

RETROSPECT,

The First Settlers in the Monarch District.
 The Early Gold Excitement and Its Sudden Death.
 Fissure Veins Discovered by the Boone Brothers in 1867.
 But the First Mine Not Opened Until 1879.
 How an Intended Boom Was Nipped in the Bud.
 "Crazy Man's Camp" Excitement and Its Fizzle.
 A Careful Review of the Growth of the Most Extensive Mining District in the State.

It is but a few years and since the discovery of the carbonate ore in California gulch, that the section of mountain country now known as the Monarch mining district assumed any prominence as an attraction for the prospector or the objective point for mercantile venture. To be sure, that mining country embraced in the Alpine district and contiguous, was somewhat known and partially scouted by the mine hunter for the past six years, but the portion of the Continental divide, which the many forks of the upper South Arkansas river drains, was comparatively unknown as a mineral bearing section. Viewed from afar these mountains that are now yielding quantities of ore under primitive development and proved to be accessible throughout, were at once, wild, precipitous and discouraging to the mountaineer, and scoffed at by prospectors on his migrations through the valley as a barren formation.

Here, as is the case in various portions of the state, Leadville and carbonates was the incentive that urged prospectors to visit the district and inspect the extensive silurian belt that was said to exist. At least this was the case in the spring of 1879, when a number of men, including Colonel Altman, who had lived in the Leadville country, came and made the discoveries on the North Fork that are now attracting so much attention, although the original discovery of the carbonate ore was made in 1878, on the Monarch mineral belt, by Mr. N. C. Creed, who, for a long time thereafter, did not have any faith in his "find", and who furthermore, had not the faintest idea of what the character of the mineral was.

The FIRST SETTLERS

The valley of the South Arkansas river was taken up in different sections for stock ranges and ranches far back in the early day, but the possibility of there being a mineral tract at its headwaters never occurred to the original settlers until of recent years. During the summer of 1867 Messrs. Hoge (Hogue) and Bailey located a farm below the present site of Maysville; and in 1872 Mr. Edward Miller, a well-known stock man of the state, took up the tract of land east of this farm--that is now embraced in a rapidly growing city--ostensibly to till the soil, but in reality for the purpose of commanding the western extremity of what has been for years considered one of the best summer stock ranges in the state. After persistently and unprofitably holding it for three years, Miller traded it to Mr. John Matthews for a pony. The latter but held possession a year, and emulated the precedent of his predecessor by disposing of it for an insignificant sum and leaving the country.

Mr. Amasa Feathers, the present postmaster, was the third owner, and though no remarkable financial benefit was derived from his investment for some time, he has recently disposed of it to the town organization for a good consideration.

THE FIRST EXCITEMENT

As far back as 1861, the district was the scene of one of the most intense and promising gold excitements that ever occurred in the state. In the spring of that year, and consequent upon the developed richness of the Blue river tributaries and the main Arkansas forks, prospectors scattered and wandered in a

desultory manner to the west; a detachment of whom made the south Arkansas river their objective point. Following the river bed they received a slight encouragement from a few "colors" obtained from the gravel banks and tracing the gold up Welden (Weldon) gulch--within two miles of the present Maysville--they met with the most flattering success at its head and around the base of Mt. Shavano. Fabulous results rewarded their every effort, the gravel "panning out" richly from the very grass roots. The prospectors feared a battle with the winter's snows and blasts, and after securing themselves several claims and organizing a district they repaired to the valley where they put in the winter on frugal fare and refulgent hopes. Rumors of the new discovery were not long in reaching the outer settlements and the following spring witnessed a stampede to the new found gold fields from all sections. Before summer had well broken, eight thousand people were quartered at the diggings and working as industriously as beavers. The country was staked and claimed for miles. A town was laid out and houses went up with astonishing rapidity. The ubiquitous gambler and old-timer of the occident expatiated on the brilliant future of the camp over the poker table, feeding the excitement by a ten cent "ant"; while the verdant arrival from the orient gazed with wild avidity at the faro layout, and vainly waited with the patience of the Micawber for something to turn up, so that he might learn the intricacies of the alluring game. Time wore on. The broker in gold dust hung his scales in the empty window and the receptacles for exchange looked vacant and unfed. The saloon keeper with the reputed frontispiece of his mythical diety, occupied himself by alternately basking in the rays of the summer sun and courting the seductive bunghold of his bibulous larder. And the hopeful prospector struggled with an empty stomach and an indigent purse.

There being no water in the gulch several large and lengthy ditches were projected, and the energy of the populace asserted itself to the extent that one of these was in course of construction when the bottom dropped out of the district with a crash, and the proverbial reaction set in. It appears that when but little distance was attained from the surface in sinking, the gold gave out entirely, and the deeper the explorations were prosecuted the more discouraging became the prospect, that concomitant of placer gold--the black sand--petering out completely. This fact, once circulated, was given full credence, and inside of four months from the date of the first arrivals in the spring, the camp was entirely deserted. The old workings and partially constructed boxes have remained intact to the present day, and the general surroundings are replete with reminders of this marvelous excitement--that faded like a dream and scarcely occupies the remotest corner in the memory of the pioneers.

EARLY DISCOVERY OF FISSURES

The first discovery of mineral veins was made by H. C. Boone (Boon) and B. Fowler, on the Fourth of July, 1867, in the North part (fork) region; but as they were seeking gold ore the claims that they located at the time were not worked, and no assays of the float they found were made. In 1871 Messrs. Burnett and Robbins discovered and located the already famous Iron King fissure vein, which is 125 feet between walls. The surface ore gave an assay return of sixty ounces silver and twelve dollars of gold to the ton, but such a grade of mineral was next to worthless in those days and consequently the property was only worked to the extent required by law for possession; and never spoken of abroad. Following this during the summer of 1872, Mr. Miller after locating his ranch, took to the mountains with a limited outfit and within a distance of three miles from his home he discovered a galena croppings and named the "find"--Lone Star. During the same summer considerable prospecting was done by the Boone (Boon) brothers on North Fork, but with disparaging results might be inferred, from the fact that they abandoned their claims the subsequent fall and were not seen in the district for some years afterwards.

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The discouraging results of these insipid efforts to prospect the country, although proving naught, were noised abroad and imparted derogatory impressions of the section. But a short while thereafter the Alpine boom was born to a life of prospective greatness. It was of short duration, however, the wave of opposing circumstances sweeping over it and almost burying it in oblivion. All those who are conversant with the history of mines and mining in Colorado, can without an effort recollect the embryo existence of Alpine and the excitement over reported discoveries made in its vicinity, the advent of a smelter there and the apparent prosperity that was attending every effort at development in the district, and the terrible crash that ensued, resounding the echo that Alpine was a blasted hope and only sought an identity in the past. Precocious in life and substantial in causes for greatness as a mining camp, it was brought to the verge of nonentity by natural and unavoidable circumstances. From this lethargy it showed no signs of recovery until the facts of the Leadville discoveries invited attention to the various camps of the state, and among the rest brought the Monarch district, with Chalk creek, to the front.

DEVELOPMENTS OF 1878 and 1879

Before the summer of 1878 had well opened up, Mr. N. C. Creed visited the upper forks of the river, alone; and, with but a very sparse outfit, proceeded to give the country a thorough prospecting. Losing but little time in looking at the foot-hill formation, he took his course up the Monarch fork toward the main range, and arriving at a point near the present site of Chaffee city, went into camp. Attracted by the huge bluffs of discolored limestone to the south, he resolved to lay over a few days and prospect, and in consonance with this determination was soon scouring the mountain side in quest of a mine. Float was found low down on the hill, and tracing it up he discovered the vein cropping between blue and crystallized lime walls. The nature of the ore discovered was a carbonate, but, ignorant of that fact, he thought it a low-grade mineral, and once or twice came very near abandoning it for some other section. Working the assessment, he stayed in camp, irresolute as to the best course for him to take, when very opportunely, sensible mentors arrived upon the scene in the person of the Boone (Boon) brothers, who had returned to the district. To them Creed sold a half interest in the original discovery--the Little Charm-- for ten dollars, and a half of the Monarch, which is an extension, for fifty dollars. Together they worked the claim, and with the best of results, but Creed was doubtful, and thinking to hold one claim on the vein while the other developed it, he traded his half interest in the Monarch for the Charm entire. The Boone (Boon) brothers then bought the Charm of him for three hundred dollars, but he becoming dissatisfied at the transfer shortly thereafter, they sold him a half of their last purchase for two hundred dollars. This he soon disposed of for one thousand dollars, and was let out of the combination. The Boones (Boons) still clung to their interests and in a short while the extent and richness of the property was noised abroad. Messrs. Van Gieson and Posey, of the San Juan, secured the group entire for \$5,000, and repairing to Leadville, perfected a combination that purchased it for \$60,000. That fall a number of men were put to work, and development went steadily forward until late in December, when the weather becoming intensely severe, the men abandoned their labors and left the country. Creed, after getting his money, went to Silver Creek, where he discovered a number of valuable mines and started a new district.

THE SEASON OF 1879

The men who were in the district this season were not long in spreading reports of the country's richness, and the early spring of 1879 witnessed a very modest stampede to the new camp. Messrs. Finnegan, Morgan, Lacy and Greenfield were the first to arrive, spreading their blankets at the mouth of the north fork the latter part of April. More followed, and before the snow had well begun to melt the various forks were inhabited by prospectors, eagerly awaiting the advent of spring. In the early part of May, Colonel Henry Altman, who had been for some time involved in mining operations at Hortense and Alpine, undertook to find a pass to the Gunnison--the engineers having reported adversely to the South Park railroad management on the feasibility of extending that line west via Alpine--and in his migrations traveled over the north fork headwaters. He was so favorably impressed with the general mineralized aspect of the country that he deferred the search and temporarily settled. Commencing on the 9th of May, he in a short while had secured thirty-six claims, many of which he located personally. Following this, Willima Finnegan and Pitt Cook, a son of ex-Governor Cook at Washington, made some good discoveries. Shortly afterwards William Finnegan and Patrick Cuddigan made a prospecting trip of three days duration, with marvelous results, they finding and locating in that short period eleven distinct fissure veins, all of which were mammoth in proportions and cropping on the surface. These were purchased from them, and now comprise a portion of the property placed on the London market by Colonel Henry Altman. In quick succession came the discoveries on Middle Fork and the Mountain Chief, Columbus, Brighton, and many other mines that are now shipping high grade ore under primitive development. Towns sprouted with astonishing rapidity at every few miles on the river and that fall there were to exceed five hundred men scattered over the mountain. The men of means who visited the district made preparations for permanent settlement, and took every precaution that no news from the country reached the press abroad. An amusing incident is told in this respect of Colonel A. C. Babcock, who had in his company a correspondent for a Chicago journal. The man of the pencil was quite--if not more--enthusiastic over the country than the colonel, and was sparing of no varnish in his writings to make the aspect of affairs glossy. The colonel was going quietly about his business securing substantial interests at every point of the compass, while his friend, the journalist, was at intervals of two or three days each writing a glowing letter to his paper and inwardly chuckling over the coming boom. After a letter was ready for sending he consigned it to the colonel's mail sack--there being no postoffice nearer than Maysville. Letter after letter went to the certain newspaper, and day after day time wore wearily on without return of recognition for his work. The writer remonstrated against the mail service, and the colonel consoled with his fellow-man in tribulation, but did not waste any valuable time in so doing. And thus it ended; the letters never reached their intended destination, the writer went home a sadder, wiser, but disgusted man, the intended boom was not inaugurated, and the colonel is still lamenting the loss of the valuable manuscript.

THE MAYSVILLE EXCITEMENT

Many people who came to the district went no farther than Maysville to look for mines. Among this class was a party of four who arrived in February, 1879, from Del Norte. The surrounding formations suited them and they were not long in hunting up a mine. Local excitement prevailed intensely after the discovery, the general supposition being that the new found mineral was a telluride. ~~The~~

The camp, which is within a mile of town, was named "Crazy Man's", and for a long time was considered the most promising in the region. Everybody was agog to secure an interest on the new mineral belt, and in a short time the country was entirely staked off in claims. Picked specimens were given to local assayers for treatment, but the endeavors to make a return of either gold or silver proved fruitless. However, the owners of the property astutely declared that the ore was of a refractory character and not susceptible to the scorifying treatment-- would have to be desulphurized, and so forth. And suiting their actions to the assertions made, they sent a quantity to Professor Hill's works from which they anticipated receiving fabulous returns that would substantiate all they had said in regard to the richness and quality of it. General interest was stirred to a great extent, and the only topic that could forestall that of the weather when friends met was the coming "returns". As a matter of consistency, the discoverers were more turbulent than the balance of the population over the matter, and were eagerly seeking bets that the ore would not run up in the thousands. Unable to procure such on the outside, they made one between themselves, the condition of which was, that he who came the farthest from guessing what the mineral would run a ton, had to set up a gallon of the best whisky obtainable for the party. No. 1 guessed five thousand dollars to the ton. At this modest estimate his partners laughed in derision, and No. 2 becoming encouraged by the prevalent opinion guessed twenty thousand dollars; No. 3 twenty-five thousand dollars and No. 4 finishing the pool of absurdities with the round figures of thirty-five thousand dollars. After a few days of expectant waiting, the sample certificate came with the concise sentence inscribed thereon--"no trace". The result can be better imagined than described. But the owners would not have it that way, and for a long time thereafter kept the excitement at a mediocre heat by claiming that it was a put up job, and that the Boston company's object was to secure the property for a nominal amount. This claim, however, did not suffice to re-establish the confidence that was broken, and in a short while the local interest in the camp gave way to an almost universal indifference. Whether or not the ore is valuable has not yet been definitely settled.

TO THE PRESENT

By the fall of 1879 the district was well established and the towns of Maysville, Arbourville, Garfield--late Junction city--Chaffee city and Clifton were well organized and growing. The Mount Shavano company erected a ten-ton smelter close to Maysville, and the future was assuring in promises. The ensuing winter found about three hundred people quartered in various localities; but little work could be done on account of the prolonged snow storms and the few preparations made to cope with them. Those who stayed, in the face of this adverse state of affairs, made Maysville ring with winter pleasures and sports, and managed with all to pass its dull season in merriment. When the spring had well opened many who were bound for the Gunnison, found the end of their journey in Maysville and became willing adjuncts to the swelling population of the district. In a quiet way the several towns commenced a healthy growth, and readily consumed all the lumber at hand. The unacquainted visitor marvelled much at the aspect, and while admiring, wondered why so little excitement was manifest in the movements and ambition of the populace.

Although developments are now well inaugurated for the season, and much ore is being produced in various localities, but little energy has been displayed on the part of prospectors and mine owners to make their properties accessible by wagon. Hence the difficulty in manipulating the ores. Mainly on this account the smelter was not put in operation, having until quite recently been unable to obtain the ore contracted for. Now matters are assuming a more encouraging shape, the Cree camp road being completed and practically opened to travel, and the north fork road being constructed as fast as men and means will admit. Many of the rougher

sections are opened up with good trails, which in time can be displaced with good roads. Another working season will suffice to give an easy outlet for the ores, when the richness of the district will be quickly established and heralded abroad. One of the best evidences of the greatness of the country is found in the avidity with which such experienced men as Colonel Babcock, Colonel Altman, Colonel Steinberger, Messrs. Charles Blake, Platt and Graham, Fletch Taylor and many others of keen business adaptability and extensive mining erudition have secured large interests in various sections, and cast the lines of their future here, without making ostentatious display of the fact.

(THERE ARE ALSO ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE ON THE BEGINNINGS OF ALPINE, HORTENSE, THE HORTENSE MINE, THE TILDEN MINE, AND SEVERAL SENTENCE ARTICLES ON THE MONARCH MINE AND ~~XXXX~~ SOUTH ARKANSAS (NOW SALIDA)