

Gilpin County

Russell Gulch District (or Russell 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 Russell Gulch 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.

William Green Russell made a discovery in the spring of 1859 in present-day Russell Gulch and the Russell District was officially formed on June 18th of that year (Marshall, 1920). According to Eberhart (1969), some of the first mining laws in the state were drawn up here. By the next spring, Russell Gulch had over 2,500 residents. The Consolidated Ditch was built in 1860 to bring water from the Fall River to Russell Gulch and other nearby gulches for placer operations (Dunn, 2003). Russell Gulch was the site of much bootlegging activity during prohibition, as bootleggers used the old mines to hide their products.

Placers were important early in Russell Gulch, but petered out and were operated on sporadically after the turn of the century. In general, there are three types of placer deposits - alluvial placers on the valley floor, colluvial placers (mined by drifting), and outcrops of oxidized bedrock that could be worked by sluicing (Parker, 1974).

Commodities in the district included gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc (Dunn, 2003).

Mines located in the district (mindat.org and others) include:

- [Aduddell Mine](#)¹
- [Air Line](#)¹
- [Alpha](#)^{1,2}
- [Bangor](#)³
- [Becky Sharp](#)^{1,3}
- [Columbia](#)²
- [East Notaway](#)²
- [Federal](#)^{2,3}
- [Forfar](#)³
- [Gladstone Vein](#)²
- [Gold Collar](#)³
- [Golden Cloud](#)²
- [Gold Rock](#)⁴
- [Gulch](#)²
- [Gunnell](#)³
- [Hillhouse](#)²
- [Hubert](#)³
- [Hull](#)²
- [Iron Duke](#)²
- [Justice](#)²
- [King](#)³
- [Lamberson/Warren](#)³
- [Livingston](#)²
- [Lotus](#)²
- [Lutz](#)²
- [Missouri](#)²
- [Nashville](#)²
- [Newfoundland](#)³
- [Old Town](#)⁴
- [Oranoake](#)³
- [Pearce](#)²
- [Pewabic - Iron](#)^{1,2,3,4}
- [Pittsburgh](#)⁴
- [Post Hole](#)³
- [Prize](#)³
- [Ready Cash/Independence](#)³
- [Rocky Mountain Terror](#)²
- [Russell Vein](#)²
- [Saratoga](#)⁴
- [Slide](#)²
- [Springdale](#)⁴
- [Waterloo Mine](#)¹
- [West Notaway](#)²
- [Whiting Vein](#)³

Notes: ¹ Indicates mindat.org.

² Indicates detailed discussion in Bastin and Hill (1917).

³ Indicates detail in Sims et al. (1963).

⁴ Indicates Dunn (2003).

Minerals listed in the district (mindat.org; Bastin and Hill, 1917) include:

[Chalcopyrite](#)

[Enargite](#)

[Galena](#)

[Gold](#)

[Iron](#)

[Pitchblende](#)

[Pyrite](#)

[Rhodochrosite](#)

[Sphalerite](#)

[Tennantite](#)

References:

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