

Conejos County

Platoro District (aka **Axell District**, aka **Lake Fork District**, aka **Ute District**)

The Platoro District is situated on the Conejos River and includes the former mining camps of Platoro, Lake Fork (adjoining to the south of Platoro) and Axell (two to three miles east of Platoro) (Patton, 1917). Patton (1917) and Henderson (1926) show that the Platoro District was also known as the **Ute District**. Vanderwilt (1947) used the Platoro District as the primary name. Dunn (2003) indicates that the Platoro District was also referred to as the Axell, Lake Fork, **Gilmore** or **Stunner Districts**. However, Patton (1917) shows the Stunner District as being part of the Decatur District situated along the Alamosa River; refer to the **Decatur District** for more information.

The geology of the area is predominately igneous in origin. This district lies in the eastern part of the San Juan volcanic field and the late Oligocene-aged Platoro and nested Summitville calderas constitute a composite collapse structure of about 20 kilometers in diameter (Steven & Lipman, 1976). Ore was found in mineralized epithermal quartz-latite veins that extended over long distances. Major commodities in this district were silver and gold, with minor to trace zinc, copper, molybdenum, lead and antimony.

The Mammoth group consisted of fifteen patented claims having a total area of 126 acres, and lying upon the northern slope of Mammoth Mountain. The Mammoth Mine, was known for silver ore, but also contained gold and telluride, and the ore was sourced from the Mammoth vein (Patton, 1917). This consisted of a quartz fissure vein with associated marcasite and Arsenopyrite and complex sulpho-telluride ore. The principal workings were on the Mammoth and Revenue claims that join each other end to end, with a main tunnel 1,600 feet long.

Patton (1917) reports that the Congress Mine consisted of seven claims with an area of 61.4 acres. It was located along the Mammoth vein, just south of the Mammoth Mine. Just north of the Mammoth Mine was the Parole Mine consisting of 2 claims with an area of 20.6 acres along the Mammoth vein. Also on the Mammoth vein was the Valley Queen Mine to the north of the Parole Mine. At this mine the mineralized quartz vein was reported to be 34 feet wide and contained a streak of 12 to 18 inch ore. The Merrimac Mine was located along 6000 feet of a separate vein roughly paralleling the Mammoth vein. The Forest King Mine, located on the western slope of Mammoth Mountain, was about one mile west of the Mammoth vein. Specimens of free gold were obtained from this vein.

A little molybdenite was found at the Merrimac Claim in a two-inch wide quartz vein, but was too small to be of commercial value. The host rock for this was granite and granitic gneiss (Worcester, 1919).

The town of Platoro was stated as being located at an elevation of 9,900 feet, in the midst of a flat, open expanse of the Conejos River valley that measures some half to three-quarters of a mile wide and three miles long (Patton, 1917). Platoro was one of the oldest towns in the area and had a population of 300 by 1890. However, as the ores were depleted, so was the town. There was a slight resurgence in the early 1900s and again just before World War 1, but these did not last. Currently, Platoro has become a tourist attraction (Eberhart, 1969). The Axell District and camp may have been named for Charles O. Axell, who prepared geologic maps of the area (such as Axell (1934)) and also the mining claim map included in Patton (1917).

Mines listed in the district (mindat.org) include:

- Congress
- Dee Stock Occurrence
- Forest King Mine (Forest King Group; Ophir; Bonanza King)
- Gilmore
- Glacier Mine
- Lake View Claim (April Queen; Claims: Lake View; Queen Bee)
- Mammoth - Revenue Mine
- Mammoth Revenue Mine (Mammoth Mine)
- Merrimac Mine
- Parole Mine (Parole Group; Patented Claims: Parole; Parole No. 2)
- Siskiyou
- Valley Queen Mine (Platoro Tunnel; Ajax Nos. 1-10; Texas; Snowstorm; Platoro Tunnel Site; Valley King; Valley Queen Group; Patented Claims: Valley Queen; Shasta)
- Vera Breccia Pipe Occurrence

Minerals listed in the district (mindat.org) include:

Acanthite	Digenite	Polybasite
Alunite	Galena	Proustite ¹
'Andorite'	Gold ¹ var: Electrum	Pyrargyrite ¹
Argentite ¹	Hematite	Pyrite
Anhydrite	Kaolinite	Pyrrhotite
Arsenopyrite ¹	Marcasite ¹	Quartz var: Chalcedony
Barite	Miargyrite	Silver
Calcite	Molybdenite	Sphalerite
Chalcocite	Montmorillonite	Sulphur
Chalcopyrite	Muscovite var: Illite, var:	Zinkenite
'Chlorite Group'	Sericite	
Covellite	Petzite	

Note: ¹Associated with the Mammoth Mine (Patton, 1917).

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