

Historic Trail Map of the Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle, Central Colorado

By Glenn R. Scott
1999

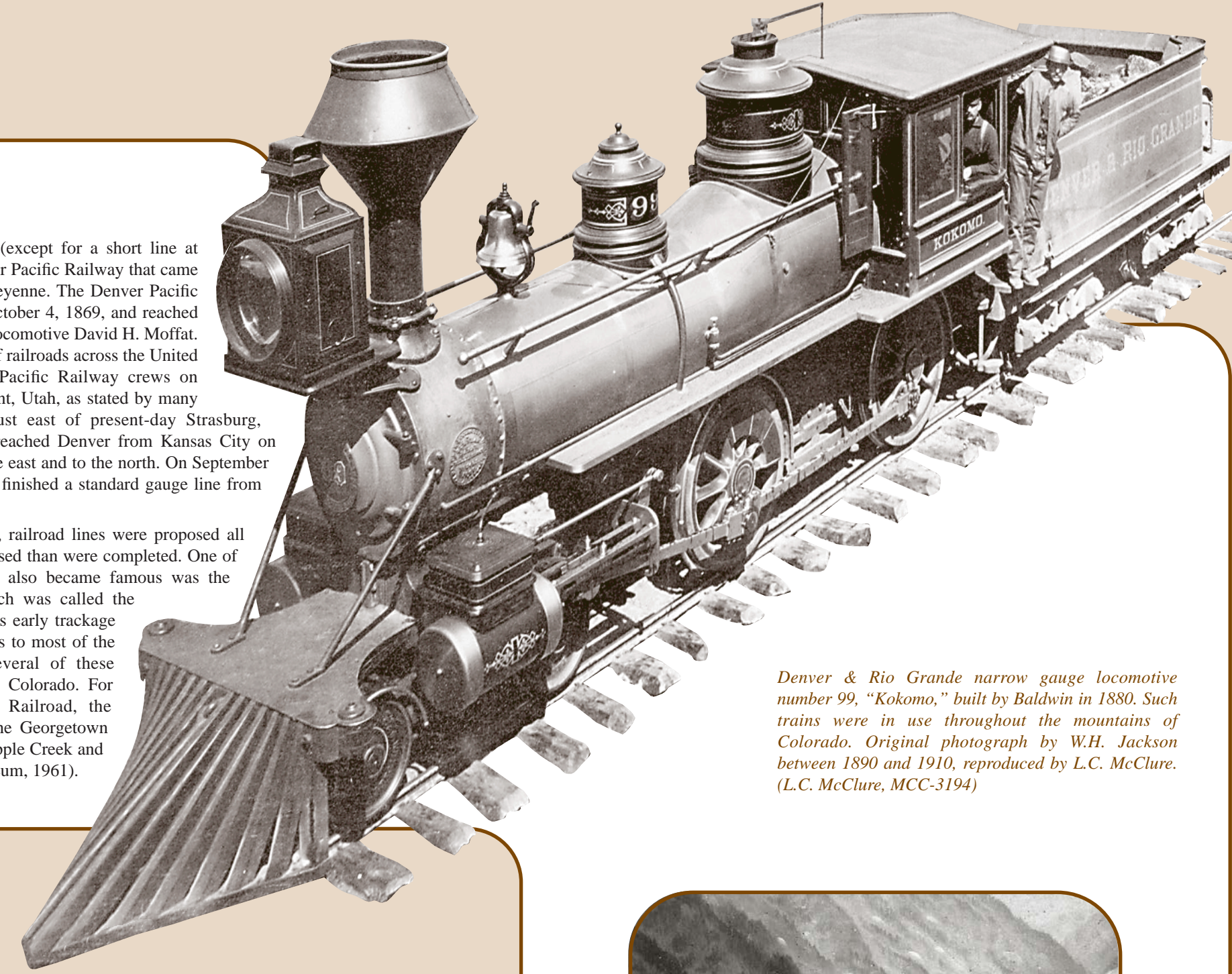
Geologic Investigations Series
I-2649 (Sheet 2 of 2)
Maplet accompanies map

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The Denver Public Library and
Western History and
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RAILROADS

The first railroad to enter Colorado (except for a short line at Interoceanic) was the standard gauge Denver Pacific Railway that came south from the Union Pacific line at Cheyenne. The Denver Pacific train crossed the Wyoming line about October 4, 1869, and reached Denver on June 17, 1870, pulled by the locomotive David H. Moffat. This last segment of a continuous chain of railroads across the United States was completed by the Kansas Pacific Railway crew on August 15, 1870, at its terminus, Platteville, Utah, as stated by many authors, but at Comanche Crossing just east of present-day Strasburg, Colorado. A Kansas Pacific train then reached Denver from Kansas City on August 15, 1870, providing service to the east and to the north. On September 22, 1870, the Colorado Central Railway finished a standard gauge line from Denver to Golden, Colorado.

During the twenty years after 1870, railroad lines were proposed all across Colorado; many more were proposed than were completed. One of these that not only was successful but also became famous was the Denver and Rio Grande Railway, which was called the "Baby Railroad" because nearly all of its early trackage was narrow gauge. This railroad ran rails to most of the metal mining camps in Colorado. Several of these narrow gauge lines are still running in Colorado. For example, the Durango and Silverton Railroad, the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, the Georgetown Loop Railroad, and the Silverton and Clear Fork and Victor Railroad (Colorado Railroad Museum, 1961).



Denver & Rio Grande narrow-gauge locomotive number 99, "Adolphe," built by Baldwin in 1880. Such trains were in use throughout the mountains of Colorado. Original photograph by W.H. Jackson between 1890 and 1910, reproduced by L.C. McClure, L.C. McClure, MCC-3194.

Originally, access to the Colorado mountains was made possible by private parties who built toll wagon roads through the rugged valleys and over the mountain passes. Walkers, horseback riders, wagons, and stage and mail coaches used these roads and they were satisfactory for passengers and for light freight. However, when mining increased in the mountains and the transport of ore grew, the need for larger and faster ways of shipping called for railroads. Because of the steep grades and sharp curves in the mountains, narrow-gauge lines were usually used. Narrow-gauge tracks are 3 feet wide, whereas standard-gauge tracks are usually 4 feet 8.5 inches wide.

Snow created serious problems for the mountain railroads. Generally, the higher the mountains the deeper the snow. At first it was cleared that trains would seldom be delayed by snow. However, after a few long delays as long as 3 months or more, a solution to the problem had to be found. Snow fences were tried but they were found to be useless in keeping the tracks clear. Snow sheds were built at avalanche chutes and where blowing snow accumulated, and they immediately proved their worth. Snow sheds were wooden structures, sometimes quite long, that enclosed problem stretches of track. The snow sheds could be heated by stoves or blowing snow, while trains safely chugged through the wooden structures (Colorado Railroad Museum, 1961; Taylor 1992). In addition, special train engines were equipped with fire-mounted rotary snowplows that could remove snow 10-12 feet deep, and hydraulic "ice picks" attached to the front of some engines cleared tracks covered by solid sheets of ice that could easily derail trains (Hollinger, 1959).



The Georgetown Loop, the famous narrow-gauge tracks of the Colorado & Southern Railroad. View looking upvalley toward the town of Silver Plume in the upper right. Because of its maximum grade up Clear Creek in a direct line from Georgetown to Silver Plume, this was the steepest 1875 percent grade for trains in the United States. This grade did not exceed 3 percent. This required 4.5 miles of railroad track that gully climbed Clear Creek valley, whereas, by direct line the distance is a little over a mile. From an 1890 painting by W.H. Jackson, (Temp 16).



Locomotive of the Colorado Central Railroad and part of the main station of Central City, between 1875 and 1881. Central City High School is the prominent two-story building in the upper part of the photograph. The steeple of St. Paul's Episcopal Church can be seen to the left of the school. The mountain slope in the view is underlain by resistant metamorphic rocks that in places contain mineral veins that contain gold. (Joseph Collier, c.1920)



Enlarged Map of the Northwest Quarter of the Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle

Base from U.S. Geological Survey Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle, 1911

Universal Transverse Mercator projection, zone 13, 1800-foot grid based on Colorado coordinate system, central and north zones, 1927 North American Datum. A corner of map occupies north latitude 37° east 108°35'

SCALE 1:100,000
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
METERS
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
KILOMETERS
CONTOUR INTERVAL IN METERS
NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE SYSTEM DATUM OF 1983



Miner panning for gold west of Denver. He swirls sediment and water in his gold pan. Between 1890 and 1910. L.C. McClure, MCC-7934.



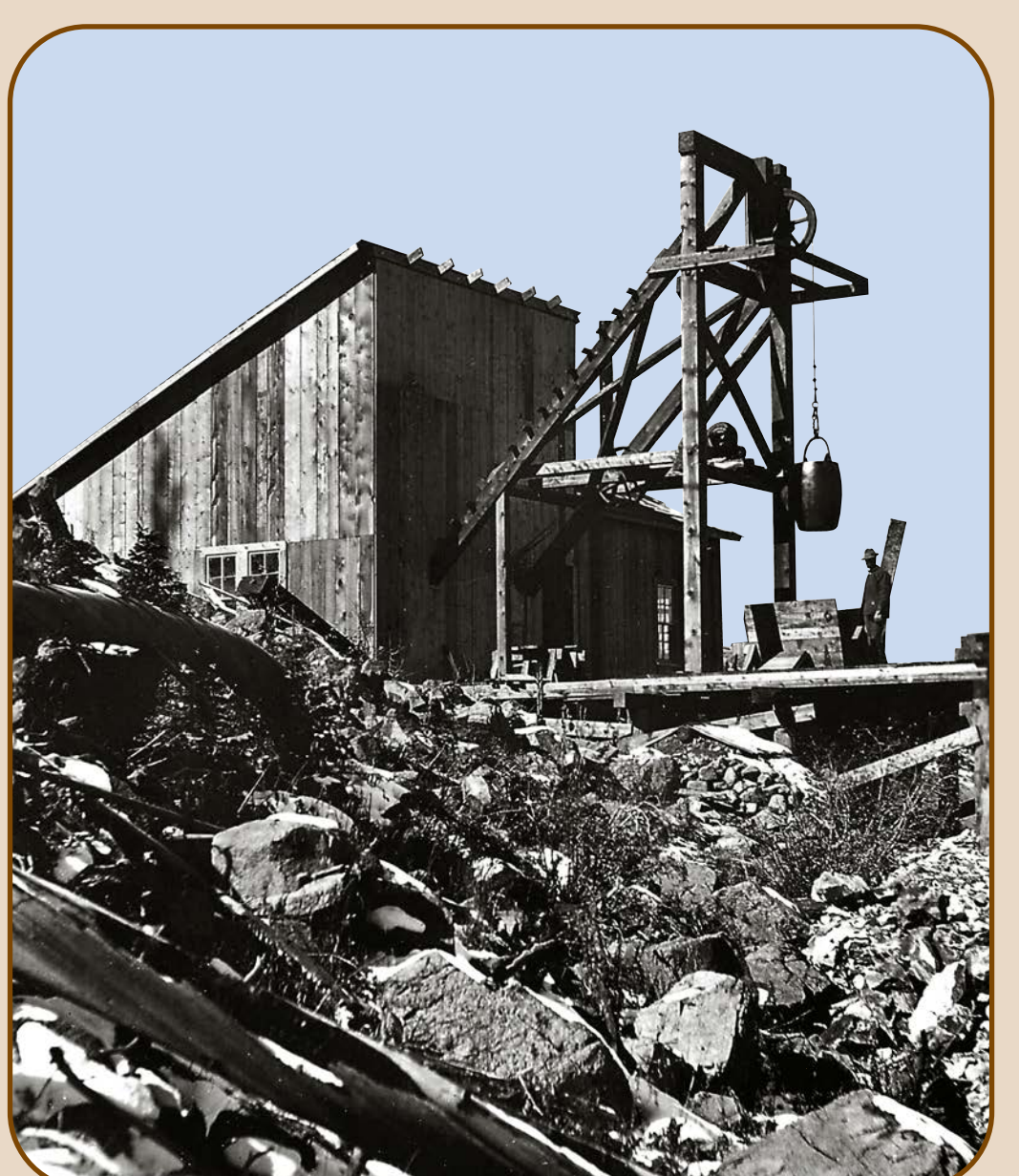
Locomotive of the Colorado Central Railroad and part of the main station of Central City, between 1875 and 1881. Central City High School is the prominent two-story building in the upper part of the photograph. The steeple of St. Paul's Episcopal Church can be seen to the left of the school. The mountain slope in the view is underlain by resistant metamorphic rocks that in places contain mineral veins that contain gold. (Joseph Collier, c.1920)

THE GOLD RUSH

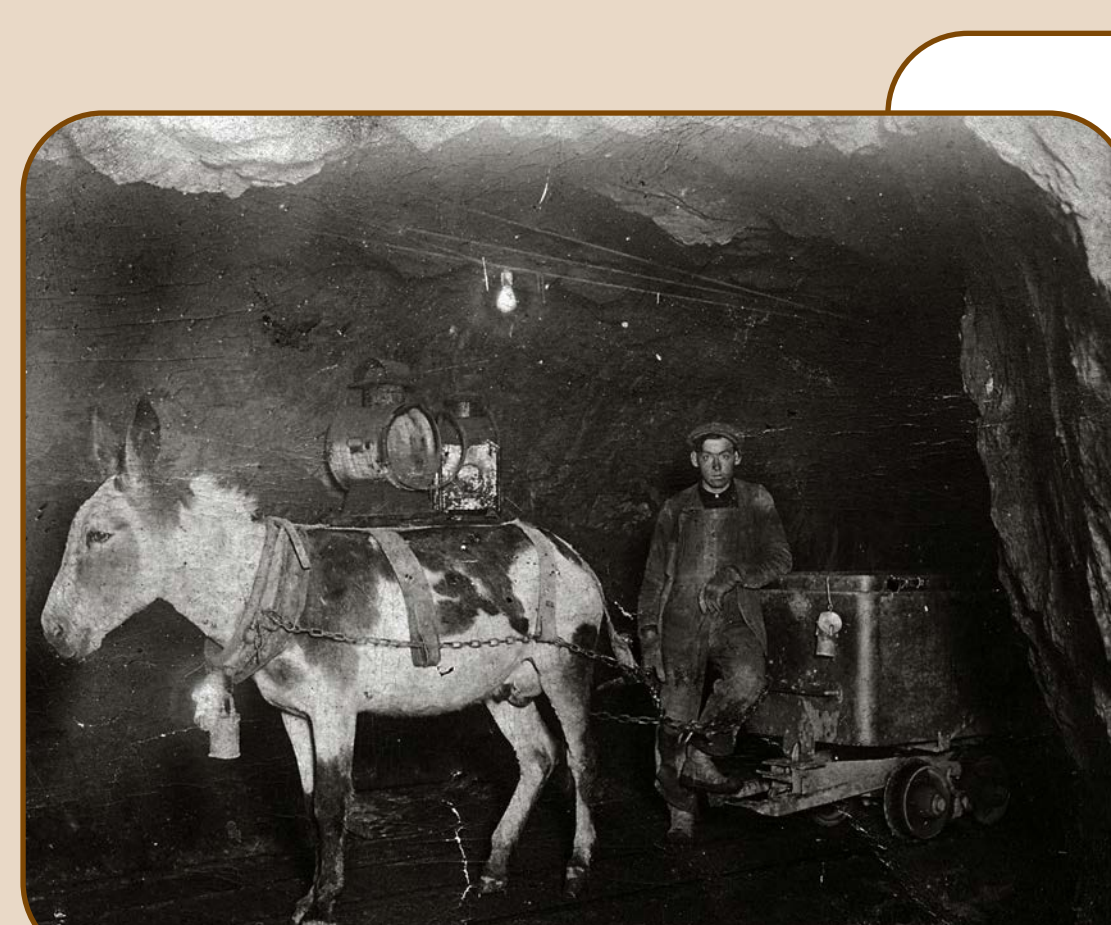
In the 1850s, gold was found at several places, but primarily in Denver. In 1858, news of the strikes brought scores of people to the area seeking fame and fortune. The gold they found on the Platte near Denver was in small patches along the stream and was very fine, and each deposit was soon exhausted. The prospectors looked for placer gold in streams from the Pike Peak area northward to the Wyoming border, but they failed to find any really profitable deposits east of the mountains. Nevertheless, when fall came and winter was approaching, several parties of prospectors returned to the west in 1858-1859 with the confidence of prospectors of present-day Cherry Creek and South Platte River and named their rapidly growing small communities Auraria, St. Charles City, and Montana City. Many prospectors brought few provisions with them, so within a short time they were in short supply. A hundred-pound sack of flour cost \$20 if it could be found. Bacon, coffee, and sugar sold for 50 cents a pound. About the only source of food was wild game, such as bison, antelope, and mule deer. As the little villages, hunters had to go farther from camp to find game. Also, after the ground froze, game hunting became almost impossible.

In 1858, there were almost 300 people in the three new towns and two cabins to house them all, and only a few cabins had fireplaces. Some people either took turns in the warm cabins or slept around campfires outdoors. They also cooked all food outdoors. The discomfort and the difficulty of getting food began to decrease their interest in gold. Fortunately, on Christmas Eve, 1858, Richard Lang Weston, a friend of William Bent and Kit Carson, showed up with a wagon he had driven from Taos, New Mexico, loaded with flour, sugar, bacon, dried apples, and bags of coffee. Soon the goods were unloaded into one of the cabins, and a store was started. Trade for such goods was made throughout the community. The item of greatest interest was three barrels of Texas Lagering, "PICKED DRINKS FOR ALL!"

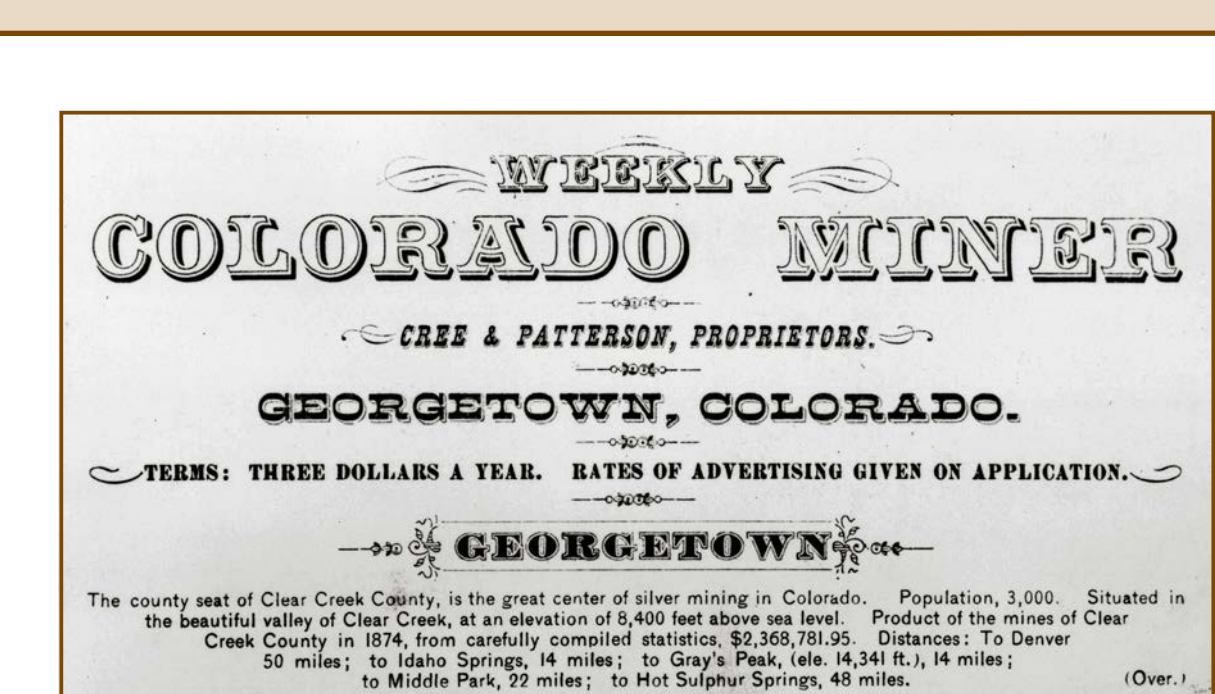
The next spring, because of the lack of new gold finds, many discouraged gold seekers gave up and started their long journey back east to civilization. However, larger and more profitable gold deposits were found by George A. Jackson at present-day Idaho Springs on Jan. 7, 1859 (kept secret until spring), and by John H. Gregory at present-day Blackhawk on May 6, 1859. News of these new and more payable strikes spread like wildfire. Soon thousands of fortune seekers started to Colorado from all over the country and from overseas. Thus, the gold rush of 1859 began, and an estimated 50,000-100,000 gold seekers flooded the area in 1859-1860. The search for gold then spread across most of Colorado. In the following decades, many deposits of gold, silver, and other valuable minerals were found in Colorado. See also extracts from the San Juan Mountains notebook to Boddy (Dorset, 1970).



Mine building in the mountains of Colorado, east location unknown. One bucket is suspended over the mouth of wood-handling and pulley wheel. Between 1890 and 1910. (H.S. Peay, P-045)



Tom May and his burro "January" in a mining town in the Mendocino Mine, Silver Plume, Colorado. The burro carries lanterns on its back. Between 1875 and 1910. (L.C. McClure, MCC-3195)



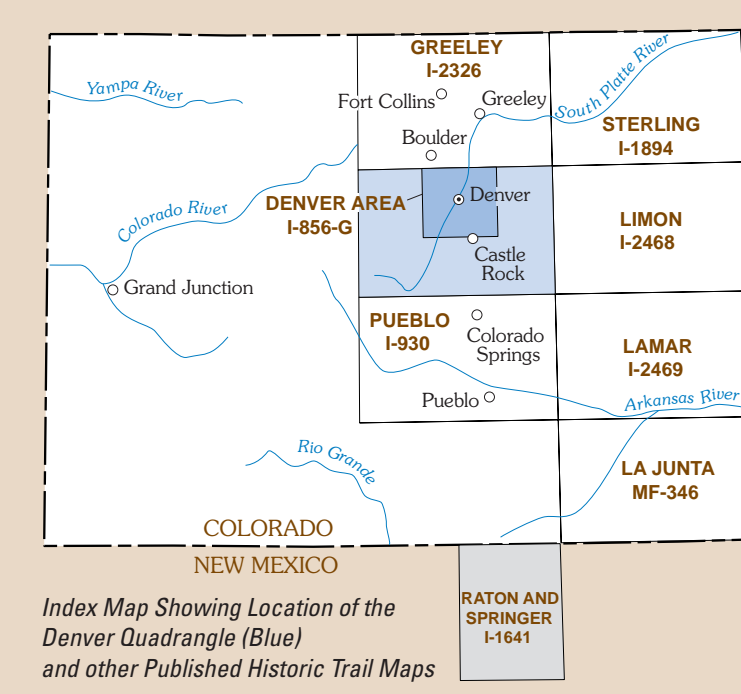
Newspaper masthead of "Weekly Colorado Miner," Georgetown, Colorado, between 1874 and 1880. (L. 1440)



Blackhawk, Colorado, between 1862 and 1869 (possibly 1864). The Commission House (lower right) is a white and red stone grocery store, usually used as a meat market, and further up the street is a covered wagon and its team of horses in front of a grocery and liquor store. The Blackhawk Presbyterian Church, built in 1863, is at middle right. On the mountain slope in the left background are mine-shaft buildings, some of which contain steam engines that provided power for hoisting ore and water rock and for running heavy stamp mills that pulverized the ore to release the gold. The mine-shaft buildings follow the "Gregory vein," which varied from a few inches to several feet thick and contained gold ore. The Gregory vein was discovered by John H. Gregory on May 6, 1859. Photographs are original photographs by unknown photographers. (H. H. Lutz, L-557)

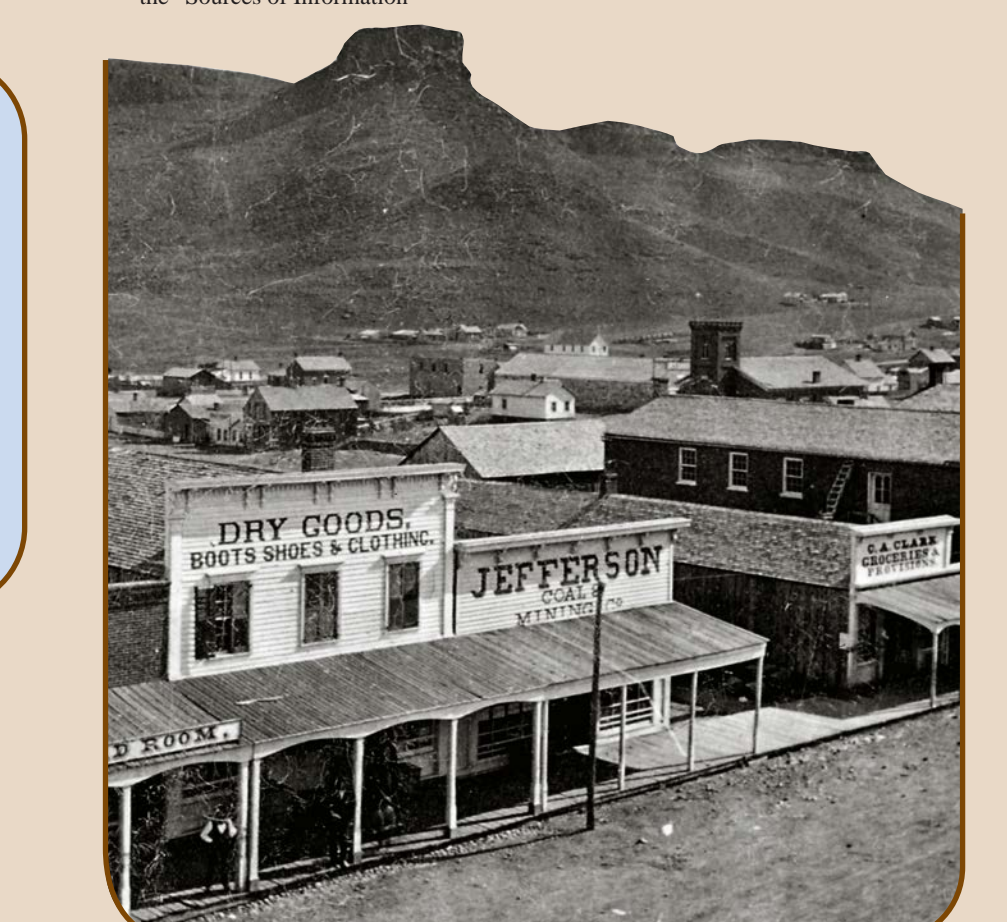


As early as 1859 and continuing into the early 1860s, "hard rock" lode deposits of gold were discovered in the Gregory (Central City) and Blackhawk areas, Georgetown, and Idaho Springs districts. Vertical and inclined shafts and horizontal tunnels were driven hundreds of feet into the solid rock of these deposits using only hand tools and blasting powder. In many mines, steam engines provided power for hoisting ore rock and water rock out of the mines and for running heavy stamp mills that pulverized the ore to release the gold.



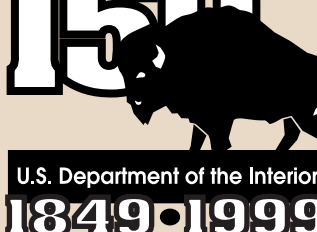
Index Map Showing Location of the Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle (Blue) and other Published Historic Trail Maps

- EXPLANATION**
- **TRAIL OR ROAD**—Dashed when approximately located, queried when inferred. Dates of use shown for some roads. Routes plotted from General Land Office (GLO) land files, early maps, or aerial photographs. Main trail or road segments are from original sources such as land files. Some shorter trails and mail segments on the GLO land files were omitted to avoid cluttering the map excessively. Some trail segments are not shown on the GLO land files but are shown on the basis of modern sources of account. Trails date from 1850's to 1880's. Abbreviation used: CC = Cheyenne.
 - **TOWN OR OTHER CULTURAL FEATURE**—Approximately located, showing approximate date of founding of a town or establishment of a post office, not generally the date of the first person to settle. Abbreviation used: town names and dates as in parentheses. Most newer town names are in boxes. Locations of towns shown on previously published maps very reliable, and some locations shown here may be inaccurate. Abbreviation used: P.O. = Post Office.
 - ✱ **TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURE OR HISTORIC SITE**
 - **RAILROAD**—Dash shows beginning or duration of operation. Currently operating railroads are shown in boxes. Abbreviation of railroads as explained in the paragraph text. For more details about railroads, see books about railroads listed in the "Sources of Information."



Flour-bush buildings with covered boardwalks along Washington Avenue in Golden, Colorado, in 1872. Castle Rock and South Table Mountains in background. (L. 1008)

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