

Gilpin County

Gregory District (aka Lake District; aka Lake Gulch District; aka Gregory Diggings District)

Gilpin is the second smallest county in Colorado, but has the second highest gold production. Several months after the big discovery on Clear Creek, gold was discovered by John Gregory near Blackhawk in 1859. A few months later, the placers and veins in Russell Gulch initiated a major rush into this mountainous area. Early lode mining was restricted to oxidized ore, which normally reached 40 to 100 feet below the surface. The construction of the Hill smelter in Blackhawk in 1868 enabled extraction of metals from the unoxidized sulfide ores. Later, the completion of the railroad from Denver to Blackhawk spurred production again. Mining diminished early in the 20th century and has proceeded only sporadically since 1909.

The first discoveries in the area occurred in Gamble Gulch in 1859 (Koschmann and Bergendahl, 1968). Stamp mills processed the oxidized ore and the level mining activity followed the same pattern as in Clear Creek County. Much placer activity occurred in the various gulches, especially near Rollinsville. The geology is much the same as in Clear Creek County, with Precambrian bedrock of the Idaho Springs Formation cut by Boulder Creek Granite with Tertiary intrusions of quartz monzonite and bostonite porphyries. Fissure fillings include pyritic gold that, where unweathered, is rather low grade but has been enhanced by oxidation.

The Gregory District is located within the **Central City District**, which is contiguous with, and so the same as, the **Idaho Springs District** in Clear Creek County. The basic geology includes interlayered Precambrian gneisses and schists, intruded by Precambrian granites of the Boulder Creek and Silver Plume family, with later Tertiary intrusions associated with mineralization.

John Gregory is credited with the first discovery in the area with the Gregory lode in Gregory Gulch between Blackhawk and Central city. Formation of the district involved the first mass meeting in Colorado according to Marshall (1920) when workers at the "Gregory Diggings" met on June 8, 1859. Among the speakers at that meeting was Hon. Horace Greeley. There were 2000 to 3000 miners present. As the meeting progressed, the participants outlined the district to include much of southeastern Gilpin County. The town of Mountain City was established near the site of the original Gregory discovery (Eberhart, 1969).

According to Dunn (2003), the definition of the Gregory District has evolved through time. At one time, it included what is now the entire Central City District. The district was shortly thereafter divided into smaller districts. The gold placer activity was mostly completed by 1863 although some activity continued after that (Parker, 1974).

The district produced gold and silver, with lesser copper, lead and zinc until 1945. Additional references include Bastin and Hill (1917) and Vanderwilt (1947).

Mines listed in the district (mindat.org; Sims et al., 1963) include:

- [Atlantic & Brighton](#)
- [Bachus Group](#)
- [Bedford County](#)
- Buell¹
- O'Neil¹
- Rialto¹

Note: ¹ Indicates detailed description in Sims et al. (1963).

Mindat.org lists the Buell Mine in the Eureka district, an illustration of the confusion brought about the complexity of small interconnected and overlapping districts in the oldest mining areas.

Minerals listed in the district (Sims et al., 1963) include:

Gold	Chalcopyrite	Sphalerite
Fluorite	Galena	
Pyrite	Silver	

References:

Bastin, E.S. and Hill, J.M. 1917. Economic Geology of Gilpin County and Adjacent Parts of Clear Creek and Boulder Counties, Colorado. U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 94.

Dunn, Lisa. 2003. Colorado Mining Districts: A Reference. Colorado School of Mines, Golden, Colorado.

Eberhart, Perry. 1969. *Guide to Colorado Ghost Towns and Mining Camps*. Fourth, revised edition. Swallow Press, Athens, Ohio.

Koschmann, A.H. and Bergendahl, M.H. 1968. Principal Gold-Producing Districts of the United States. U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 610.

Marshall, Thomas H. (ed.). 1920. *Early Records of Gilpin County, Colorado, 1859 - 1861*. W. F. Robinson Printing Company, Denver, Colorado. 313 p. in J.F. Willard (ed.) The University of Colorado Historical Collections Volume II, Boulder, Colorado.

Parker, Ben H. Jr. 1974. Gold Placers of Colorado. Colorado School of Mines Quarterly, 69 (3).

Sims, P.K., Drake, A.A. Jr, and Tooker, E.W. 1963. Economic Geology of the Central City District, Gilpin County, Colorado; U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 359.

Vanderwilt, J.W. ed. 1947. Mineral Resources of Colorado. Colorado Mineral Resources Board, Denver, Colorado.

www.mindat.org, accessed May 2015.