Victor — Colorado’s City of Mines

by STEVEN WADE VEATCH, C. ROBERT CARNEIN, MARGE BRETH, DAN ALFREY, WAYNE JOHNSTON, ROGER LOEST, DEE LOEST, MARY O’DONNELL, JO BECKWITH, JUDY ST. PETER, and BRENT GERAUGHTY.

Since its beginnings in 1891, the Cripple Creek district’s 500 or so mines have produced an estimated 22 to 24 million ounces of gold—more than half of Colorado’s total output of gold. The Victor area included the district’s 4 richest mines. The Portland, Cresson, Ajax, and Independence mines together produced more than one-third of the district’s gold, and total gold production for the Victor area is about 12.5 million ounces (Jensen, 2003). Victor is thus the heart of the most productive gold district in Colorado and the third most productive in the U.S.

The city of Victor, on the southwestern side of Pikes Peak, was founded by Frank and Harry Woods. The city began to take shape in 1891, shortly after W.S. Stratton discovered gold nearby. Victor quickly grew from a camp of tents and miners’ shacks on the side of Battle Mountain to a platted city by 1893. The following year, Victor was incorporated. Soon Victor was one of the most prosperous and largest cities in Colorado.

During the excavation of a hotel foundation in downtown Victor, workers discovered a rich gold vein. The Gold Coin Mine was quickly established to work this vein. The Strong Mine, another within the city limits, was also a big producer. Victor soon became known as the “City of Mines.”

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An artist’s view of one of the Battle Mountain mines near Victor, Colorado. Original watercolor by Marge Breth.

GIFT SHOP BOOK REVIEW

A New Bride at Colorado’s Tomboy Mine:

by STEVE STANTON, Historic Interpreter and Gift Shop Manager

While you are warming yourself with a cup of hot cocoa topped with whipped cream this holiday season, think of those arduous adventurers who first started Colorado’s mining camps in the twentieth century. Life was difficult for men working in those early mining camps, but just as important were those women who either eagerly joined their husbands or simply wanted to attempt panning or mining themselves.

In the book Tomboy Bride, Harriet Fish Backus gives an actual account of a woman’s life in Colorado’s rugged country above Telluride, CO. Relive the hardships and learn about how women made a contribution in those early days through her memoirs.

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featuring Steven Veatch

To learn more about the city of Victor, be sure to make reservations for February 4, 7:00 p.m. Email us at RSVP@WMMI.org or call 719-488-0880.
Victor—City of Mines

Today, Victor is one of the best preserved mining camps in Colorado, with period homes, turn-of-the-century buildings, and historic gold mining structures. Currently, AngloGold Ashanti owns about 85 percent of the district’s productive area, with recoverable gold reserves and resources amounting to several million ounces (Tim Brown, personal communication, 2008). Today, the Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Mining Company operates the largest open pit and heap-leach mine in Colorado. Low-grade disseminated gold (native gold attached to pyrite or within the molecular structure of pyrite) is the target of current mining operations (Hunter et al., 2009). Production for 2009 is estimated at 292,000 ounces of gold (Tim Brown, personal communication, 2009). A continuing exploration program, with the goal of defining additional resources, recently extended the mine’s projected life to 2016.

More than 120 minerals have been reported from the ores and host rocks of the district (Carnein and Bartos, 2005), of which a small number are of economic or collector interest. The major historical ore minerals are calaverite, \( \text{AuTe}_2 \), sylvanite, \((\text{Au}, \text{Ag})_2\text{Te}_4\), and krennerite, \((\text{Au}, \text{Ag})\text{Te}_2\). Because these minerals are difficult to distinguish, their relative importance is unknown, but indirect evidence suggests that calaverite is far more important than other ore minerals (Jensen, 2003).

Attractive specimens of these and other minerals can be seen in museums and private collections, although native gold specimens of collector interest are very scarce. Other specimen-grade minerals include large amethyst crystals, yellow and purple fluorite, melonite, tellurium, turquoise, and, in a single occurrence from 2001, an attractive assemblage of botryoidal rhodochrosite (figure 1), purple creedite (figures 2 and 3), yellow and blue celestine, and gearksutite, all from the Cresson open pit.

Aside from the recent Cresson finds, poor records were kept with most historical specimens, and locality information for fine specimens was often fabricated. As a result, and because the geochemistry and mineralogy of the productive zones were relatively uniform across the district (Jensen, 2003), one cannot readily identify minerals that are unique to the Victor area.

References


THE WMMI LIBRARY contains a variety of books on the history of the Cripple Creek-Victor Mining District. Two that might be of interest are From the Yellow Gold of Victor to the Black Gold of Prudhoe Bay by Ken Lorenz and A Quick History of Victor. Colorado’s City of Mines by Leland Feitz.

Fig. 1. A beautiful specimen of rhodochrosite (botryoidal), celestine, and creedite from the Cresson open pit, 6 cm x 3.5 cm. C.R. Carnein Collection. Photo by S. Veatch.

Fig. 2. Creedite from the Cresson open pit, 1.3 cm across.

Fig. 3. Acicular, radiating sprays of creedite. 3.5 cm across.

C.R. Carnein Collection, Photos by S. Veatch.

Note: This article is a condensed version of a paper presented by the Lake George Gem and Mineral Club at the 2009 New Mexico Mineral Symposium held at the New Mexico Mining and Technical Institute.
### Polar Express Train Display

**thru** Can you hear the bells? Come to the Western Museum of Mining & Industry to see a Lionel model train—featuring scenes from the movie “The Polar Express.” Display courtesy of Palmer Lake Fire Trustee Gary Coleman. Mention you are here to see the display and you will receive $1 off per person. Open Mon - Sat 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. through December. Located at 225 North Gate Blvd. (I-25 at exit 156A). Visit [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org) for information.

### Special Exhibit—Full Steam Ahead!

*Through December 31 – Last Weeks!*

**thru** Join the Western Museum of Mining & Industry in celebrating the work of photographic pioneer, William Henry Jackson. This visually engaging exhibit explores the multiple roles of photography as art, promotion, and documentation in the late 1800’s. Museum located at I-25 Exit 156A. Visit [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org) for more information.

### January 2010

**Family Exploration Day: Geology.**

**9 SAT** Have you ever picked up a rock while hiking and wondered what it was? Bring it to the Western Museum of Mining & Industry on Saturday, January 9 for a day of geologic exploration. Members of the Colorado Springs Mineralogical Society will be here to help identify various minerals and rocks. Richard Sweeny of Goldco Mining will be here to demonstrate the use of a Mini-Highbanker (re-circulating sluice) along with presenting information on assay techniques and modern day assay equipment. Younger family members can enjoy an exercise in cookie mining. Fun, and educational for the whole family! Customary admissions apply. Museum located at I-25 Exit 156A. Visit [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org) for more information.

### February 2010

**100 Years of Scouting:**

**thru** Scouting is an important part of our American history. To help scouts celebrate this incredible achievement, for the entire month of February, the Western Museum of Mining & Industry will give all scouts in uniform 50% off regular admission price. The museum is a perfect place for a group tour! Call today 719-488-0880 to book or visit [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org) for more information.

**Heritage Lecture:**

**4 THU** Mr. Steven Veatch, adjunct professor of earth science at Emporia State University and local author will present the history of Victor, CO. Mark your calendars, this event will fill fast. Heritage Lectures are free and open to the public. Call 719-488-0880 for reservations or email us at [rsvp@wmmi.org](mailto:rsvp@wmmi.org).

**Quarterly Workshop:**

**“Preservation”**

**20 THU** Do you have a quilt passed down from your grandmother and have no idea how to keep it preserved? Renowned quilting expert, Ms. Bobbie Aug, will teach visitors how to properly store textiles. Certified by the Professional Association of Appraisers of Quilted Textiles, Ms. Aug has appraised thousands of quilts, taught workshops on quilting, and quilt history and lectured at many national venues. Come to this workshop dedicated to preserving items of historical value. Reserve by calling (719) 488-0880 or email us at [RSVP@wmmi.org](mailto:RSVP@wmmi.org).

**Winter Collection Exhibit:**

Chosen pieces from the WMMI off site collection will be displayed in the changing exhibit area. This exhibit will focus on energy production and the role of mining. Check website for opening reception and run times for exhibit at [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org).
### Major Grants & Funding ($5000 & up)

- AngloGold Ashanti Ltd.
- Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining & Co.
- Woodford Manufacturing Company

### Heritage ($1000-$4999)

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### Grant Funders

- Newmont Mining Corp.
- Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining & Co.
- AngloGold Ashanti Ltd.

### Operating Principles of Steam Engines

- Bruce Temkin, WMMI Volunteer

> operating principles of steam engines and associated machines, like dynamo electric machines, to museum visitors. He has also been charged with revising the historical and technical descriptions of each piece of operating equipment within the museum. You can often find him in the museum’s library, researching through the vast array of historic and modern day books that relate to steam. Regarding the libraries holdings, Bruce acknowledged, “The library here at the museum has an incredible breadth and depth of technical information.”

Besides updating information on the engines, Bruce’s research contributed to the development of a physics exercise for high school students, which is based on the operation of the museum's Corliss steam engine. He is also producing documents that will be used to supplement tour information given by museum interpreters, enabling them to describe the operation of the engines at a higher level. As a card-carrying member of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (laboratory which discovered the fundamental laws of electricity), Bruce is pleased to have found a museum and its staff so close to his home that shares his love of technology. He enjoys the technical aspects of his volunteer work and looks forward to expanding his role as a museum docent.

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**Many Thanks to the WMMI Volunteers:**

- Pat Romig
- Bill Kathmann
- Betty Chastain
- Bruce Temkin
- Steve Berry
- Brad Poulson
- Scott Pride
- Bob Nestlerode
- Matt Mathisen
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A Letter from the Camp

Today, the hand written word in a paper letter to one another has become somewhat of a historical artifact. Words in today’s society are shared via texting, Facebook, Twitter and even to a lesser degree – email. While the medium may have changed, the sentiments shared are the same. A letter in the WMMI archives preserves the excitement of a man writing from the Cripple Creek Mining District over a century ago. Though caught up in the frenzy of the day, he still took the time to write his family during the holidays. A transcription of his letter follows:

Anaconda
Dec. 18th, 1895

Dear Bro,
I received your letter some time ago. I have delayed writing hoping that something would turn up favorable before this. I have leased and bonded one of my properties for $8,000.00. They have commenced work putting up a whim-horse power. I am trying to sell my interest in both claims for cash. We will not take less than six thousand cash for properties, which would give me $2,000.00. The way it looks at present, I am reasonably sure to sell in the next four months. In fact I am liable to sell any day, but a man in a mining deal can’t count on anything until he gets cash in hand. There was a property adjoining me that contained less ground and not as well located that sold for $5,000.00 a short time since.

The camp has begun to boom in the last two months. Eastern capital has begun to come in and everything has an upward tendency. There are quite a number of sales being made. Nearly all the stock in camp has doubled in value in the last two months. We have more producers and the biggest miners of any camp in the country today, and it is not half prospected yet. Yet with all that, there are more men here than can get employment. Miners have flocked here from all over the country, on account of the hours (8) and the wages ($3.00). Most of the properties are dry, in fact nearly all. So it makes it one of the most desirable camps in the country to work in.

If I make a sale I will send for you and we will see what we can do, but do not count so much on the sale, because there is many a slip between a cup and a lip in mining. I am not doing anything at present. Hope you have been able to get employment before this. My health keeps good.

Will close by wishing you all a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year. Love to all.

J.F.M.

Letter from the W.S. Stratton Archival Collection

As 2009 draws to a close and a new year is upon us, the staff and volunteers at the WMMI would like to wish you the very best this Holiday season.
Share a Museum Membership For a Holiday Gift and Receive $5 Off!

Purchase a Museum Membership during December, mention this article, and receive $5 off! It’s the perfect gift for that hard-to-find-for person, and a Museum Membership lasts the whole year. Send in the form before December 15th, and we’ll make sure the gift membership is delivered by December 24th!

(Copy the form for more than one person).

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE:
• Free Admission to the Museum
• 10% discount on purchases at Museum shop
• Quarterly Newsletters
• Use of Museum library
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Bruce Temkin, WMMI Volunteer

When Bruce Temkin decided to retire and move to Colorado Springs three years ago, he had no idea that there was a museum in his own backyard that was comparable to those he had visited in his worldly travels. In his travels Bruce visited renowned technology museums in such international cities as Oxford, London, Florence, and Prague. He stumbled upon the Western Museum of Mining & Industry (WMMI) after reading a newspaper ad regarding a need for volunteers at a museum.

Upon visiting the WMMI and becoming a volunteer, he was astonished and pleasantly surprised to find such a hidden treasure within five miles of his new home. In describing his discovery, Bruce commented, “This museum is unique in the fact that the equipment in the collection is demonstrable. In most museums, the equipment is static.” He continued on that the WMMI “offers an excellent educational opportunity—especially for teachers and students who don’t have access to this type of equipment. They can learn about the fundamental principles of mechanical operation by seeing it operate.” During the 3-4 days he volunteers per week at the museum, Bruce gives tours on the museum’s steam engines and electrical generators, assists at the front desk, and greets visitors among other duties.

Though Bruce’s background is in electrical engineering, with related degrees from Carnegie Mellon University and the New Jersey Institute of Technology, he now finds himself describing the