

Early History of the Cottonwood Mining Districts

The area of the country involved begins at the eastern base of the Sawatch range of mountains and extends some twenty miles westward to the central ridge of the Continental divide, the dividing line between Chaffee and Gunnison Counties. Along the southern extremity of the district is the majestic Mt. Princeton, with Mt. Harvard, the third highest peak in the state, forming the northern boundary. Within these limits are the three Cottonwoods, South, Middle, and North Forks; the South and middle forks merging at a point some three miles from the entrance of the canyon.

The North Cottonwood area is independent of the other two Cottonwoods, and its entrance spreads out into an undulating mesa in the Arkansas valley. The creeks traversing the district are of the same name and rise in the upper reaches of the range divide, which in turn are fed by numerous smaller creeks descending from a vast number of small side canons, or gulches; the waters of which, after plunging in turbulent cascades, flows across the plateau of the upper valley and loose themselves in the Arkansas river.

The occupation of this territory was prior to 1869. The first prospector was a man by the name of Jones, who explored the southern branch area. He was followed by Phil Groves, a rancher, ^{who} in search of the alluring precious metals, forged his way along unbroken trails. His search led him to the head-waters of the South Cottonwood, where he discovered and located the Mound, June, and Atlantic mines on the southern slope of Jones

Mountain; he also discovered the Longfellow mine in Mineral Basin.)

About this same time, T. B. Bedsworth, Ruben Autner, and William Pierce came to the vicinity, and discovered and located the Little Missouri and Amanda claims; Charles Nachtrieb discovered the Geneva--all three being on Jones Mountain. The Crawford brothers, hailing from Pennsylvania, located claims; and Ed Whitely, an early arrival, located the Hancock and several other claims in Mineral Basin.

In the spring of '78 the area about Cottonwood Lake was beset by newcomers, among whom were the Fox brothers, Asa, Charles, John, Dave and Tom, who discovered and located the Cora Bell group of claims. Tom Meyers and George Carver, owners and operators of the Danube mine on Buckeye Mountain; Charles H. Gloss, and Dick Senyor operating mines on Eureka Mountain; Aaron Humphrey--called Dad--who discovered the Carmel mine on Carmel Mountain, were all pioneer miners of the region. Charles Gillmore and his partner, Tom Hawley--an experienced California miner, who dealt out mining lore by the hour, and attempted to make the miners believe that yellow cheese was gold--worked the Grace claim high upon Buckeye Mountain. Aaron Wade, Ed Block, and Bob Dary, early arrivals in Buena Vista, were owners of the Hope mine; while John Stromberg, Charles Bogue, Sr., and Barney Shade worked property on Buckeye Mountain under the guidance of Aunty Fronev, a spiritualist. Other prospectors entered the camps until there were some eighty men at work, mining and developing these districts.

Trails were the only means of access into the region, over which all merchandise and provisions had to be packed on horse back. The construction of roads was imperative, so in the spring of 1880 this work was undertaken by the men in the camps, and by fall a fairly good mountain road was opened to traffic.

In the fall of '79 a miner's organization was formed and mining laws framed and adopted. Asa Fox was elected president and Charles H. Gloss

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secretary; and all business of the organization was recorded. Closs was also appointed justice of the peace and sworn in as such.

Phil Cook and his wife were early pioneers, who operated the first restaurant and saloon in the camp. Phil Cook was later shot and killed during a brawl in Buena Vista. Anthony Botts and associates, T. J. Turner, John E. Faunce, and J. A. De Weamer took over the Mt. Carmel mine and operated it for a number of years with varying success. Asa Fox interested Frank Durell in his Core Bell property, who in turn interested a Mr. Gillett of New York, who supplied the funds to construct a wagon road to the mines, and to erect a mill. The operations of the mine and mill were carried on for a number of years.

During the fall of '60 claim jumpers entered the camp and took possession of the Little Missouri and Toronto mines located high up on Jones Mountain. This outlawsry necessitated the action of the miner's association whose members were called to order by the secretary and unanimously voted to arrest the invaders. A posse of miners was selected to oust and arrest the claim jumpers in conformity with the law, and Ben Morgan, sheriff of Lake county, was called to join the posse and make the arrest. The sheriff was quite devoted to liquor, and when the posse arrived at the Jones Mountain camp he was pretty well intoxicated, so, being unable to make the arrest himself, he swore in members of the posse, armed them with the service papers, and instructed them to carry on the proceedings. The mine jumpers were heavily armed, but, after considerable arguing and upon learning they were surrounded by a force of determined and armed men, they surrendered, with the assurance that they would be delivered safely to the authorities at Buena Vista. They were later convicted and sentenced to prison.

Meanwhile the sheriff, on the night of his arrival at the camp, wandered out into the darkness and became lost when a terrific blizzard set in. A diligent search was made for him but without results, and his

body was not found until the melting of the snows the following spring.

During the spring of '80 the naming of the mountains and gulches came before the assembly meeting, and a committee was appointed to do this; the task falling to Asa B. Fox, Charles H. Closs, and Tom Hawley. The mountain and gulches as named westward up the South Cottonwood district from Mt. Princeton are Fox Mt.; Hope Gulch; Nipple Mt.--named after an old timer; Morgan gulch and mountain, named in memory of the sheriff, who lost his life at the confluence of Morgan and Cottonwood Creeks; next comes Mineral Basin, an expanse of mineral area, bounded on the west by the central ridge of the Continental divide; herein are located the first mining claims of the district.

Sheep mountain, so named from the herds of wild mountain sheep that roamed its ranges in years past, form the barrier between the South and Middle Forks or gulches; next, to the westward is Porphyry gulch, and Mt. Carmel, upon which numerous prospects are in evidence; then Buckeye, Reed, and Grassy Mountains, with alternating gulches between them; and followed by Jones mountain, a mighty structure constituting part of the range divide. Mt. Princeton, one of the mighty mountains of the Sawatch Range, forms the southern barrier between the Cottonwoods and the country to the southward. Many mining enterprises were conducted along its slopes and amongst its numerous ^{PP} crags. The Latsnew Mining Co. of St. Louis Missouri, of which Charles Sharges was the manager, owned a large group of claims, and operated them by an extensive tunnel. This company began operations in the early '80's and carried on for years. The Hortense mine, owned by George Teets, was a heavy shipper of gold and silver ores in the early days. It is now laying idle; awaiting the return of raising prices in metals.

In June, '80, the peace justice of the camp was accosted by ¹⁸⁰⁰ Hughs, an old timer from the middle fork district, who was accompanied by

his sweetheart, a Miss Lanyhilland. When they demanded that they be united in holy wedlock, the astonished justice became greatly frustrated and he remonstrated against officiating in any such proceedings, but all his pleading was unavailing. Hughs was determined that his romance should be fulfilled then and there. The justice made a search among the miners for a bible in which he hoped to find the proper rites for the ceremony, with out success; a holy book was not to be had in the camp. One of the miners offered to lend his six-shooter, if the justice would shoot the lovesick couple. The justice, in company with the necessary witnesses, returned to the awaiting couple, and between them, somehow managed to perform the ceremony.

(Cottonwood lake, a beauty spot of the state, which lies at the northern base of Mt. Princeton, with Sneep mountain to the north. Many miners built their cabins and established their homes on its shores. In the fall of 1880 John Hawkins, and associates, attempted to secure the lake by location and patent. These proceedings were contested in the courts, at Leadville by the association's officials, and at their personal expense. The latter were victorious, and hence the lake was freed from private ownership so anyone who wished might enjoy this lovely spot) X

On the right flank of Cottonwood creek the mesa west of Buena Vista gradually rises until it verges into the higher slopes of Springs mountain, on the southern base of which is located the Cottonwood hot springs. These springs, famous for their curative mineral contents and high thermal temperatures, were located in the early seventies. During '76 Dr. Adams erected and conducted on this site the first hotel in the district. This hostelry soon became famous from the healing and beneficial qualities of its waters, and was the happy rendezvous of folks from far and near. It was later taken over by George Martenstein and Stafford, and was operated by them until it was destroyed by fire in 1885.

That same year, George McCampbell, brother of Mrs Emma Holloway, erected a new hotel on the high land east of the old springs hotel. The new location was a most picturesque spot to which the waters of the hot springs were piped, and private baths and plunges were incorporated within the confines of the hotel. Soon after its construction the hostelry was purchased by a Mr. Chain, and his manager, Mr. Allen, a congenial host, conducted its operations until Mr. Chain's untimely death at sea. The Durst of Leadville then became the owner, and he and his wife were the hosts until 1912 when the hotel mysteriously caught afire and was destroyed.

Allen Holloway and wife located a homesite in '76 on an attractive spot just above the old springs hotel's site, and from where the main flow of the thermal waters issue forth. In '80 Henry Walthausser and Charles Aimes filed on a homestead at the junction of the South and Middle Cottonwood creeks where they built and conducted a fish hatchery. This tract is now known as the Big Horn Ranch, and is owned by Charles Craig and May W. Somme.

In 1874 Harvard City was founded near the forks of the South and Middle Cottonwood creeks. It boasted of a post office, a general store, operated by Sam Denny, a Virginian, dance hall and saloon, and was a election precinct. Harvard was the "change point" for freighters traveling over the middle Cottonwood pass to Aspen. This road was constructed and operated as a toll road by the Jules brothers, who finally turned it over to the county. Harvard became a ghost town after the abandonment of freighting over the Cottonwood pass road in '82.

Early day locations were the Martha Bonny and Lottie Lode mines on the east slope of Sheep mountain, owned by Block and Stafford. The Redstone mine located during the year of '78, some eight miles west of Harvard was owned by Este and Burns of Leadville, and was known for the

richness of its native silver ore. In '79 Bob Huns took up a homestead on the glade two miles west of Harvard City; and about the same time, he and Judge Diamond located the hotly water claim some ten miles west of Harvard. These springs are noted for their medicinal properties. After his business venture Sam Denny prepped a homestead six miles west of Buena Vista. He also located a number of mining claims in the surrounding hills.

North Cottonwood district lies between Mt. Yale on the south and Mt. Harvard on the north. Many mining claims were located among the rugged and precipitous mountains of this camp. Homer Brown and Wahlen, with gold claims on the west wing of Mt. Yale, were early arrivals. The Mercury group of claims on the north arm of Springs Mt., and above the entrance of the canyon, was discovered by Charles Matthias in the late eighties; and were later operated by Charles Sharpe Sr. and associates for several years. Roger McPhailmany and John Paul, old scouts of the hills, worked claims on the south slope of Mt. Harvard.

The Crater mine on Crater Mt., managed by Aaron Wade in the late '70's and early '80's, was a prospect of much promise. Arthur Vincent prospected the area during the late '70's, and filed on the Caliope group of claims, which gave promise of rich reward. They were located at the extreme end of the North Cottonwood district above Conket Lake, a fisherman's paradise. Hugh and Robert McLean, and Peter Savard were early arrivals, and were engaged in many of the operations of the districts.

(Of all the early and sturdy pioneers of the '70's of the Cottonwoods, and who have been mentioned in this narrative, have passed on, with the exception of Mrs Emma Holloway of Buena Vista, Ed Whitley of Denver, and Tom and Dave Fox, now residing in California.)

J. A. Cross.

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