[7]Griswold, op. cit., p. 168-70.

smaller mineowners who were unable to hire gunmen to protect their property. The merchants established their own police force and hired guards to patrol the area of their businesses throughout the night.[8]

Finally, on November 19, 1879, a vigilante committee took action and hanged two inmates of the jail. Griswold has printed the contents of a note found pinned to the back of one of the victims.

> Notice to all lot thieves, bunko steerers, footpads, thieves and chronic bondsmen for the same, and sympathizers for the above class of criminals: This is our commencement, and this shall be your fates. We mean business, and let this be your last warning. . . . Vigilantes' Committee. We are 700 strong.[9]

After this lynching there was a noticeable decline in the rate of crime. There was a temporary end, at least, to the lot jumping because one of the victims had been one of the leaders in such enterprise.

A description taken from the account of a visit to Leadville in 1883 shows the changes that had taken place.

> Vice is more prevalent than it is in Eastern cities, and crime does not make so black a record as it does in numerous Eastern towns we might name. In the autumn of 1883, the writer walked through its principal thoroughfare after nine o'clock in the evening and witnessed the same order and quiet to which he had been accustomed at home. True, the

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[8]Willison, op. cit., p. 168.

[9]Griswold, op. cit., p. 175.

> doors of saloons were thrown wide open, and they were thronged with miners from the suburbs; but the crowd was orderly and quiet.[10]

Because of the sensational development of the mining towns, their lawlessness has been exaggerated. In reality the law abiding citizens gained control after a comparatively short period in which murder and crime were rampant. Colorado, like other American frontiers, went through a stage of lawlessness. As in any other American frontier, however, the settlers immediately set about to establish law and order, and as the settlements assumed permanency, the mining camps became orderly organized towns.

Religion and Schools

Another area in which progress was made was in religion and schools. Although they played very minor roles in the very earliest camps, their coming showed the growing up of the town.

"It is true," wrote A. K. McClure, "that I was not nearly so much crowded at church as I was at the race course and at the theater: but it is possible that most of the people were at other churches."[11] There was much religious activity in the early days of Colorado. The circuit riders

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[10]Thayer, op. cit., p. 466.

[11]Glenn Chesney Quiett, They Built the West, p. 167, quoting A. K. McClure in Three Thousand Miles Through the Rockies.

and preachers of all denominations visited the various camps. Churches were built in all the major camps. By 1847, beautiful stone churches had been completed at Denver, Central City and Colorado Springs.[12]

One of the pioneer church men of the Protestant Episcopal Church was Bishop Talbot who made his first visit to the territory in 1861. While he was in Denver, members of the St. John's Church scoured the city for the best singers and a full service was held. One of the singers who had a "wheezy little melodian" accompanied him on his subsequent visitations throughout the region.[13]

Another personality who stands out for his faithfulness in his service to these isolated communities was Bishop Randall. He made great personal sacrifice to bring religion to the Rockies. When he arrived in Denver in June, 1866, he found only two parishes in the area. One was St. John's, at Denver, and the other was St. Mark's at Central City. He came to Colorado as an old man when other men of his age were thinking of retiring and worked seven years, organizing schools and churches.[14]

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[12]Fritz, op. cit., p. 226.

[13]Ibid., p. 225.

[14]Alice Polk Hill, Tales of the Colorado Pioneers, pp. 122-24.

Father Macheboeuf, another early missionary, crossed the mountains to California Gulch to hold regular church services as early as 1860. In many of the communities the churches came early enough to compete with the gambling halls. The Presbyterians founded a church at Black Hawk in 1863. Other communities in the region did not always fare so well. Gold was so plentiful in some areas that the saloons often swept stray pieces out in the street without taking the trouble to examine the debris to look for them, but the pathetic story of Father Dyer reveals that a very few dollars were spent by the miners in the forwarding of religion.

Dyer was a Methodist missionary sent out in 1861 to Buckskin Joe at the height of the excitement. He built himself a pine-bough shelter within a few houses of town and set out to talk quietly to all who would listen. Every night he preached on the street corners and not unsuccessfully, he declared, in spite of the two balls a week, the dancing school, the one-horse theater and the many murders.[15]

Something of the problems of the pioneer parsons can be seen from Dyer's activity in 1862.

> I reached Georgia Gulch on the second of April, and was kindly received. There were about one hundred and fifty people in the Gulch, and I found some few that had been members of some church. I gave out preaching for the next Sunday

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[15]Dyer, op. cit., p. 137.

> at ten and a half o'clock and at French Gulch in the afternoon. The hall was well filled in the morning, and there were about forty hearers in the afternoon. There was a friendly Jew at Georgia Gulch, who proposed to raise the preacher something, and took a paper and collected $22.50 in dust; for that was all the currency then. This amount was quite a help, as there were only ten cents in my purse when I got there.[16]

By the middle of the 1870's churches were established in most of the larger communities. At this time there were two Baptist associations in Colorado. The Methodist Episcopal Church had twenty-five church buildings in Colorado with a membership of 1,336 in 1873. The Presbyterian, Lutheran, Congregational, and Unitarian denominations were also established in the area by this time.[17]

People began to take great pride in the church building and to compete with each other in acquiring extravagant articles from great distances. The Presbyterian Church in Lake City, which was founded in 1876, boasted a bell which was freighted from New Jersey across two mountain ranges in a wagon.[18] Stained glass windows were brought in by other churches, while others bought elaborately carved altars and pews. The Victorain architecture provided numerous opportunities for extravagances.

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[16]Dyer, op. cit., p. 138.

[17]Fritz, op. cit., p. 226.

[18]Wolle, op. cit., p. 347.

Whether the churches were founded early or late, the early church services of any community were held in saloons, gambling houses, school houses, private homes, or anywhere the minister could find room and someone to listen.

> The Reverend Joseph Gaston of Ouray received permission to talk for fifteen minutes in one "club room," during which time the faro dealer left his chair and the preacher mounted it for a rostrum. . . . The three hundred within the sound of his voice stood with uncovered heads, paid rapt attention, a few joining in the recitation of the Lord's Prayer which closed the service.[19]

In California Gulch the Episcopal minister found about the same situation in 1878.

> The following Sunday service was held in the only available place--an upstairs room over a saloon, where there were cracks in the floor an inch wide that gaped down on the crowd drinking at the bar and gambling over the green tables below.
> The chips clinked, the faro dealer shouted, the men shuffled about as the bartender served the drinks.[20]

Some preachers did not depend entirely on their faith in God to achieve the desired results. One of these was the "Fighting Parson," T. A. Uzzell, who established a church in Leadville. He believed that the strength of God was also in a strong right executed at the proper time. After he had raised the money to build a church, he saw some strange men unloading lumber on his lot, and realized

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[19] Ibid., p. 326. [20] Ibid., p. 54.

that they were going to jump the property. When they did not listen to his words, he stripped off his coat and made a determined assault on the invaders. Later he told a friend, "I made up my mind, if the Lord wanted me to recover that lot He would give me strength to lick those fellows.. . and He did."[21]

The growth of the church has paralleled the development of Colorado. Church establishment began to function in Colorado in the 1850's and from those pioneer beginnings continued to spread as settlement expanded.

The people who came to Colorado in 1858 and 1859 came to hunt gold, not to found homes. Most of them were unmarried, and those who were had left their wives at home. They had come to make their fortunes and return to their homes to live. In these temporary settlements, there was little need for a school.

As time passed and men learned that fortunes were not to be had in a summer, they sent for their families, and the newcomers brought their families with them. These families brought with them the educational traditions of their homes, which soon asserted themselves even in the still thinly populated regions.

The first school in Colorado was established at Denver. It had no building of its own, and met in a one-room

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[21] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

log cabin with a mud roof. Though inadequate, it happened to be available and centrally located. It was called the "Union School" because it was attended by students from the several parts of the divided Denver.

The first school house built in Colorado for that purpose was built in Boulder in the summer of 1860. Abner R. Brown, who came to Colorado in search of gold, promised the people there that if he did not make good in the gold fields, he would return and open a school. A short experience in mining was enough to convince him that his business was school teaching after all. He then opened a private school in a two room cabin while the people took up subscriptions to build the school house. The new building was completed by October, 1860, at a cost of $1,200, and Brown's salary was paid through the tuition charged to the students.[22]

In 1862, O. J. Goldrick organized the first public school in Denver and became the superintendent. He remained many years in the public school work in Colorado. The first public school system was established in Denver by general assembly, which voted to finance the system by certain portions of mining claims. It provided

> . . . that hereafter when any new mineral lode, of either gold bearing quartz, silver, or other valuable metal, shall be discovered in this territory, one claim of one hundred feet in length

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[22]Henderson, op. cit., pp. 124-25.

> on such lode shall be set apart and held in perpetuity for the use and benefit of the schools of this territory, subject to the control of the legislative assembly.[23]

This act had hardly any direct advantage for the public schools. In the later camps it was the responsibility of the local citizens to build schools when necessary. They were usually late in arriving. They almost invariably consisted of but one room with one teacher for all ages and sizes. Often the town promoters would contribute a lot for the site of the school.

Changes in Mining Methods and Financing

The early prospectors were primarily gold seekers. They confined their first search to the free gold that was found in the sands and gravels of the mountain streams. The process of obtaining this gold was simply physical. This placer mining could be done on a small or large scale. Soon, however, these easily obtainable stores of gold were exhausted and a search for the original source, or mother lode, was made. If the mother lode was discovered a mine was opened and the gold bearing vein was followed into the earth. Obtaining the ore from these underground mines became a highly complex undertaking. Skilled labor became essential for profitable working of the mine. The ore found

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[23]Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 394.

in the mountainsides was not pure but was combined with quartz and other minerals. Methods then had to be devised for extracting the gold. Once out of the ground the ore had to be milled, that is ground or crushed so that the metal could be separated from the rocks. Then methods similar to placer methods of mining were used in finally extracting the gold. The deeper the mines were dug, the more varied the ore became and simple methods of milling were no longer satisfactory in extracting the gold. Smelters and reduction works then had to be built to cope with the complex ore bodies.

Methods of mining silver were similar to those in mining gold. Most silver deposits, however, are not free ore but are found mixed with other metals. Ore deposits of this kind were frequently found in huge masses. This vastly complicated the mechanics of mining.

The transition from simplest placer mining to difficult lode mining is seen in the development of mineral resources in Colorado. Perhaps the best example can be found in the mining operations of California Gulch. The richest gold discovery of 1860 was made by John O'Farrell in California Gulch in March on the spot where Leadville later mushroomed. The immediate result of this discovery was the starting of a lively mining camp. By early summer nearly five thousand men were conducting mining operations in California Gulch. Parts of the gulch were fabulously

rich, but the water supply was limited. This was used over and over again by each miner, and by the time it reached the lower part of the district it was of the consistency of liquid mud. Despite this handicap the mining camp was the most productive and prosperous in the mountains. Some claims yielded over a thousand dollars a day, and one firm was reputed to have taken out one hundred thousand dollars in sixty days.[24] The separation of the gold was hampered by the heavy black sand which the miners cursed because it clogged the riffles of the sluices and accumulated in the bottoms of the pans and rockers. Not until twenty years later was this sand found to be carbonate of lead, rich in silver.[25] The principal mining camp in the area was Oro City.

In 1860-1861, Oro City was a typical wide-open mining camp. Saloons, gambling houses and brothels lined the gulch road for miles and the six dollars a day the ordinary workman earned was always spent by the next morning.[26]

By 1862 the output of the placer mines became less and less profitable. By 1865 less than five hundred miners were left in the gulch and most of them, too, soon drifted away.

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[24]Frank Fosset, op. cit., p. 407.

[25]Ernest Ingersoll, The Crest of the Continent, p. 210.

[26]Willison, op. cit., p. 142.

The few miners who remained in Oro City did so because they were hoping to discover the lode from which the placer deposits had come. Finally, in 1868, when a new process for recovering the gold was introduced, the Printer Boy mine caused a new excitement in the region. Activity was confined large to this one mine and the new arrivals began to drift away. By 1870 the entire gulch was almost deserted. The sleeping town was not awakened until the silver discoveries in the late seventies.[27]

In the more difficult lode mining and the reduction of refractory ores more capital was needed for developing a gold or silver mine. Attention of eastern capitalists became focused on Colorado mines. In 1863 and early 1864 there were formed a large number of companies for the exploitation of these mines. Large amounts of machinery of a very modern and often useless type were freighted across the plains, many mills were erected, high salaried officials were placed in charge of operations and the companies hoped for quick and large returns.[28] The mining companies which were organized in various eastern cities on mining properties of Gilpin, Clear Creek, and Boulder companies, had a capital stock which mounted into the millions of dollars. The entire history of these company investments and operations

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[27]Griswold, op. cit., p. 14.

[28]Henderson, op. cit., p. 116.

was deplorable.[29] With the increase of speculation, mining stocks were sold by salting (placing gold-bearing ore in barren mines), and other dishonest methods. Some of these mining companies were legitimate and honest business. Others possessed titles which were partly or wholly fictitious. The common mistake of the companies was the purchasing of mining property scattered throughout the goldfields rather than buying contiguous claims on the same lode for more profitable exploitation.

Although eastern capital did begin to enter the state, it was not a significant factor until it moved into Leadville. Fossett, writing in 1880, said:

> For the most part mining has been conducted by men of limited means or no means at all when they started in. These mountaineer prospectors and miners have worked out their own salvation, and have made their state rich and famous almost by their own unaided labors, strong hands, and characteristic energy and enterprise. But little outside capital came in to help them during the fifteen years of the State's greatest progress. What has been secured is due to the splendid showings and remarkable returns previously made.[30]

By 1880, huge financial structures began to be erected, thereby changing the character of the mining towns. There occurred a conspicuous separation between the mine-owner, mine manager and the miner. Eastern owners were far removed from the mining town and its interests and were mainly interested in as large a dividend as possible. The

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[29]Fossett, op. cit., p. 134. [30]Ibid., p. 221.

managers and engineers began to form a separate class in the mining towns. The miner no longer had the opportunity to strike it rich, because mining had become big business.

The Miner as a Laborer

A study of the life in the mining camps shows that those who made the rushes had come from all walks of American life to strike it rich. They had a strong notion of independence and freedom. The young and vigorous made up a large part of these ventures. They were able to survive all the disappointments that were involved in prospecting. The rigors gave rise to a daring, reckless spirit that colored life in the mining camps. They enjoyed living dangerously.

When the miner was forced to work as a laborer, it was only to earn enough money to attain a grub stake. Why should a prospector work for someone else when he might go up a gulch and establish a claim of his own? By 1880, however, this was different, man might escape by way of prospecting, but it was not easy. The silver mining of the Leadville district had large scale underground workings which required miners. The smelters also required many workers. Thus, it was inevitable that a distinct working class grew up.

Stories of the fabulous wealth to be acquired in Leadville attracted thousands of hopeful people. Even in 1880

the influx continued. Thomas Ingham describes the conditions there.

> It is astonishing what a vast number of people are still rushing to Leadville; yet we were told by reliable men from there that there were perhaps ten thousand idle men in that city, many of them without money or means of subsistence, depending upon "luck" for a square meal, and on their blankets for lodging. We saw men en route for that place from every State from Maine to California. We encountered many from the Eastern States, as well as from California and Nevada; even Idaho Territory is represented in the list. People in the East little know of the tricks of towns and railroads, by which they get up a "boom" and an excitement, as may suit their purpose.[31]

So many of these men who rushed to the area had willingly taken jobs at the mines, then paying three dollars per day to underground workers and two dollars to surface workers. For this pay they worked ten hours a day. Such wages were considered big money in the East. Eastern investors were astonished when the men became dissatisfied.[32]

The first union of miners in Colorado was formed in January, 1879. It was called the Miners' Cooperative Union and was affiliated with the Knights of Labor. In May, 1880, the union took action to increase wages a dollar a day and to make eight hours the standard day throughout the camp.[33]

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[31]G. Thomas Ingham, Digging Gold Among the Rockies, p. 273.

[32]Griswold, op. cit., p. 181.

[33]Vernon H. Jensen, Heritage of Conflict, p. 22.

The strike which ensued following the miner's demand for a raise began in a somewhat spontaneous manner, for there was widespread dissatisfaction. In addition to the raise in pay and the eight hour day, the miners wanted the right to select their own shift bosses. When workers of the Chrysolite company were refused their demands, they left their jobs. These workers then began marching to other mines in the district where they were joined by the workers in those mines. Soon there was a group of more than one thousand marching miners.[34]

Michael Mooney, president of the union, assured the mine managers that no property would be damaged because there was great fear that the miners might damage the mine properties if their demands were not met. Of course, there was some violence when the mineowners tried to reopen the mines with new workers. Joseph R. Buchanan, a newspaper man who supported the strikers, described the situation which existed.

> The managers employed every available man who could handle pick or shovel, hold a drill or swing a sledge. Sthe strikers used every means at their command to keep men from going to work. . . .The methods employed were not always diplomatic, and sometimes they were a little bit coarse. Every day, and sometimes twice each day, a "committee," composed of several hundred strikers, made the rounds of the mines that were working. On several occasions these visits were marked by

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[34]Griswold, op. cit., p. 191.

> clashes between strikers and mine guards. Fists, clubs, and sometimes pistols, were used, but without fatal results.[35]

Several fruitless efforts were made to settle the dispute. On June 10, the strikers offered to compromise, but their offer was rejected. As tension tightened, mine-owners fortified their property and threatened to close down the mines for six months. No settlement seemed in sight until Governor Pitkin was induced to declare a state of martial law in the city. Leaders of the strike were ordered arrested and they could no longer direct the strike. Thus ended a strike which marked a new era in the life of the mining camp.

End of an Era

Many other discoveries of gold and silver were made after 1880, but they were no longer the pioneering ventures of the two decades following the Russell discoveries. Throughout this period, with each new strike, a camp sprang up. The camp flourished until the ore played out. Then the venturous miners left the camp for better diggings. The camp died out and, unless new discoveries were made, remained a ghost town.

During the mining camp's brief existence, there was the quest for wealth, the quest for pleasure, the quest for

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[35]Joseph R. Buchanan, The Story of a Labor Agitator, p. 14.

law and order, and the quest for adventure. Some of the people who came to the boom towns did find fortune but they were few. The thousands that made the rushes found that disappointment and disaster was just as frequent there as any where else. The great majority of them became workers. They made up a labor force like none other. Independent men who set out early to strike it rich had a profound influence upon the history of the West.

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