

Gilpin County

Pleasant Valley 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 gold 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 Pleasant Valley District was one of the earliest districts in the state, formed on September 3, 1859 (Marshall, 1920). Although it is shown on the map in Marshall (1920) as Pleasant Valley District, the text section refers to it as Pleasant Valley No. 10 District. It is commonly considered a part of the larger Central City District. The **Central City District** is contiguous with, and so the same as, the **Idaho Springs District** in Clear Creek County. Henderson (1926) does not list a Pleasant Valley District in Gilpin County, only one in Fremont County. According to Dunn (2003), the district overlaps with the **Russell Gulch** and **Lake (Gregory) Districts**. There is very little information on this early-formed district.

References:

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

Henderson, C.W. 1926. Mining in Colorado, a history of discovery, development and production. U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 138.

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

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