

REMINISCENCES OF AN OLD-TIMER

BY

JUDGE JOSEPH NEWITT

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*Spring 1933  
before mine forum*

Mr. Chairman, and my good people of Chaffee County, I am going to talk about Chaffee County mining. Doctor George H. Curfman said I should come down here and do this, so I am under the Doctor's orders, and if his favorite prescription doesn't work, you charge it up to him.

I have jotted down, my good friends, a few things as best my memory serves me. There are probably some in this audience who will remember the things I am going to tell you.

The first thing I would like to read to you, just to refresh your memories, is about the Incorporation of Salida. I brought this from the files out of the Court House, so there is no question about the signatures. Most of these some of you will remember. This was filed July 22nd, 1880. The list is as follows:

Wm. E. Robertson	B. W. White	B. Phillips
John T. Blake	G. W. Bower	Jas. C. Towers <i>Power?</i>
M. R. Moore	J. H. Conway	M. Mix
M. R. Peel	R. Morehouse	R. Devereaux
H. J. Wilson	C. T. Holbrook	A. A. Carr
R. B. Hallock	H. B. Whitney	F. J. Hindee
J. C. North	Geo. W. Mayer	A. J. Thomas
E. H. Webb	Edwd. Dale	R. A. Baw
E. W. Corbin	J. D. Wilkins	G. R. Gray
W. E. Wilson	J. Meredith	N. R. Twitchell
O. V. Wilson	D. D. Ayres	Wm. W. Roller
Wm. P. Moore	H. Logan	E. B. Jones
R. F. Parsons	J. E. Shobe	
B. F. Garrison	T. L. Miles	
L. B. Ramsdall	N. E. Woolman	
M. M. French	G. F. Bateman	
John G. Evans	A. D. Sears	

Those were the old cranks that started the City of Salida. Max Dickman and a few more here tonight remember most of them.

I ran across a little data which I am going to read to you. There were some people living outside of Salida at that time, I want you to bear in mind. This paper that I hold in my hand reads as fol-



lows:

"Tally list of votes cast at a municipal election held at Maysville, Chaffee County, Colorado, April 6, 1880."

For Mayor		For Recorder	
J. W. Wood	52	James F. Kelly	71
Edward E. Elliott	61	Jas. S. Randall	45
For Trustees		For Trustees	
W. H. Champ	64 ✓	William Harris	52
Adolph Frohn	55	J. W. Rule	58 ✓
Dell Crane	166 ✓	Lionel A. Whitney	50
John F. Tyler	70 ✓	George A. Haynes	44

So you see all the people did not live in Salida then. Those were the first that fought the battles along with their good wives, and helped to build up this great State of Colorado, and the County of Chaffee.

I sometimes think that the historian has overlooked the good women that did the cooking.

Those were the good old days. Somebody has said that we shouldn't live in the past. Well, I just want to live in the past once more. If we could only get back to those good old days again.

Mining is what made this country, that's what built your railroads and brought people here.

Now if you please, I want you to just go along with me up the valley to California Gulch. The first town that I can find any record of in '59 and '60 was Hawkinsville, near Granite. I do not know how it got its name. Next came Granite. Granite was never incorporated, it was simply laid off in lots and blocks.

Placer mining was all there was in the mining game at that time; both at Granite and California Gulch. Everybody was looking for gold.

There has been so much stuff that I'll call "bunk" written about the early days so I am going to give you some facts:

The first locators of the Cash Creek Placers at Granite were three old bachelors: Ludwig Schmidt, H. Freulich and William Gable. They were Bavarians. I think perhaps they took the first rifle with them



that went into the town of Hawkinsville. When the last one died (which was Billy Gable, I administered his estate, and the rifle was among his belongings) I gave it to Joe Hutchinson, son of Sheriff Joe Hutchinson.

These old codgers never patented the placer locations they made. They sold out to Walter Jones and the Gaffs. And they sold to the English Company.

Prior to the death of Billy Gable, he came into my office in Buena Vista, and carried something tied up in a gunny sack. I said, "Billy, what you got?" He undid the sack and exposed a good sized can of gold nuggets. "These", he said, "are some of the nuggets we took out of Cash Creek, and we buried them in this can in the dirt floor of our cabin, and we all agreed that the last one living should have them, and so I want you to send these to the mint and get the money." I did this. I do not remember what the amount was that the mint paid, but it was several hundred dollars. The pin you see me wearing is one of those nuggets. I will show it to you later.

Now lode mines had not received any attention at the time I am talking about. Then came the discovery of carbonates in Leadville. The placer miners in California Gulch were bothered by the lead ores getting down into their sluice boxes and upsetting the amalgamate. Then along came Uncle Billy Stevens and his party from Michigan. It was he who found out carbonates in the sluice boxes and silver ores. Uncle Billy Stevens located the Iron Mines, which in my opinion turned out to be the apex of the whole section, and I have it from good authority that the lead carbonates are still coming down and raising "old ned" with placer operations. So Uncle Billy, Charley Nathrop, Charley Hall, and some others went down to old Mexico and took some of the samples with them. There they had assayers; they found out that it was carbonates of lead and rich in silver.

We did not have any assayers in this country at that time. The



only man I am told that was an assayer was a man by the name of Turks. He was up at my old camp at Newitt, (then called Divide). He located many claims in my old camp and filed on what we call the big spring for mining purposes. It seems he and another fellow had a little unpleasantness at or near Granite, and someone had to call the coroner and undertaker, so Turke thought it would be more healthy for him in California, so off he went and nothing was heard of him or his son after that.

Well, Uncle Billy Stevens brought the word back that the stuff raising "old ned" with the placer miners was rich carbonate silver ore. Even then very little attention was paid to it. They were then in the prime of California Gulch; gold was what everybody was looking for, and believe me they were getting it, and you bet your bottom dollar there is some of it there yet.

Now Oro was the only place of any consequence in that gulch. H.A.W. Tabor came over from Fairplay and put up a store. He was an Odd-Fellow and we had a lodge in his store building. Incidentally there was where I first met H. A. W. I liked him very much. Most of the old placer miners were Odd-Fellows, including Tabor, R. B. Newitt, Hook, Rische, the three Cornish men, and the Pearces, Joe, Bill and Al.

As I have said before Uncle Billy Stevens located the Iron Mines and the Cornish boys the Printer Boy.

George Hook and August Rische ran a cobbler's shop in Fairplay. It wasn't a shoe shop, it was a real cobbler's shop.

As I have said carbonates were not considered very seriously until Hook and Rische located the "Little Pittsburg", and discovered lead carbonates near the surface, and I want to read you the facts as to that discovery. So much bunk has been told about it. Listen, I'll read the facts, and the truth.

George Hartenstein, a young fellow from Pittsburg, came to Leadville to practice law. He afterwards located in Buena Vista.

I might say right here that I was not present at the actual loca-



tion of it, but what happened the night before, however, never mind, I am going to read to you the following over the signature of George K. Hartenstein. (I might interline in those days we drank good whiskey, now we drink bad.)

"George Hook and August Rische formed a prospecting partnership. They prospected in 1877 in the Leadville district for lead carbonates. H. A. W. Tabor grub-staked them. Late in the fall of 1877 they prospected on what was afterwards called Fryer Hill. They discovered what they believed were good indications, but it was too late in the season to do any work. They came to Leadville, rented a small building on what became Chestnut Street, a frame shack. They started a cobbler shop and mended shoes during the winter. In March 1879 I bought their lease on the little shop, bought some of their furniture and supplies, fixed up the building and used it for a law office. They intended to go prospecting as soon as the weather would permit. Conditions were not very favorable for prospecting, so they waited for better weather, in the meantime they slept in my office, by making a bed on the floor and removing it in the morning. They had some misunderstanding with Mr. Tabor and they did not rely on him to grubstake them for that season; they were going it alone. About the first of April, '78 they informed me that in a day or two they would make a trip to Fryer Hill and investigate the prospect they had examined the fall before, and invited me to accompany them, and they would assist me in selecting a location to prospect and locate a claim. Early in April I think it was the 3rd, Hook, Rische, myself and a man by the name of Hamm started to Fryer Hill. When we reached the place they had in mind, they concluded to make a loca-



tion at that point. They both lived in Pittsburg before coming to Colorado and concluded to call their claim the "Little Pittsburg." I wrote a discovery notice on a stake and they planted it. This was the inception of the famous "Little Pittsburg". After a very few days work they discovered lead carbonates.

By the time they had the discovery work done which consisted of an incline with a ten foot face, they were again out of money and could not pay for a survey and a record. After offering an interest to sundry persons for the expense of a survey and record, they again entered into an arrangement with Mr. Tabor to stake them for a third interest.

By a very little development work they opened a body of rich ore. In the fall of 1878 the "Little Pittsburg" Mining Company was organized to take over the property. Tabor and Rische took most of the purchase for their interests in stock, with some cash, but Hook refused to take stock and insisted on getting cash for his interest, and received One hundred and forty thousand dollars for his interest.

Hook did not spend very much time around Leadville after he sold his interest in the Little Pittsburg. He made occasional trips to the camp but never remained long."

Signed G. K. Hartenstein

I just want to say I suppose a lot of you would like for me to tell some of the stories about Tabor. I am not going to do it. My Dad said to me once, "Joe, if a man's good deeds are few, of his bad ones the least is best said," I just want to say this much at one time Tabor was worth about eight millions of dollars, he got into bad company and died a pauper. That's all I care to say about him.

Well, after the discovery of the Little Pittsburg it set the



whole country wild. Silver was \$1.00 to the miner, everything was weighed up by the assayers as silver. Not until long after this was it found out that the carbonates carried gold also.

About this time I took one of these "great professors" over the territory just this side of Buffalo Peaks. As we went up the hillside he threw up his hands and said, "Why you'll never find any gold in the lime formation." It goes to show how little we all knew.

People flocked into Leadville five hundred a day, until at one time it was estimated that Leadville and Lake County had a population of forty-five thousand people. Then placer mining practically ceased; everybody went to digging for carbonates, anything that looked yellow, and the tenderfoot had just as good a show to find it as the expert and we had enough experts by that time. But much placer mining was still carried on in and around Granite, and much gold taken out.

Then the Alma and Fairplay districts took on the fever for carbonates. I think the "dolly Varden" located about that time by Sy Hall and others was the first real discovery of carbonates. Then the Majenta and others and that district was full of prospectors. The father-in-law of "Chicken Bill", whose real name was William Lovel, discovered the Majenta which afterwards had another name given it. Prior to this Hill had just started a mill at Alma to treat the gold ores for such mines as the London. Hill was a <sup>SWANSEA?</sup> Swanson man of Wales. Then there was Jim Monahan and Charles Montross who were possibly the prime movers in the mining game at that time.

It was pretty well understood that the original locators of the London Mine went broke about this time. Then Hill built a smelter in Denver and Jim Grant built one at Malta just below Leadville.

We had eighteen smelters at one time in this State.

Then came the South Park and Rio Grande Railroads. Everything was freighted in and out by mule teams, as many as eight mules to a wagon. I think the Rio Grande got into Buena Vista in April, 1880.

There were regular stopping places on the road for the freighters



for supplies and barns for their teams. Up this valley we had first, Bales Ranch at Cleora; Nathrop at Nathrop; Frank Mayo (at Riverside, then on to Granite, then on to Leadville.

From the Denver end there was Cassell's, Fairplay, Hartsel's, Salt Works, and our old Chubbs Ranch.

I have seen a hundred teams start out from Buena Vista, before the railroad got in, loaded with freight for Leadville. And in addition to that, have seen as many prospectors starting out to the hills with their jacks, mostly all on a grubstake.

Then they got to building cabins in most every gulch; then the towns sprang up, every camp had a town site. I had one surveyed but never filed it, and I am glad I didn't.

Then came the Mary Murphy, and the town of St. Elmo, with its stores, saloons and a bank. Then the Madonna Mine and Monarch, then Garfield, the San Maguiel with Tom Bowen and his Tom Boy Mine. (Tom Bowen was considered the best poker player in the State). Later on Tom Walsh with his wonderful Camp Bird Mine. Then Creede and the Bassick in the Wet Mountain Valley. Then came Aspen with its wonderful silver deposits. Then came Cripple Creek with its gold mines.

Then Colorado forgot its mining interests, when silver was demonitized, and went wild on the tourists trade and agriculture and we have been gradually slipping ever since. The cities have drawn our population to the bright lights and the results you all know.

I must tell you a little story on those lines:

Along about this time when things went "flat", myself and a few old plug miners of Leadville, got together and they said to me, "Joe, what do you say if we go down to Denver and see Tabor, Moffat and a few more of the millionaires that have now moved to Denver and see if we can't get some help from them in the mining game. So down we went and we met the bunch in Dave Moffat's Bank. As usual I was the one that was selected to shoot off his mouth; (now remember as I first told you Doctor George Curfman is responsible for all this talk of mine). Well, anyway I got up and elaborated how they had made their money in



our mines and built up the City of Denver and couldn't they just help us out a little in opening up our old mines again. I told them they could if they would and never miss it as they were all millionaires many times over. I thought when I concluded that I had stated a very good case, probably I overdone it a little. Dave Moffat said, "Joe, you have not told the half of it." Then Dennis Sheedy with that peculiar voice of his said, "Joe, smoke up, don't you know that Colorado is like California, gone from a mining state to a tourist and agriculture state, and that's what we are after in Colorado, and you boys will have to take care of yourselves." And we have. So I said, "Thank you gentlemen", and "Boys, let's go", and we did.

Now I want to tell you a little something of how we handled the ores in those days. Denver had a public sampling works, we just billed our cars to the "Public Sampling Works"; they sampled the ore and the several smelters made a bid for it and the best bidder got the ore. They had several smelters in Denver by that time. They said the smoke spoiled the ladies complexions and the smelters had to cease business.

Chamberlin and Dillingham ran the Public Sampling Works. The miner got a square deal; they charged one dollar per ton. When we shipped direct to the smelters we had a man watch the sampling and we paid him \$5.00 per car.

I looked over some of my old mining books the other day, and I find we paid miners wages of \$2.00 per day and board, or \$3.00 where they boarded themselves, as some built cabins and had their families at the mine.

Powder and fuse were about half the price they are today. Blacksmiths and foremen were paid \$3.00 per day and board.

Farmers could take a load of vegetables and other supplies to any mining camp and come back with the money. They could get a good



price and could sell a beef, hog, or chickens at anytime.

The treatment charges from my old town of Newitt was smelter \$10.00, and freight \$2.00, making a total of \$12.00.

Tool steel, picks and shovels were higher than now.

As you know railroads were built into the several mining camps that I have quoted. All roads were narrow gauge at the time I am talking about.

Then everybody wanted a ranch or a fruit farm -- well some of them got them and don't know how they are going to pay the taxes.

Well, I suppose some of you are thinking that's quite a story, but what the heck has that got to do with our condition now?

As to that, I have this to say: When the State came into the Union we exempted mines from taxation for ten years. LET'S DO IT AGAIN; make the School of Mines assay ores for the prospector free of charge, We pay enough taxes to support it. That in my opinion would do the mining industry more benefit than any other laws that can be passed.

Then we must have more sampling works and more smelters. Marketing our ores is the great problem today, and we must give the miner a square deal.

Now I want to take you on a little prospecting trip. Just draw on your imagination and come with me.

We will start at Alma, the London Mine. Follow the formation along the rim of the South Park, and we will see what we can find. I want to say right here, as I have said for fifty years, that within the lines of Chaffee County we have mining territory second to none.

First, we come to Horse Shoe Gulch, the Last Chance Mine, and then following the ridge we come to Weston Pass, showing good bodies of lead ores; then on the east side of Buffalo Peaks; then on to Newitt, and the Dolomite Mine and the Lime Quarries. The Dolomite has produced about seventy-five thousand dollars worth of ore since the early sixties. Then we go on to Bassham Park; then following the lime formation on the Herring



Park; then to the Calumet Iron Mines; Turret and Whitehorn, not forgetting the Sedalia Mine. Then down Badget Creek to Wellsville, and across the river to the Sangre de Christo Range. I have prospected that entire range many times, and some day more than one London Mine will be discovered if you go after it in that lime formation.

Now, lets go over the other rim called the Continental Divide, and see about that formation. We start again at Granite, the placers-- what if you please put the gold nuggets into the gulches there, it did not grow there. Did it not come from the mountains above and old Father Time and the elements of errosion sent it down from the mountains above, no doubt miles higher than they are now? That in my opinion made the placers, and I say that there is lots more if we go after it.

Next we come to Clear Creek and Winfield--splendid ore taken out at this point; then we follow the Continental Divide and we come to the Cottonwood Creeks. (A lot of good prospects in these gulches right up to their head). Then we go along Mount Princeton to the Hortense Mine, which has a good shipping record. Then up we go to Chalk Creek, to the Mary Murphy and other good mine--the same formation right along.

Then we jump along and come to Monarch, Garfield and Maysville; we examine the Madonna dump and the formation. We all know the Madonna has shipped its millions.

A friend of mine from the old country, whose money I have put in the ground more than once, sent me the following newspaper clipping.

#### RICH SILVER ORE ARRIVES

"Sacks of silver, assaying from 5,000 to 10,000 ounces to the ton were brought to Denver yesterday by F. D. Willoughby, veteran mining Engineer of Aspen, Colorado. The ore came from the Midnight mine near Aspen."

That kind of talk does the silver miner a lot of harm; the gold bugs parade that stuff all day long. A banker in New York once told me that when on one of my trips to the old country, "Why we will be



making tea kettles out of silver one of these days. You can just back up a wagon in Colorado and shovel this stuff in." And I heard the same thing when I arrived in London.

Let me tell you what the facts are about this very ore. The vein undoubtedly is thirty feet wide. I read a clipping from the Denver Post, among other things it says about this mine:

"It is difficult to segregate the high grade and ship it independently, according to President F. D. Willoughby, a veteran miner and mayor of Aspen, but the entire vein of thirty feet is good milling ore as shown by developments this year. At normal prices this grade of ore on a facing of thirty feet would be worth \$25.00 per ton and there is sufficient ore developed or in sight to keep the mill running for many years."

So the real value is \$25.00 per ton from the thirty foot vein.

But the gold bugs will tell you, just think of a thirty foot vein of ore with 10,000 ounces of silver per ton. Figure it out and see what that means. So I say that kind of talk does the silver issue much harm.

The best book I have ever read with instructions to prospectors is that written by Arthur Lake, (now out of print). Suppose the State of Colorado printed and distributed these books free of charge to prospectors. I think it would be money well spent, at least just as well spent as some of the appropriations.

Now suppose a fellow like Benjovsky here got on the pay roll of this Reforestation Camp, and done some prospecting when he wasn't performing his other duties. He surely, in the territory I have named, would find some mighty rich float and perhaps discover another London Mine. I am told a foreman of a gang of men at the Camp gets \$150.00 per month.

I repeat, there is no better mining territory in Colorado than we have in Chaffee County--more London Mines, more Madonnas, more Mary Murphy's, are to be found in this county. As the old saying goes, "There is just as good fish in the sea as ever was caught."

I want to live long enough to see the good old mining days back and the smoke coming out the smelter stack that Tim Goodwin built



here in Salida, and which still stands.

I want to read the following article:

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS.

To be able to carry money without spending it,  
To be able to bear an injustice without retaliating,  
To be able to do one's duty even when one is not watched,  
To be able to keep at the job until it is finished,  
To be able to make use of criticism without letting it  
whip you.

KEEP SMILING.

I contend, this resolving and whereas and providing and doing this over and over again never found a job for a single damn man.

You cannot create prosperity by taxation. We will never get prosperity in this State and this County until we get back to mining.

I remember a little ditty that runs thus:

What is the use of repining  
Where there's a will there's a way,  
Tomorrow the sun may be shining  
Although it is clouded today.

Now in conclusion. You must be tired listening to me. Well charge it up to the Doctor, and remember the world honors a sticker, but never a quitter.

Some of our good preachers tell us to trust in the Lord;

There is a good old Scotch saying which runs like this:

"Laddie, you'll be a long time looking before you'll see the Lord coming o'er the hill with a sack o' flours on his back."

The Lord helps those who help themselves.

AND THAT'S OUR CASE IS IT NOT!

Have we got the sand and the guts to carry it out?

I thank you for your attention.