

Chaffee County

La Plata - Winfield District

The La Plata or Winfield District derives its name from La Plata Peak on the north edge of the district. It is also referred to as the Winfield District for the ghost town of Winfield, once the main supply town of the area. The latter name avoids confusion with the La Plata District of Southwest Colorado. The district also abuts (or overlaps) several other named districts - the Red Mountain to the North and West, the Twin Lakes to the North and East, and mines that may be associated with Mount Harvard or the Riverside District to the South.

The District has seen mining and exploration since 1867. The location of several lodes led to the establishment of the towns of Winfield and Vicksburg in 1880. These towns grew rapidly as new mines opened. Winfield reached a population of 1500 by 1890 and Vicksburg boasted its own smelter. The Silver Crash of 1893 nearly closed the towns. The opening of the Tasmania Mine in 1900 rejuvenated Winfield, but the last ore shipped toward the end of World War I and the area gradually cleared of people (Aldrich, 1992).

Ranta (1974) defined the district as the drainage basin of Clear Creek. He identified the most important unit as the Twin Lakes Pluton, first defined by Howell (1919). Fridrich et al (1998) show the area underlain by three intrusive units. In addition to the Tertiary Twin Lakes Granodiorite (which contains most of the mineralization), Precambrian intrusive rocks also underlie much of the district - the Kroenke Granodiorite and the Denny Creek Granodiorite.

Historic production was small, consisting of lead-silver-zinc veins. Mineralization at the Banker Mine consisted of silver-bearing galena, sphalerite, pyrite, molybdenite, bismuthenite in quartz veins. Molybdenum mineralization has long been recognized. Worcester (1919) discussed mines of the Winfield District in his paper on molybdenum in Colorado. In the 1960s and 1970s, molybdenum, beryllium, bismuth attracted attention. According to Ranta (1974), several mining companies drilled targets in the area. Ranta concluded that the Middle Mountain area is a deeply-eroded weak Climax-type molybdenum deposit and the Winfield Peak area represents an attractive exploration target for a molybdenum ore body.

The website www.coloradoghosttowns.com contains information on some of the old mine sites in the Winfield District, along with photos and directions. The Clear Creek Historical Society has done a great job of restoring and preserving parts of the old towns of Vicksburg and Winfield. They are available to visitors.



Banker Mine Site, Winfield/ LaPlata District.

Mineral list contains entries from the region specified including sub-localities (Mindat.org)

Acanthite	Chalcopyrite	Ilmenite	Rhodochrosite
Aikinite	'Chlorite Group'	Leucoxene	Rutile
Anglesite	Columbite	Molybdenite	var: Ilmenorutile
Beryl	Columbite-(Mn)	Monazite-(Ce)	Sphalerite
var: Aquamarine	Emplectite	Muscovite	Titanite
Biotite	Ferrimolybdite	Polybasite	Topaz
Bismuth	Fluorapatite	Pyrite	Wolframite
Bismuthinite	Fluorite	Pyrophanite	Xenotime-(Y)
Bornite	Galena	Quartz	Zircon
Chalcocite	Hematite	var: Smoky Quartz	

LaPlata - Winfield District Mines (Mindat.org)

Ady and Mathews Claims
 Banker Mine
 Baracouta Mine
 Clear Creek Occurrence
 Clohesy Lake Prospects
 Crescent Mine
 Douglas Platt Prospect
 Fortune Mine
 Hamilton Mine
 Last Dollar Prospect
 Middle Mountain Complex

Mike Rabbit Prospect
 North Point
 Rockdale Mine
 Swiss Boy (Silver Crop)
 Tasmania
 Uintah Lode
 Uranus Mine
 Winfield Peak Prospect

Middle Mountain Prospect

References:

Aldrich, John K., 1992, Ghosts of Chaffee County; Centennial Graphics, Lakewood CO.

Fridrich, C.J.; DeWitt, Ed; Bryant, Bruce; Richard, Steve; and Smith, R.P., 1998, Geologic Map of the Collegiate Peaks Wilderness Area and the Grizzly Peak Caldera, Sawatch Range, Colorado; U.S. Geological Survey Misc. Inv. Series I-2565.

Howell, J.V., 1919, Twin Lakes District of Colorado; Colorado Geological Survey Bulletin 17.

Worcester, P.G., 1919, Molybdenum Deposits of Colorado; Colorado Geological Survey Bulletin 14.

www.coloradoghosttowns.com accessed 10 August 2012.

www.mindat.org accessed 28 August 2012.