

Chaffee County

Cache Creek Placers

The Cache Creek Placer District lies at the extreme north end of Chaffee County, adjacent to Lake County. The district is considered by Parker (1974) to extend from the Arkansas River at the town of Granite upstream to Lost Mountain. Vanderwilt (1947) included the district in the Granite District. This was the largest single placer in Colorado, and produced for nearly 60 years. The district is contiguous with the Lost Canyon placers on the upstream end.

According to Parker (1974) and Voynick (1992) gold was first discovered in Cache Creek in 1859. The Rocky Mountain News reported the placers there were producing a half ounce of gold per day per man. Early on, water was supplied by a 16-mile ditch from Lake Creek. Fairly quickly, larger companies consolidated claims and began large-scale mining. In fact, the state's only profitable large hydraulic mine operated on the terraces above Cache Creek. Finally, a lawsuit by the city of Pueblo and other downstream water users curtailed hydraulic mining (and its attendant siltation) in 1910 (Parker, 1974; Voynick, 1992).

Davis and Strufert (2011) show the placer as consisting of both fluvial and glaciofluvial elements (river gravels and older gravels deposited by and after glacial activity). Parker (1974) points out that the gravels contain very little clay or boulders and were thus very favorable for placering. The district was a prolific producer of gold and Parker (1992) points out that most of Chaffee County's gold production came from this district - more than \$1million at a gold price of \$20.57 (so more than 48,000 ounces.) He points out that the source of the gold was probably mostly from Lost Canyon Creek to the west and southwest and the glacial moraines of Lake Creek. Much of those source areas remain unmined.

References:

Davis, Mark W. and Strufert, Randall K., 2011, Gold Occurrences of Colorado; Colorado Geological Survey, Denver, CO.

[Mineral Resource Data System \(MRDS\) - Online Spatial Data – Cache Creek Placers](#)

Parker, Ben H., 1974, Gold Placers of Colorado; Colorado School of Mines Quarterly, vol. 69, no. 4., 2 volumes.

Parker, Ben H., 1992, Gold Panning and Placering in Colorado; Colorado Geological Survey Information Series 33.

Vanderwilt, J.W., 1947, Mineral resources of Colorado. Denver CO: Colorado Mineral Resources Board.

Voynick, Stephen M., 1992, Colorado Gold; Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, MT.