

Ouray County

Sneffels District (aka **Mount Sneffels District**; includes **Imogene Basin District**, **Camp Bird District**)

The area of the Sneffels District is on the northwest edge of the Silverton caldera. The geology and geographic location of the district generates confusion with district names. The districts of Imogene Basin, Camp Bird and **Telluride** are often associated with Sneffels District, not to mention the alternate name of Mount Sneffels District.

Burbank (1947) points out that the general San Miguel "mining area" (quotes mine) encompasses some 250 square miles in Ouray, San Miguel and San Juan counties around the headwaters of the San Miguel, Uncompahgre and Animas Rivers. Within that area is the Sneffels District.

Henderson (1926) called the Sneffels District Mount Sneffels and located it in T43N, R8W, but extending south into sections 1 and 2 of T42N R8W. (That southern extension would project into the Red Mountain District of our map.) Vanderwilt (1947) refers to it as the Imogene Basin District. In that same volume, Burbank points out that the Sneffels and the Telluride Districts are one and the same, with the name changing at the Continental Divide.

Burbank, in his 1943 report on the Uncompahgre District, speaks of the Sneffels with the Telluride District as one, as does Moore (2003). Fisher (1990) breaks out the Camp Bird as sort of a sub-district, but also combines the Sneffels-Telluride into one.

Mindat.org is less definitive. The website lists the Mount Sneffels District, but also lists the Sneffels as the Red Mountain District (inconsistent with this report) and Mount Sneffels, but includes the Camp Bird Mine within that district (as we do.) Both Sneffels and Camp Bird are listed under the Ouray District.

The stratigraphic section of the area contains rocks as old as the Pennsylvanian Hermosa Formation, deposited prior to the Uncompahgre uplift, lying on Middle and Late Proterozoic quartzites (Fisher, Ibid). Unconformable above that Paleozoic-Mesozoic sequence is the Tertiary Telluride conglomerate and some 1000 meters of flows, tuffs, breccias and mudflows. At the base of the volcanic-related sequence is the San Juan tuff - 700 meters of intermediate-composition volcanics and volcaniclastic sediments, mudflows, lava flows and flow breccias of 30-35Ma age. Structure is dominated by northwest-trending dikes, fissures, and veins radiating from the Silverton Caldera.

Moore (Ibid) recognized several stages of mineralization - early quartz veins with base-metal sulfides, quartz or quartz-carbonate veins with gold and silver, and late barren veins. Most of the mines occur in the San Juan tuff, although a few are found in the units directly above or below that unit.

Burbank (1947) discussed the Liberty Bell Mine (in the Telluride District) and the Camp Bird. The latter was operated from 1896 to 1916 for gold and silver, then again from 1926 with the recovery of lead. Zinc recovery began in 1942. He points out the interesting situation with the Treasury Tunnel. That structure extended beneath the continental divide from Ouray County to the Black Bear Mine in San Miguel County. Production was attributed to San Miguel County, although the portal and the mill were

both in Ouray County. Lead, copper and zinc were recovered primarily from veins in the tuff. Bastin (1923) adds considerable information on mineralization in the combined Sneffels-Telluride Districts.

The Camp Bird is commonly treated as a special case (e.g. Moore, Ibid), and is discussed in detail in Spurr (1925). The entry on mindat.org for the Camp Bird Mine is notable for an extensive list of references, which will not all be included here. The mine has produced intermittently since 1896 and was reportedly under further development in 2015. The story of the mine's discovery and the development of the settlement is found in Eberhart (1969).

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

- Bankers Tunnel
- Bi-Metallist
- Camp Bird Mine (considered by some as its own sub-district)
- Francis Mining Tract
- Hawkeye Claims
- Hidden Treasure
- Mountain Queen
- North Star & Conny
- Ocean Wave
- San Pedro
- Sunrise Tunnel
- Sweepstakes
- Terrible
- Tip Top
- Torpedo Eclipse Mine
- Wheel of Fortune
- Yellow Rose Mine

Minerals listed in the district include:

Acanthite	Fluorite	Pyrolusite
Actinolite	Freibergite	Quartz
Albite	Galena (argentiferous)	Selenium
Andradite var: Topazolite	Gold	Silver
Beidellite	Prehnite	Sphalerite
Chalcopyrite	Pyrargyrite	Stephanite
Epidote	Pyrite	Tetrahedrite

Minerals associated with the Camp Bird Mine (subdistrict) by mindat.org are listed in the separate Camp Bird Mine District write up.

References:

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