

EVERY CLOUD HAD A SILVER

LINING DURING THE

1893 PANIC

BY

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silver lining during
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INTRODUCTION

SILVER VERSUS GOLD CREATES A DEPRESSION AND PANIC

The Gunnison country was one of the greatest silver producing sections of the state of Colorado. When the silver panic of 1893 hit the Gunnison country, it had a devastating impact on the silver mines of the Gunnison country, as well as many other silver mining towns across the West. During 1893-1894, the gold to silver ratio increased from twenty-four to one to thirty-four to one and the value of silver fell to forty-nine cents.

Since its founding, the United States had been on a bimetallic standard and gold and silver were both used as legal coinage. Periodically, over the years, the dollar value was adjusted according to the commercial value of the two minerals, gold and silver.

During 1853, the California gold rush depressed the price of gold because of the overwhelming amounts of gold discovered, and at the same time, depressed slightly the value of silver. The value of silver was further depressed by new discoveries of silver in Colorado and Nevada and in 1873, the Coinage Act was passed which placed the country on a gold standard and terminated the use of silver. The passage of this act created an uproar among angry silver miners and in 1878, the Bland-Allison Act was passed, which required the federal government to purchase not less than \$2,000,000 and not more than \$4,000,000 worth of silver per month which would be used for coinage. Shortly thereafter, huge new

discoveries of silver were made in Leadville, the San Juans, Arizona and Nevada, and the end result was that the silver market was flooded and the value of silver in relation to gold showed a sharp decline.

All through the 1880's, the value of silver in the dollar continued to decline and the value of gold in the dollar continued to increase. Something had to be done. Congressmen representing the Western states were worried because their states depended heavily on silver, so they demanded unlimited coinage of silver.

As a result of the pressure from the congressmen from the Western states, and also to appease the gold advocates, a compromise was reached in the form of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1890. The Sherman Act specified that the government was to purchase four and one-half million ounces of silver every month. This action was supposed to increase the value of silver in a dollar to eighty cents, and to decrease the gold to silver ratio to 18 to 1, instead of 16 to 1 as it was in 1853, when the first significant evidence of the depression of silver surfaced.

The government treasury soon found it had an ever-increasing stockpile of silver that declined in value with every passing day, and by 1891, the ratio was twenty to one, with seventy-six cents worth of silver in each dollar.

After the collapse of the Banking House of Baring Brothers in London in 1891, and with declining gold reserves - partly due to helping Europe's declining economy - a severe depression fell upon the country. President Cleveland believed that a major reason for the crisis was the constant battle over bimetallism and he felt a return to the gold standard would bolster the economy. The president called Congress into special session and asked for the immediate repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. The act was repealed in October, 1893.

CHAPTER I

RUBY-IRWIN: WE WON'T BE A GHOST TOWN

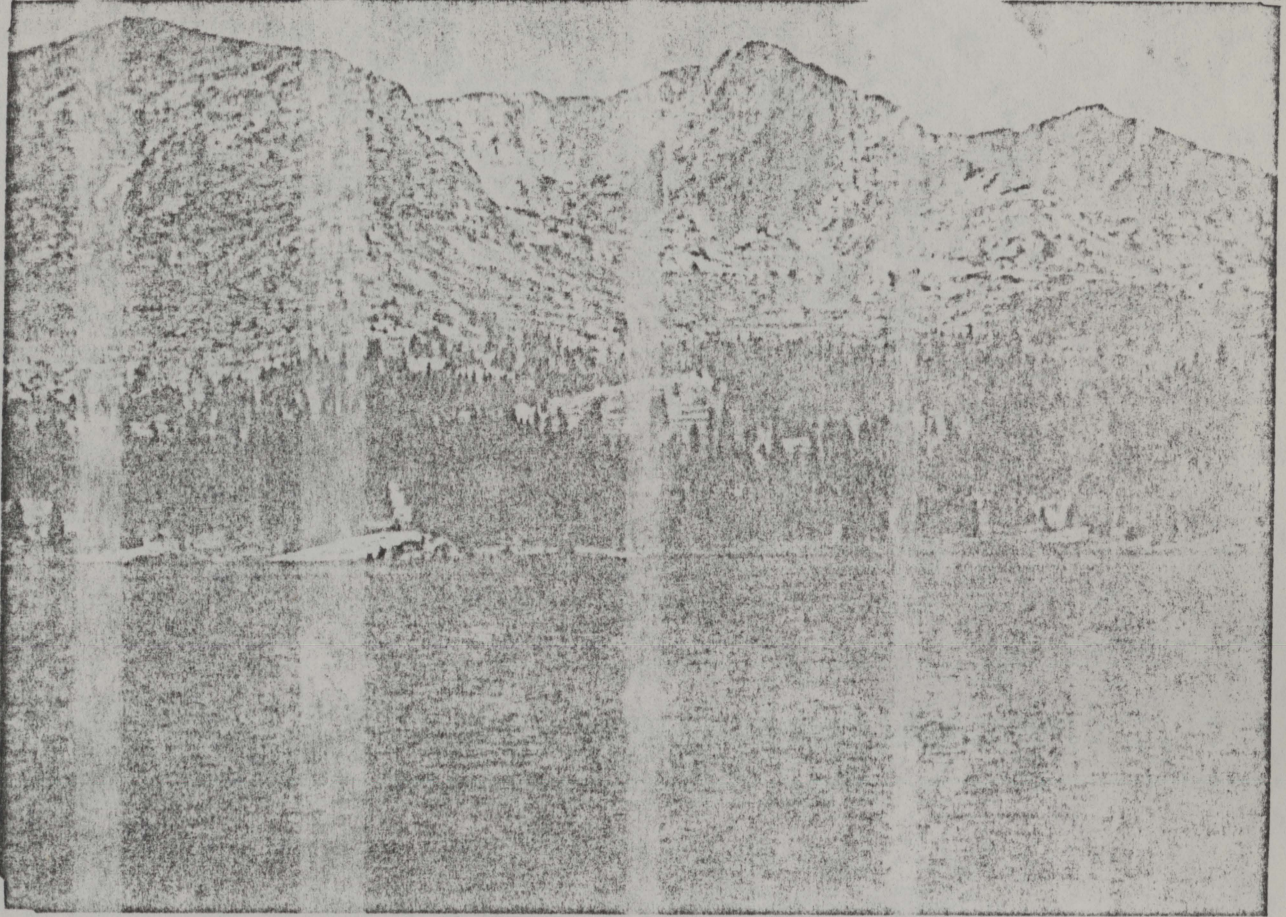
For a long time the people of Irwin had been feeling the results of a decline in the price of silver. Their status symbol of a thriving town - a newspaper - had ceased to exist when John E. Phillips had quit publishing the Elk Mountain Pilot in 1884 and had decided the grass was greener on the other side of the mountain. With heavy heart, he had left Irwin forever.

Irwin's economy had declined to "rock bottom" from its boom days in 1880-1884. By 1893, the population had declined from around 2,000 people to 200 summer residents and from fifty to seventy-five year around residents - some of them families. There was a feeling of general concern and even anger, about the silver crash, but most of the people had the attitude that whatever happened would happen and there was nothing that they could do about it.

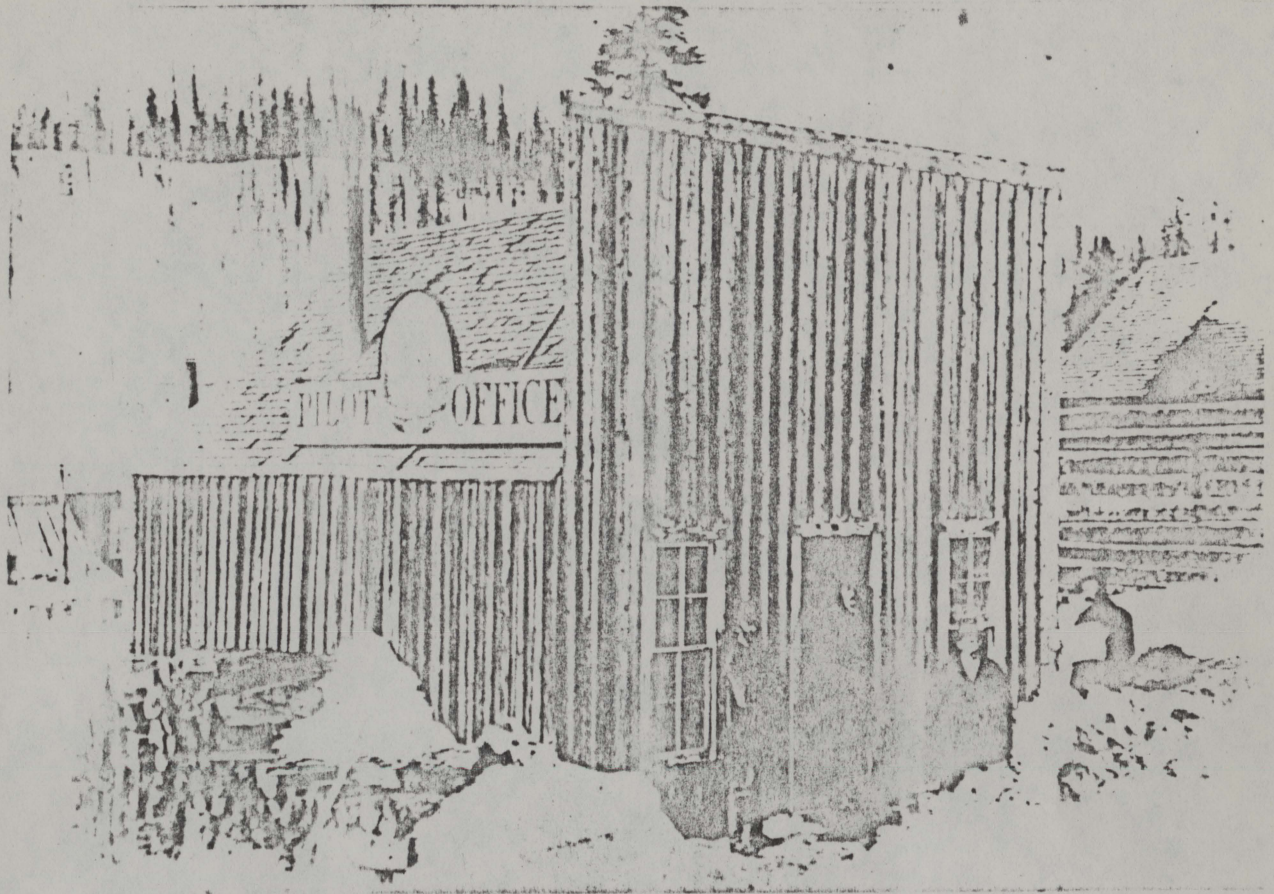
Ruby-Irwin had been one of the Gunnison country's most noteworthy silver mining camps. The Ruby Belt, in the Elk Mountain country, was named from the large proportion of ruby silver in its ores and was six miles in length north and south and three miles in width.¹ Founded in 1879, the mines in the Ruby Mining District produced approximately \$500,000 worth of silver during their four years of peak production.

Located seven miles southwest of Crested Butte, at an elevation of

¹R. E. S., Special Correspondent, Gunnison & San Juan (The New West Publishing Company, 1881) p. 12.



The Beautiful and Mineral Rich Ruby Mountain Range



(Figure 3-3) - Elk Mountain Pilot Office - Although the Elk Mountain Pilot editors Phillips and Lacey were forced to move into a poorly-constructed cabin upon their arrival in Irwin, it was not long before they managed to construct a substantial office. The Pilot sign was added to the building in May of 1881. The gentleman in the doorway is probably the champion booster of the Gannison Country himself, John E. Phillips. (State Historical Society of Colorado Collection)

10,300 feet, nestled by the Ruby Mountain Range and near the present site of Lake Irwin (formerly Lake Brennand) Ruby-Irwin was rich in silver deposits. During the peak silver boom years in the Gunnison country from 1879 to 1884, mines produced 1,826,914 ounces of silver valued at \$2,054,739. Of this amount, the Irwin mines contributed twenty to twenty-five percent.²

Irwin's most famous mine was the Forest Queen. "This mine now shows more ore of high grade in silver than any other mine."³ In the summer of 1893, F. W. Fuller, owner of the Forest Queen, had between 790 and 800 tons of ore that were ready for concentration. However, he decided he would wait until silver prices made some kind of recovery and transportation costs went down before he shipped his ore.

By the time the crash hit Irwin later in 1893, F. W. Fuller had just made an exciting discovery. He had discovered some top quality specimens that would assay out at from 500 to 1,300 ounces per ton. Mr. Fuller shipped 300 pounds of the mine's finest specimens to Denver where they were displayed at the Chicago World's Fair in the Colorado exhibit entry.⁴ Even though Mr. Fuller had made this discovery, by 1893 the mining activity at the Forest Queen had slowed down considerably from the "boom" days. The main reason for this was the absence of large quantities of high grade ore. Bad luck had also struck this mine in 1885 when an arsonist set fire to the works and burned the mill, assay office, shaft house and destroyed many of the tools. The Forest Queen never totally recovered from this disaster.

²Walter Borneman, "Irwin: Silver Camp of the Mountains" (Master's Thesis: Western State College, 1975), p. 125.

³John K. Hallowell, Gunnison Colorado's Bonanza Country (Colorado Museum of Applied Geology and Mineralogy, 1883), p. 39.

⁴The Gunnison Tribune, 28 January 1893, p. 3.



The Forest Queen Mine Tunnel Entrance
(Denver Public Library)

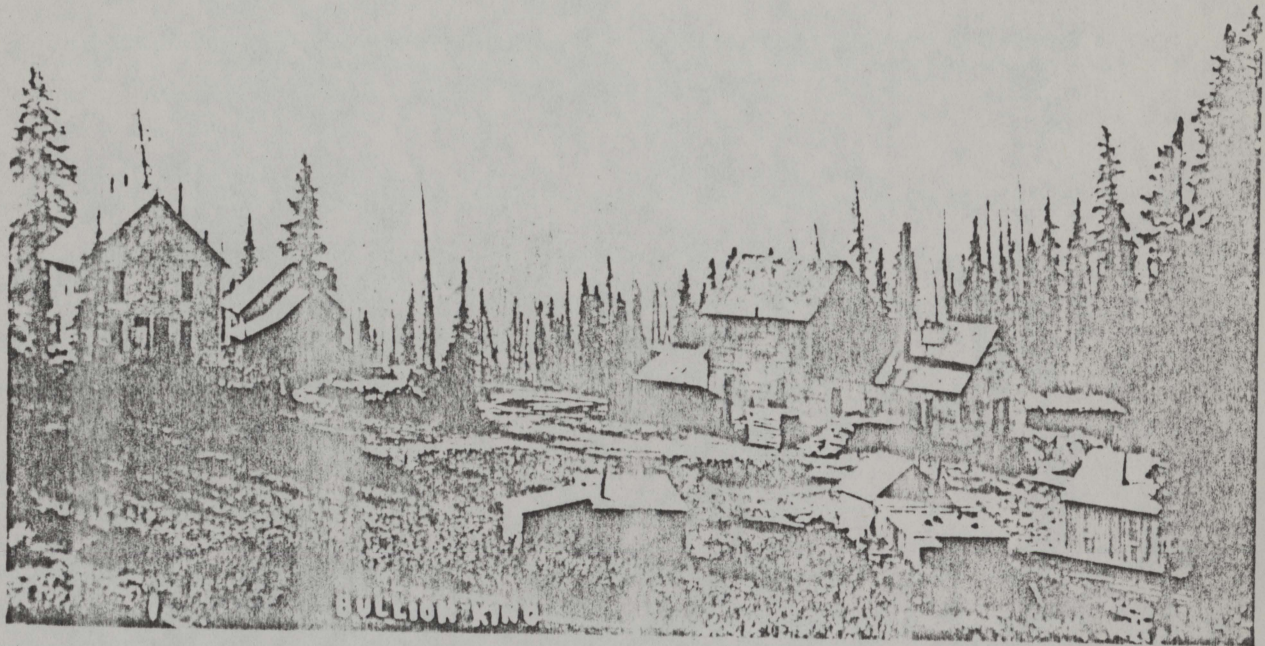
The other most famous silver mines of Irwin were the Ruby King, Bullion King and the Ruby Chief. Of these, the Bullion King was the best producer. The reasons for this were that P. F. Ropell was a very good manager and worked a smaller crew to cut down costs, and good ore was extracted and shipped out in small but steady amounts. A lawsuit was filed against the owner, the Ruby Chief Mining and Milling Company, and in 1888 operations at the mine halted for a long time. When the 1893 crash hit Irwin, there was little mining activity in the area.

All of the mines in the Ruby-Irwin camps had common problems. Besides an absence of high grade ore and a decline in capital money from investors, water seepage into the lower shafts and tunnels made mining in certain areas difficult, if not impossible. Transportation over Ohio Pass, which was the most used route, was an unbelievably hard task in the wintertime with the constant threat of avalanches and the bitter cold weather. For these reasons, by early 1893, mining activity in the Ruby-Irwin camps had slowed down considerably.

However, during the summer of 1893, there was still some mining activity going on in the Ruby Chief group, but the owner, Captain J. V. Taylor of Chicago, was trying to sell his claims because his confidence was "entirely destroyed."⁵

In the summer of 1893, a spur of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was constructed from Crested Butte up the Coal Creek Valley to within one mile of the Forest Queen mine, so Mr. Fuller loaded up the ore he had stored and shipped the first carload of ore from Irwin, even though he knew he would not make a profit because of the low price of silver.

⁵The Gunnison Tribune, 22 July 1893, p. 3.



(Figure 5-5) - Bullion King Mine - The Bullion King mine was located a half-mile west of Lake Brennan and on a dollar for dollar return on investment was the best mine in the district. This view looks south toward the Anthracite Range and shows the boarding house, residences, and mine buildings which were almost totally destroyed in the avalanche of February, 1891. (Denver Public Library, Western History Department Collection)



The Ruby Chief Mine Tunnel Entrance
in March of 1883. Look at the Snow!
(State Historical Society of Colorado
Collection)

After this, the Forest Queen's mining activity came to a halt until work was resumed there in November of 1893 with a small crew of miners at a reduction in pay of from three dollars a day to two and one-half dollars a day.

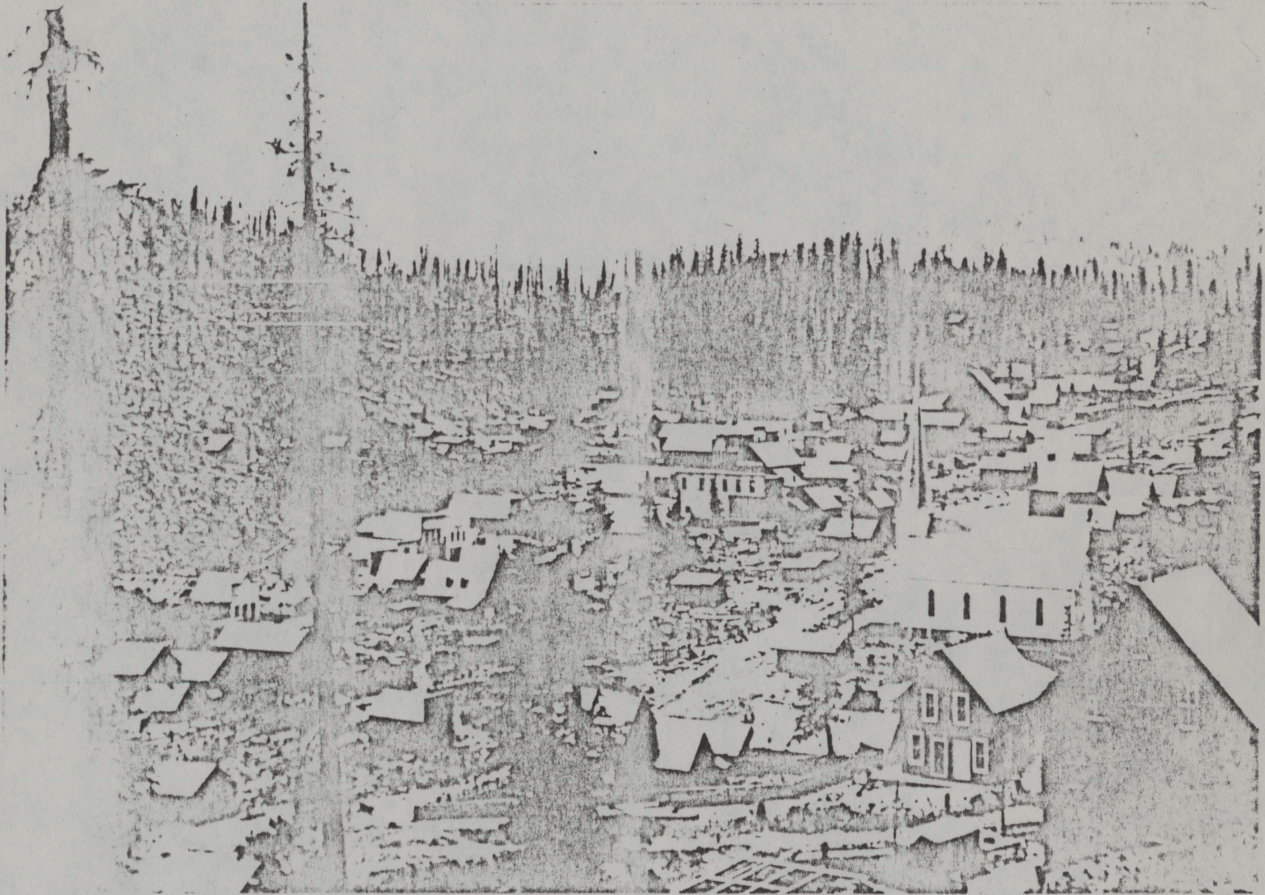
Irwin could have folded up and become a ghost town in 1893 when the silver panic struck. However, determined men lived in Irwin that cared about Irwin's existence and loved the town and the country surrounding it. Men like Dick Irwin, the founder of Irwin, Ropell and Fuller all fought for Irwin's existence. Many of the people in the town, however, were feeling frustrated and cynical about the future. Irwin's mayor, Ed Croke, published the following poem which seemed to sum up the feelings of most of the people of Irwin as well as many of the residents of Colorado.

Oh, almighty, all-powerful, all-wise most glorious,
grand and worshipful Grover, Thou who sittest in Washington
and smitest thine enemies with the lightning of thy
wrath; who rewardeth those who serve thee and chastiseth
those who do not do thy bidding; the lightning of thy
wrath is terrible. We bow before thee in humble submission.
Stick out thy big toe that we may kiss it....
Thou commandest the people to follow them (John Sherman
and others) out of the wilderness of "Free Silver Coinage."
And thou didst command Sherman and Dan to put a serpent
on a pole, that whosoever had been bitten might look upon
it and be saved. And the elders did fall down and worship
the golden serpent....

Oh mighty Cleveland, we thank thee for consenting
to be president....We thank thee for the low price of
wheat - we could buy two and one-half bushels for a dollar,
if we had a dollar. We thank thee for the millions out
of employment, for now we can hire a hand when we want to
and get him at our price....We thank thee for the patches
on the seat of our pants, for the people will not mistake
us for a banker. We thank thee for the good dollar that
we have not got....thine shall be the political glory as
long as our patches can be made to hang together.

Amen.⁶

⁶Borneman, "Irwin: Silver Camp of the Mountains", pp. 205-206.



(Figure 3-5) - Irwin from the Forest Queen Mine - One of the classic views of Irwin, this picture was taken from the Forest Queen mine looking northwest and shows the Presbyterian Church on Tenth Street and the row of business establishments along Ninth Street. "The Dyke" runs south from Ruby Peak in the background. (State Historical Society of Colorado Collection)

The demonitization of silver did not mean the complete end of the town of Irwin because of men like Irwin, Fuller, Ropell and Croke. However, it did mean the end of hopes and dreams that Irwin would ever again be the prosperous and lively mining town that it once had been.

CHAPTER II

IF SILVER WON'T MAKE IT, LET'S GO FOR GOLD

Many of the other silver mines in the Gunnison country were doing only developmental and assessment type of work in the early part of the 1893 silver crash. They had already felt the effects of an acute drop in the price of silver and were waiting and hoping better times were ahead.

Mr. D. T. Robley, one of a group of men from Buena Vista which included E. N. Snell and Sam Cupplies, had been working assessments on his claims on Brush Creek when he discovered some excellent ore. He was very sure his claim was the best at the head of Brush Creek, but he was unable to process the ore and ship it out because of the drop in silver prices. He decided to wait and see if silver prices would go up in the months ahead.

In August of 1893, with silver at seventy cents an ounce, there were hardly any silver mines in all of Colorado taking out ore unless there were other valuable metals to be found along with silver such as copper, galena, lead or zinc. The mines that had closed would only be able to reopen after water was pumped out of them and a new work force was found. This made the general mining picture in the Gunnison country even more dismal.

Along with the silver mines, many gold mines had also been forced to close because of the beginning of an economic depression that forced smelters to charge higher prices. Smelters could only afford to smelt ore from any mine at a low price when it could mix with other ores such

as lead, iron and other fluxing materials.

Of the gold mines that continued working when the price of silver was so low, a reply was: "A successful miner has the three graces, as he interprets them, of faith to catch on, hope that it will be quick, and charity for the poor devil that fails."⁷

"In Pitkin, the Cleopatra Mine will resume work in a week with a small force at reduced rates and doing only developmental work. The mill will not start up until something definitely is done with silver - then it will resume with double its capacity."⁸ Pitkin was considered one of the five great silver towns. It had a newspaper, the Pitkin Bulletin, published by C. E. Adams, which lasted less than a year after the 1893 silver panic. Pitkin had a population of 4,000 people in 1881 and 500 people in 1893. Nearly every silver mine was shut down and there were thousands of miners out of work.

In July of 1893, the Quartz Creek Mill in Pitkin was doing a fine business. Everyday, six teams of four horses each were bringing in loads of ore. The mill was doing excellent work and it looked as if things would be going along fine for a long time to come. The first part of the next month there was another shipment of 3,700 ounces of silver bullion. But alas! In August of 1893, the twenty-sixth to be exact, attachments were run on the Quartz Creek Mill. Sheriff Deering served the papers and the attachments were filed by J. A. Preston for \$300 and H. Schierenbeck for \$1,800. When Sheriff Deering took charge of the mill, it was prepared for a cleanup process and was closed down until the price of silver went back up or until its Chicago investors cleared the debts.

⁷The Gunnison Tribune, 9 September 1893, p. 3.

⁸The Gunnison Tribune, 23 September 1893, p. 1.

The great Sylvanite mine was discovered five miles northeast of Gothic on the east side of Silver Mountain and near the head of Copper Creek. It was not being actively mined in 1893. It was located at 11,700 feet above the sea and at least 500 feet above timberline. The Sylvanite mine had the richest silver ever seen in large masses.⁹

At the head of Spring Creek, the wondrous Doctor Mine, one of the biggest silver producing mines in the Gunnison country, had slowed down its mining activity in 1893. A million dollars worth of silver had been taken from the Doctor mine. In the latter part of 1893 and into the turn of the century, the "Doctor" had many tons of lead and zinc extracted from its bowels and was very prosperous.

Whitepine had been a great silver mining town, but the silver panic closed it down. Ohio City survived the silver panic only because it fell back on gold. Many people left Ohio City, however, and in 1893 the population fell from 2,000 people at its peak to about thirty-five people.

The silver crash had taken its toll of the silver mines in the Gunnison country, but people were not too disheartened because "thar was gold in them thar hills."

The Gunnison goldbelt was south and southwest of Gunnison - Cochetopa, Willow Creek, Cebolla (White Earth) and the Goose Creek District - from Ohio Creek and Dutch Flats to the northeast to the Lake Fork, the Blue and the Cimarron. In 1893, the southwest belt was being prospected.¹⁰

There was a fever of excitement because everyone thought the next big gold camp of Colorado was going to be the Goose Creek Gold Region, between the Lake Fork and Cimarron, by Cebolla, and just twenty-five miles

⁹R. E. S., Special Correspondent, pp. 22-23.

¹⁰The Gunnison Tribune, 16 December 1893, p. 3.



Loading ore at the Doctor Mine in 1900. Twenty four-horse teams operated between the mine and the railhead at Almont. Each freighter received five dollars a ton for hauling from the mine to the railhead. *Alta Dunbar Photo.*

southwest of Gunnison. It was a large territory and prospectors and miners from all over the state started pouring into the area, as many as fifty per day, who planned to be permanent residents. "Clouds are being lifted and a gold lining appears on the horizon."¹¹

Goose Creek was soon renamed Dubois after Senator Dubois. By November 1893, there had been discoveries of some of the best surface gold that had been found in the state. Gunnison people were excited about the gold discoveries and the new town of Dubois because they envisioned having an extension of the Rio Grand Railroad running into Dubois, and with the rich iron deposits south of Gunnison and the gold desopits they could open up a large steel plant. This excitement was further encouraged by the fact that north of Gunnison were large amounts of coal - bituminous, anthracite and coking coal - also gold, silver and marble quarries. To the east were gold, silver, lead and copper mines. Gunnison would be the center and supply point of these regions.

By December, Dubois had 300 men in camp. Most of these men lived in tents but houses were being built. There was a small combination store and restaurant. Most of these prospectors were poor men working on grubstakes. However, old timers of Gunnison and influential men with capital to invest were showing an interest in Dubois. "All of Gunnison feels certain Goose Creek will be a fantastic boom and are having an unusually Merry Christmas planned. They will drink of prosperity that awaits them."¹²

¹¹The Gunnison Tribune, 25 November 1893, p. 2.

¹²The Gunnison Tribune, 16 December 1893, p. 2.

Between 1893 and 1894, Dubois had around 500 people who were considered permanent residents, two newspapers - the Pick and Drill and the Chronicle - and a stage line that ran twice daily from Gunnison.

High hopes remained for the Goose Creek area into 1894, when the people had to face up to the truth that most of the gold discovered was only surface gold and the gold was not as plentiful as they had hoped.

CHAPTER III

RAILROADS AND THE PANIC

The railroads were definitely affected by the 1893 silver panic. Many of the Gunnison mines that furnished ore to the Denver, Leadville and Gunnison Railroad (Denver South Park) were no longer shipping ore and in 1893 the railroad was placed in receivership and declared bankrupt. The Denver, Leadville and Gunnison Railroad had lost over \$1,000,000 since 1889.

In September of 1893, the Denver and Rio Grande announced that all of its employees would have their wages cut twenty percent, due to hard times. There was talk of a general strike if grievance committees in consultation with officials in Denver could not stop the wage cut.¹³

Gunnison residents were having their own feelings about the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. They felt that they were being unjustly discriminated against by the railroad. At a time when money and business were so hard to come by, neither one of the two passenger trains stopped in Gunnison to eat dinner. After pressure from Gunnison residents, R. M. Ridgeway, superintendent of the division, half-heartedly promised that when the new time table went into effect, he would see what he could do, and perhaps one train would make a dinner stop in Gunnison at the La Veta Hotel. After the new time table went into effect, the train stopped for dinner at the La Veta Hotel. Mr. Ridgeway, angered because he had been

¹³The Gunnison Tribune, 26 August 1893, p. 2.

pressured into having the train make a meal stop in Gunnison in the first place, immediately ordered the train to go on to Montrose for dinner. The people of Gunnison became very angry over such "unfair" treatment and circulated a petition opposing this action. They presented this petition, with many names upon it, to Mr. Jeffery, the president of the railroad, and Mr. Jeffery immediately countermanded Mr. Ridgeway's order and the train continued to eat dinner at the La Veta Hotel. The Gunnison citizens were grateful to President Jeffery for his fairness.

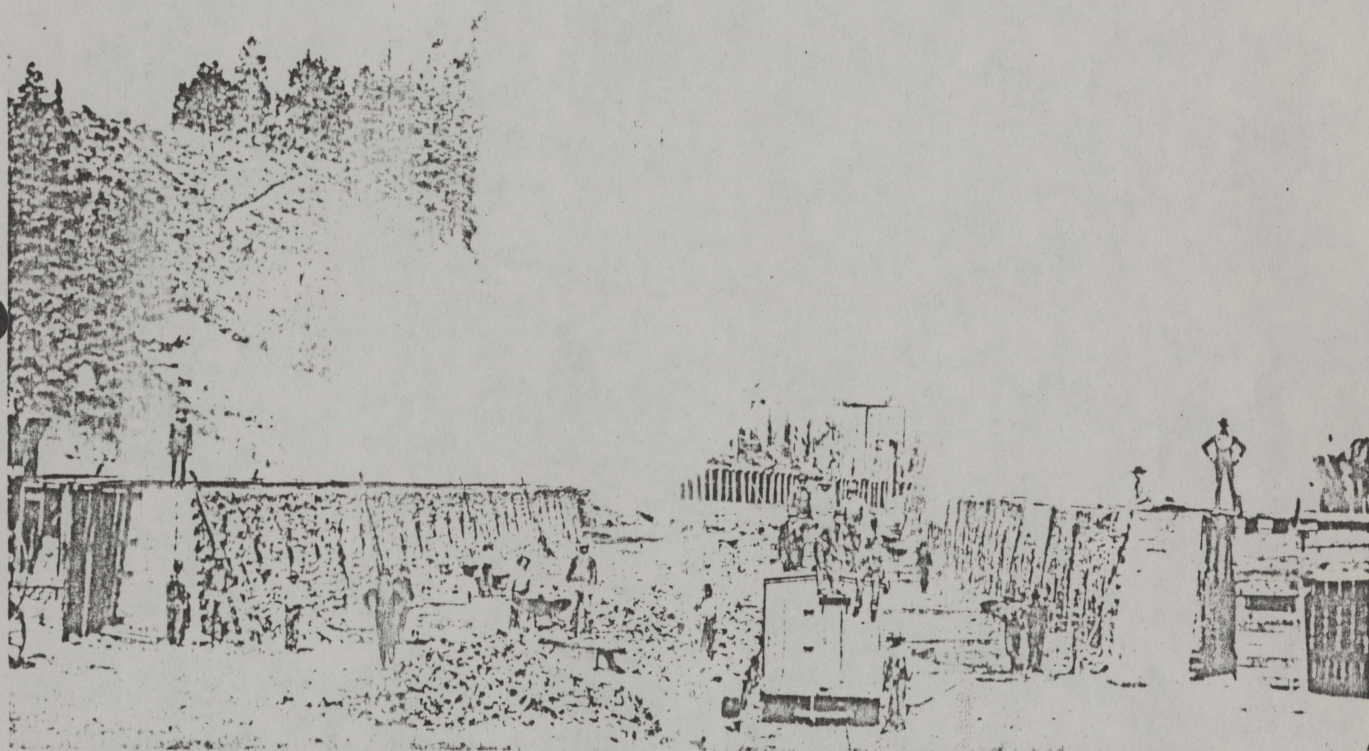
CHAPTER IV

CRESTED BUTTE THRIVES

In 1893, Crested Butte was the center of the coal mining industry with its many valuable mines. One of the most famous coal mines was the Carbonite, owned by Sylvester Richardson, known as the founder of Gunnison. Crested Butte had a population of 1,000 in 1893 and John E. Phillips, formerly of Irwin, was editor of the newspaper, the Elk Mountain Pilot. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad ran between Crested Butte and Gunnison City. Crested Butte was quite prosperous and had churches and schools.

The bi-metallic smelter at Leadville ordered 500 tons of coke from Crested Butte and there is a standing order for eleven cars of coke daily to the Grant Smelter in Denver. Altogether, Crested Butte is doing pretty well.¹⁴

¹⁴Elk Mountain Pilot, 23 August 1893, p. 1.



The Crested Butte coke ovens which produced coking coal used in the production of steel, 1888. *Colorado Historical Society.*

CHAPTER V

THE SILVER PANIC COMES TO GUNNISON CITY

In the Gunnison country, Gunnison City was the county seat with a population of 2,500 in 1893. This population enjoyed several churches, well built school buildings, a hospital and a nice county building. The United States Land Office for the district was located in Gunnison at the beginning of the year of 1893 with Henry F. Lake as the receiver and H. C. Olney as the registrar. It was felt, however, in September of 1893, that there was discrimination against the city and this article appeared in The Gunnison Tribune.

President Cleveland signed an order consolidating land offices in Colorado and the Gunnison office goes to Montrose. The change will save the government a few hundred dollars annually and will cost the people of Gunnison country thousands of additional dollars. Gunnison is unfortunate and even the government discriminates against us.¹⁵

Gunnison City's two newspapers, The Gunnison Tribune, published by W. H. Corum and edited by C. E. Adams and The Gunnison News, published by Joseph Heiner, had been prospering well until the panic year of 1893. Then, like all the other businesses, it was a struggle for them to make ends meet without the advertising support they needed from the merchants.

Times are hard. Newspapers, like all other merchants are making little more than expenses. Gunnison county officials have sent out all printing to John Morris Company of Chicago and have paid excessive prices. Blanks of all sorts, tablets and reports have been sent to this company. The money should be kept at home. There are at least two printing offices

¹⁵The Gunnison Tribune, 16 September 1893, p. 3.



The northeast corner of Tomichi Avenue and Main Street in Gunnison during the boom days of 1881. Tomichi Avenue running east and west was one of the major avenues in the new town. (Denver Public Library)

at home with proper facilities and they should be given a chance to do the work. Printers pay their share of taxes.¹⁶

Gunnison City also had good hotel accommodations and tourist attractions. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad ran a train west of Gunnison through the Black Canon and tourists had an opportunity to see some of the most spectacular and breathtaking scenery on the continent.

Two railroads, the Denver and Rio Grande and the Denver South Park furnished transportation to and from Gunnison City. These railroads were the backbone of Gunnison City and enabled it to be the "center" or "hub" of the wheel with regard to trade. Gunnison City was the trading center for all points north, south, east and west.

Surrounding Gunnison City with breathtaking beauty were abundant streams full of fish and mountains with many different varieties of wild game. There were lush, green pastures where cattle grazed and ranchers prospered. Alonzo Hartman was one of the best known and most prosperous ranchers in the Gunnison country. Known as a "progressive" rancher, he regularly shipped cattle called "grassers" to the faraway cities of Omaha and Chicago where he was well paid for his efforts. Cattle were a prosperous business in the hard times of 1893.

Private enterprise was holding its own in Gunnison City in 1893. C. E. Alvord had a farm at Jack's Cabin in Gunnison where he kept one of the best dairy herds west of the mountains. This dairy herd consisted of twenty-three cows. Mr. Alvord had mastered the art of getting through the Gunnison country's bitter, cold winters with his dairy herd and he sold rich butter and cream the year around. He sold butter to the people of Crested Butte and Gunnison City for thirty-eight cents a pound.

¹⁶The Gunnison Tribune, 25 November 1893, p. 2.



Alonzo Hartman and members of his family at their newly finished home, "The Hartman Castle" in 1894. Top row, left to right, Grandma Haigler, Alonzo Hartman, Mrs. Will Somby (just to the left of Hartman), Annie Haigler Hartman, "Aunt Nancy." Bottom row, left to right, Bruce Hartman, Sidney Somby, Hazel Hartman. *Bruce Hartman Photo.*

In a meeting of the town council of Gunnison City in September of 1893, it was reported that the town finances were in excellent shape. Gunnison City did not feel any drastic effects of the 1893 silver crash. There were many people unemployed, of course, and vagrants were a constant problem to law enforcement. However, it was a well known fact that Gunnison City was a very "thrifty" town and was one of the most substantial and well established towns of the entire mining region. As an example of its "thriftiness," the city council of Gunnison had even leased the streets to a rancher who very industriously seeded the streets with timothy, alfalfa and redtop. The rancher would reap the rewards of his efforts and "the city daddies would have enough in the city coffers to enable them to hire a burro and go fishing."¹⁷

Another example of the "thriftiness" of the town council could be shown in this story. During 1893, the sheriff of the Gunnison country was the well known and beloved Mel Deering, father of Matt Deering who owned a combination store and post office in Parlin, east of Gunnison, for a good many years. Sheriff Deering was a very good law enforcement man and often went to extremes to do his duty. Sheriff Deering had gone to California to arrest a man named Frank Hilton, who was wanted for forgery in Crested Butte after passing out bad checks three years earlier in 1890. When the sheriff asked the commissioners to pay his expenses in bringing the criminal to Gunnison for trial, they flatly refused. Sheriff Deering was very upset about being treated in such a manner after he had gone to all the trouble and expense of tracking down this criminal. He appealed to Governor Waite in Denver for some kind of compensation and was turned down again. It is not known if Sheriff Deering ever received any money

¹⁷The Gunnison Tribune, 16 September 1893, p. 2.

for his hard work and effort.

New city scales for weighing all coal sold in Gunnison City were installed in August of 1893. The charge of weighing was ten cents per load. Bids for putting the scales in were received by a committee appointed by the mayor. The scales were located in front of George Roberts' livery stable, and Mr. Roberts was appointed to be the weigher. The scales were installed because a law had been passed by the last general assembly that required that all coal had to be weighed on scales.

Two months later, this article appeared in the October 14, 1893 issue of The Gunnison Tribune. "Since the city scales were established, the price of coal advanced ten cents per ton and is now \$4.60. People have to stand the expense of weighing in where before it had been borne by coal dealers. The price is exorbitant - Gunnison is sixteen miles from the coal mines and has to pay nearly double what they do in Denver where it has to go 100 to 200 miles. We have to use coal. If the citizens would make a united effort, the railroad would make a reduction on freight charges and dealers could do the same."

Property owners of Gunnison City were having problems paying their taxes in 1893, and many properties were being sold because of delinquent taxes and because people were slow in paying their taxes. "The school board will run short of funds this year because of failure of so many property owners to pay their taxes, due to hard times. Fairly easy circumstances with low apportionment of taxes, but levy was considerably increased in order to meet the expenses."¹⁸

Some businesses, like grocery stores, were experiencing loss of income from people purchasing fruit and vegetables from out-of-town peddlers who came in from the lower country to Gunnison City to sell their wares.

¹⁸The Gunnison Tribune, 2 September 1893, p. 1.

Money was hard to come by in 1893 and Gunnisonites were urged to buy fruit and vegetables from local merchants and not patronize other places, especially since the merchants had lowered their prices as much as they could and still be able to make a profit.

At least one business flourished, and that was Cebolla Hot Springs. People continued to flock to the hot springs to enjoy the warm baths all through the year of 1893. After all, there had to be some pleasures in life!

Also on the bright side, people continued to get married during the hard times in Gunnison City, as evidenced from this article published in October of 1893. "Oh where are we drifting! We don't seem to understand why the act of marriage bells constantly ring in our ears these hard times, but still they come. Who'll be the next?"¹⁹

Waiting in the shadows for the "next" young woman, and all of the young women of Gunnison to get married, was Samuel E. Barrett, a popular stationer in Gunnison City. He was selling his latest cookbook entitled, Kentucky Home Cook Book, at "hard time prices" of \$1.60 each. This cookbook filled a long wanted desire of housewives and was guaranteed to make the husband happy by preparing him a meal in the latest style. It was filled with recipes for plain or fancy delicacies and was bound in elegant style.²⁰

Is there no end to the woes of hard times??

¹⁹The Gunnison Tribune, 14 October 1893. p. 3.

²⁰The Gunnison Tribune, 2 September 1893, p. 2

CONCLUSION

ALL IS NOT LOST

Much more could be said of the Gunnison country with regard to the silver panic of 1893. The Gunnison country was originally organized in 1877 out of old Lake County, and later the boundaries were relocated to west of Chaffee and south of Pitkin. Many towns had been formed. Tomichi, Tin Cup, Elk Mountain, Rock Creek, Cloud City, Quartz Creek, Ruby, Irwin, Floresta and Gothic. They had all developed mines rich with valuable minerals. The silver panic took its toll of these small mining towns, and many others, which disappeared overnight, never to be heard of again except in the history books.

Between the head of Slate River and Rock Creek, on the north side of the Elk Mountain Range, on Whitehouse Mountain, was a vast deposit of gorgeous marble. The marble deposit was originally formed from an extinct volcano and contained ledges of crystalized or granular marble of various shades of yellow to rosepink, to a beautiful, pure white. This marble was used to build the state capitol building.

In 1893, during the panic, there was a good, steady market for this marble and it helped stabilize the economy of the Gunnison country. Even today, there is still 300 years worth of marble waiting to be tapped in Whitehouse Mountain. Vast deposits of other minerals wait to be developed also.

Huge coal deposits of some of the world's best coal were in the northern part of the Gunnison country. Coal was in demand in 1893 for the big refining companies, factories, smelting plants, and, of course,

for heating. Coal was a significant booster of the sagging economy in the Gunnison country.

Lastly, Gunnison City, the county seat of the Gunnison country, was blessed with good town managers during the year of the panic. Its county commissioners were a group of frugal and farsighted men.

In spite of the demonitization of silver, Gunnison City's generally sound economy was supported by its location as a trade center for all points north, south, east and west. Ranching and the cattle industry continued to do its share in helping the economy and Gunnison City continued to grow and prosper in the years after the panic, while many of the other mining towns in the Gunnison country sunk into oblivion and became ghost towns.

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