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MEMORIES WORTH SAVING:
THE STORY OF ASHCROFT, COLORADO

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of the requirements for the degree
of
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INTRODUCTION

Each mining area within the state of Colorado not only has a history similar to all other mining areas within the state, but also one unique unto itself. It should be remembered that each camp no matter how successful, no matter what its size, no matter how fleeting or prolonged its existence, contributed a unique "something" to the history of the state. The task of the researcher is to find that unique "something."

One mining community which began with great promise in 1879 was Ashcroft, located in the remote Elk Mountains, fourteen miles up Castle Creek from the equally infant camp of Aspen. Ashcroft, located at an elevation of 9,498 feet is surrounded by majestic beauty. No major mountain in the area--McArthur Mountain (12,139), Gold Hill (12,361), Ashcroft Mountain (12,381), Taylor Peak (13,435), Star Peak (13,521), Pearl Mountain (13,362), Castle Peak (14,265), Conundrum Peak (14,022), Cathedral Peak (13,943), Hayden Peak (13,561)--is under 12,000 feet. An ever present problem facing early day miners was accessibility to supply points and smelters. Eventually, three routes partially solved this problem--Independence Pass (12,095) from Leadville and the east through Aspen; Taylor Pass (11,928 feet) from the Gunnison country and the southeast; and Pearl Pass (12,705 feet) from the Gunnison country and the south. Numerous feeder streams--Cooper Creek from the south; Pine Creek, Devaney Creek, Sandy Creek, Sawyer Creek and Conundrum Creek from the southwest; and Cooper Fork, Express Creek, Waterfall Gulch, Fall Creek and Queens Gulch from the southeast--cut through steep canyons to enter Castle Creek running

the length of the long, narrow valley.

The Spanish in their journeys were south and west of the Castle Creek Valley. In 1776 the Franciscan Fathers, Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante, led an expedition from Sante Fe, New Mexico to establish an overland route between this stronghold on the fringe of the declining Spanish Empire and Monterey, California, the main Spanish presidio and cultural center of the Pacific Coast. This route was to be established for economic, political, defensive and military reasons. Although failing to achieve their ultimate goal, Dominguez and Escalante gathered valuable geographic information about lands above and west of the northern border of New Spain; these lands were first recorded in the mappings of Captain Don Bernardo Miera y Pacheco, the expedition's cartographer. In their search for a suitable route Dominguez and Escalante crossed the upper waters of Plateau Creek, close to the fringes of the Elk Mountains. A variation of the old Spanish Trail to California established forty years after the Dominguez-Escalante expedition went through the San Luis Valley over Cochetopa Pass, along the Gunnison River and westward to Utah.

The Rocky Mountains with its many streams was prime territory for beaver "gold" during the 1820's and 1830's and the mountain men extensively roamed the region in search of the beaver. Although there is no documented evidence to prove the mountain men were in the Castle Creek Valley during this time, it is probable that the search for beaver "gold" touched the valley with its many streams. The ruggedness and isolation of the valley would not have stopped the mountain men of the 1820's and 1830's just as it would not stop the prospectors of the 1870's and 1880's. Although the abundance of beaver in the valley in the 1820's and 1830's is unknown, beaver were there. It is known that beaver were at the confluence of Pine

Creek and Castle Creek during the 1870's and 1880's and that beaver are in the same location now.

Until the arrival of the white men who searched for elusive mineral ore, the environment of the valley was relatively undisturbed. Mountain men had been in the Castle Creek Valley forty or fifty years earlier, but they lived a quiet existence and did not disturb the land. Although the valley was within the land of the Utes and would remain within their domain until the spring of 1880, the Utes, too, lived without disturbance to the land. An occasional hunting party passed through the valley, but due to the extreme ruggedness of the surrounding area, Castle Creek Valley was neither a major hunting area nor a major path to the hot springs of the Roaring Fork Valley. Likewise, the altitude of the valley stopped any winter occupation. The extreme ruggedness and altitude of the valley also presented difficulties for the white men who searched for mineral--difficulties which were never completely overcome.

Ashcroft never reached the magnitude of ore production which it was believed the town would reach. Silver was there, along with zinc, gold, copper and lead, but only the Montezuma and Tam O'Shanter mines, owned at one time by Horace Tabor, were large enough to be profitable for any length of time. Others might have been profitable if the railroad, long promised and planned, had ever reached Ashcroft. In its absence, expenses proved too great for the majority of miners to ship their ores to Crested Butte or Aspen for reduction.

Ashcroft, then, is one of many mining camps in Colorado that began with great promise but ended quickly as a ghost town. As a thriving mining camp, Ashcroft's life was short--a mere span of three years--and yet its life continued well after the turn of the century. The post office of

the community was not officially closed until November 30, 1912. Ashcroft was the first community in the Pitkin County region to achieve any significance, surpassing Aspen in mineral production if only for a short while. Not only was the first school in Pitkin County established in Ashcroft, but the community could also boast of its own poet laureate.

Ashcroft is no longer an inhabited town, but its history continues. In June, 1975, the townsite of Ashcroft was designated as a national historic site to be preserved for future generations. At various times Ashcroft has been a movie location, a television production location, and the location of the Tenth Mountain Division prior to the completion of Camp Hale. Had World War II not intervened, Ashcroft probably would have been the first major ski area in Colorado. Until three years ago, a winter visitor could enjoy the sight of a full dog sled team mushing through the trees. Now a winter visitor can enjoy the exhilaration of cross-country skiing.

Ashcroft has indeed contributed and; more important, will continue to contribute its unique "something" to the history of Colorado. Ashcroft was a great promise which ended in broken dreams, but Ashcroft is a great promise of new and different dreams.

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CHAPTER I
THE NEVER ENDING SEARCH

The quiet stillness of the Castle Creek valley high in the Rocky Mountains was occasionally broken by the sounds of a beaver repairing his dam and his lodge for the coming winter. Winters in the valley were cold; snow cover was many feet deep. His lodge must be snug. His food must be gathered. It mattered not that the location of his lodge and his valley had no name.

If the beaver had been interested in years instead of seasons, 1859 would have appeared on his calendar. Other valleys in the Rocky Mountains were not as peaceful as his--white men were frantically searching for elusive mineral. In twenty years that search would bring the white men to the beaver's peaceful valley. For now, he was safe.

With the intrusion of the white men, the valley approximately fifteen miles in length would be named the Castle Creek Valley. In the spring and the summer, as one Cousin Jack¹ would say, "It's a bloody flower garden."² With its many open spots filled with luscious green grass, the valley was an ideal location for anemones, larkspur, Indian paintbrush, daisies and columbines. In addition, wild roses fringed the creek banks. The beaver, for its part, was more interested in the groves of trees which covered the

¹"Cousin Jack" was the nickname for a Cornish miner from Cornwall, England.

²Carroll H. Coberly, "Ashcroft," The Colorado Magazine, XXXVII (April, 1960), p. 84.

hillsides. Although there were Douglas fir, Alpine fir, Englemann spruce, some Foxtail pine, and now and then a Blue or Silver spruce, the most important vegetation to the beaver for nutritive as well as construction purposes was the aspen which filled the spaces between all the other trees.

The lodge the industrious beaver was repairing was situated at the confluence of two streams, for the present, unnamed. In later years they would each be named; the one from the west, Pine Creek; the one from the south, Castle Creek. To the beaver, names did not matter. The repairing of his lodge and the storing of food did.

Suddenly the beaver stopped his work and listened. Something was disturbing the peace of the valley. Looking up he saw the family of ospreys who shared his valley take flight. As shadows of the ospreys fell across the valley floor, the small "pocket gophers" that also shared the valley scurried to their dens in fright. Untouched by the danger and yet aware of the activity below was the Bald Eagle high in his lofty crag. Something alien was here. The beaver slipped quietly into the stream to the safety of his lodge to wait and to wonder.

Neither the beaver, the ospreys, nor the "pocket gophers" had anything to fear for the alien element was not looking for them. A small party of Ute Indians known as the Nünt'z or "the People" in their own language was in the valley hunting for the mule deer and the elk or Wapiti. They were returning to their winter lodges after spending time at the "healing waters," a group of natural hot springs known as Yampah situated at the junction of the Bunkara or Thunder River (later to be named the Roaring Fork River) and the Grand River. The isolated valley of their Shining Mountains was good to them; the deer and the elk were numerous. Soon the Nünt'z left the valley assured of food and clothing for the coming

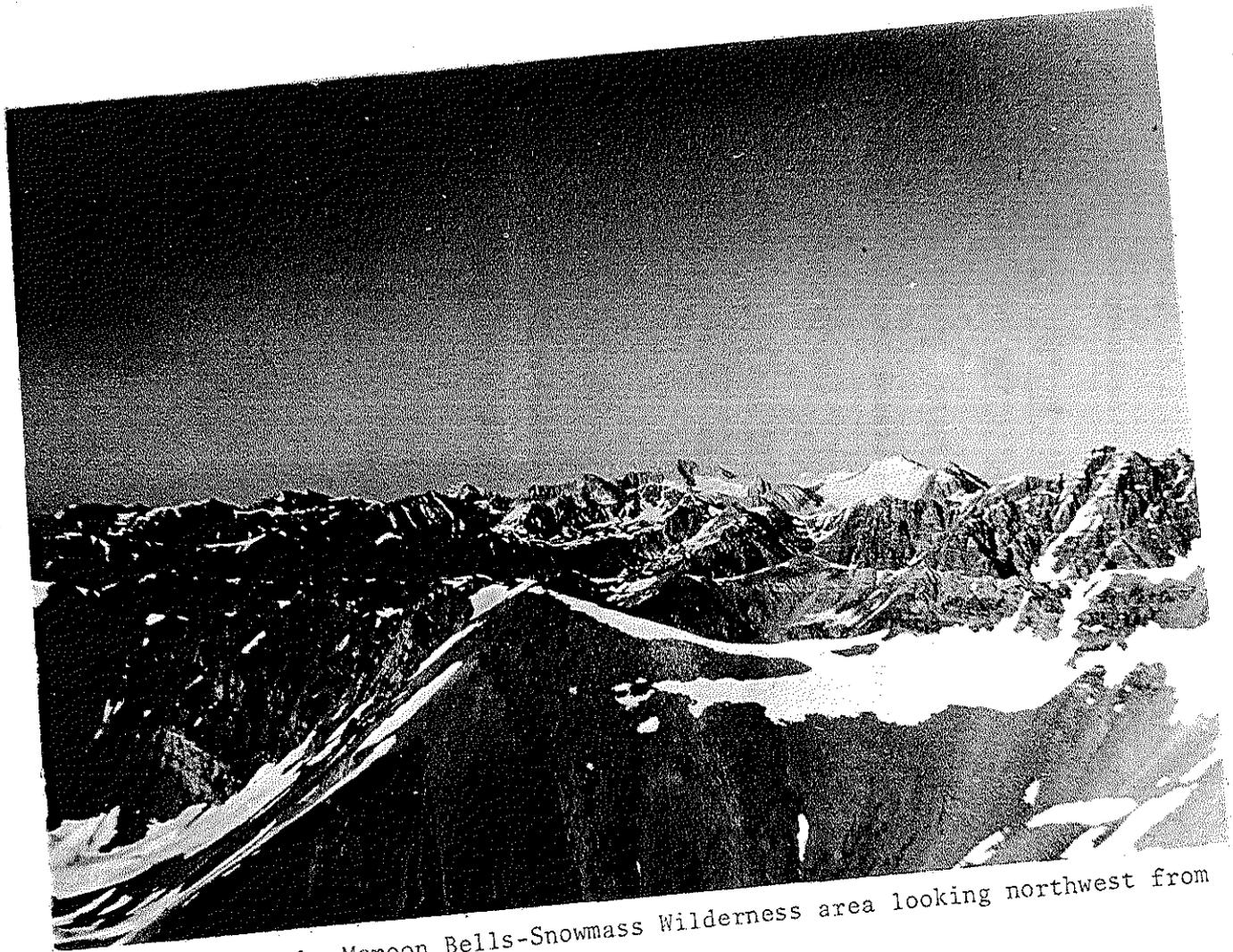
winter. The beaver could continue his winter preparations undisturbed.

The beaver envied the ospreys and the eagle for their ability of flight. He knew his valley and the surrounding area was beautiful and yet he had never seen it as the others had. The dominate feature of the area was the extremely rugged Elk Mountain range, a range of many high peaks, natural basins, and lakes. Over the ridge to the south was open country; over the ridge to the north could be seen large valleys and rivers. To the northeast and east were lower timbered mountains leading to another rugged range, the Sawatch, part of the backbone of the continent. Far to the west could be seen a large, massive tableland; a rugged, arid, broken land with massive cliffs was far to the northwest. The valley itself was long and narrow; numerous feeder streams cut through steep canyons to enter the main creek running the length of the valley. As far as the eye could see the view was one of rugged, isolated, unspoiled nature.

Ruggedness and isolation would not protect the unspoiled nature of the valley forever. The white men's unrelenting search for mineral, already occurring in other valleys equally as rugged and isolated as the Castle Creek Valley, would also disturb this peaceful setting. In twenty years the mining community of Ashcroft would add its name to the annals of Colorado mining history.

The unrelenting search for mineral started with the first discovery of gold in the future state of Colorado and was an accidental by-product of the California gold rush of 1849. On June 21, 1850, two or three dollars' worth of gold was found in the general vicinity of future Denver at Ralston Creek.³ Further investigation of Colorado's mineral possibilities

³William S. Greever, The Bonanza West: The Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848-1900 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 157.



Aerial view of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness area looking northwest from the Castle Creek Valley, 1976



Aerial view of Upper Castle Creek Valley showing Pearl Basin with Pearl Mountain in the upper left hand corner, 1976.



Aerial view of Star Basin south of Ashcroft with Star Peak in the upper right hand corner, 1976.



Ashcroft in 1942 (Courtesy of Ted Ryan and the Ashcroft Detachment)



Aerial view of Lower Castle Creek Valley with Richmond Hill, right center, 1976

would not occur until 1858. The initial mining excitement in Colorado, begun by the rediscovery of gold in 1858 and later enhanced by the discovery of silver in 1864, would last intermittently until the turn of the century.

The rush of 1859 might have been an utter failure had it not been for three major discoveries, each approximately forty miles from Denver. The first was attributed to George Jackson who found good placer diggings in the area now called Idaho Springs. The second discovery, the first lode of any importance in Colorado, was made by John H. Gregory at future Black Hawk. The third discovery on Gold Run, near Gold Hill in Boulder County, not nearly so productive as the other two regions would later prove to be, initially helped to arouse enthusiasm for the faltering gold rush.

The lure of rich rewards for all who cared to come attracted thousands to Colorado in the spring of 1859. Throughout the summer and the fall of 1859, the lure tarnished for the inexperienced and the faint hearted; the disillusioned left the region crying "Pike's Peak Hoax." Many an early fortune seeker though did not give up. With optimism and intense determination these fortune seekers prospected successfully, not only in the areas of the three sensational discoveries, but also in the South Park area approximately ninety miles southwest of Denver. If a directory of mining communities had been available at the close of 1859, the listing would have included the mining communities of Fairplay, Alma, Montgomery, Buckskin Joe, Mosquito, Hamilton, Jefferson, Negro Gulch, French Gulch and Breckenridge of the South Park region, as well as the communities of Black Hawk, Idaho Springs, Gold Hill, Central City and Nevadaville of the Little Kingdom of Gilpin.

Colorado had to become a fluid, transitory mining frontier. Estab-

lished regions would not and could not absorb all of the hopeful mineral seekers. The proven success of one district contributed to the transitory nature of the frontier. It was believed by those who came too late to an established area that their potential bonanza was "over the next hill." Consequently expansion continued in leap frog fashion, but not without direction. It soon became apparent that almost all of the deposits occurred along what came to be known as the "mineral belt," a fifty-mile-wide zone extending from present day Boulder County in the northeast to the present day San Juan County in the southwest--a distance of some 216 miles. All told, some 430 metal mining districts were established as legal entities in the state of Colorado although only a few of the districts ever became really significant producers.

California Gulch, near present day Leadville, became important in 1860 as the site of the richest gold placer ever found in Colorado. The rush was short but sweet; approximately \$5,000,000 was produced in two years.⁴ Gold prospecting in the San Juan Mountains of southwestern Colorado in 1860 ended in failure, although false rumors of fabulous discoveries sent others into the region in 1861.

At first miners in Colorado sought only gold; gradually they came to realize that they should also look for silver. The silver craze began in 1864 with the discovery of the first paying silver lode near Georgetown approximately sixty miles west of Denver and ended on a major level in 1893 following discoveries in the Creede and Cripple Creek districts and the great silver panic of that year. By the 1870's and the 1880's, the belief

⁴John and Halka Chronic, Prairie, Peak and Plateau: A Guide to the Geology of Colorado (Denver: Colorado Geological Survey Bulletin 32, 1972), p. 82.

that potential bonanzas were "over the next hill" proved true. In leap frog fashion rich strikes occurred in such places as Caribou in Boulder County, Silverton and Ouray in the San Juan Mountains, Leadville in the Sawatch and Mosquito ranges, Tincup and Pitkin in the Gunnison country and Ashcroft and Aspen in the Elk Mountains.

In the early 1870's, rich strikes were not the only stimulus to the development of the mineral wealth of Colorado. Investors had long been clamoring for careful appraisals of the potential mineral wealth. Without some scientific knowledge and without good maps proper mineral development was too wasteful and too costly.

To fulfill this need, Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden, leader of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories under the auspices of the Department of the Interior, began exploration of Colorado in 1873. For the next three years, his purpose was to map the topography and the geology of Colorado, as well as study its natural history. For so vast an undertaking the territory west of the Front Range was divided into logical study sections; each section was then extensively mapped and photographed. Reports were quickly published in order that others might know what a specific area contained. In 1879 the state legislature of Colorado passed a resolution expressing their gratitude to Dr. Hayden and his assistants for their collection of reports, views and maps which were helping to develop the mining and agricultural interests of Colorado.⁵

Rich strikes and geological surveys may have provided a boost to the mining industry in the 1870's, but one extremely complex problem remained-- Colorado's Indians. The Utes had always claimed all of the mountainous

⁵Richard A. Bartlett, Great Surveys of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 120.

regions of Colorado as their domain. With the encroachment of the white men into the Shining Mountains a series of treaties were drawn up and signed--each worse than the last from the standpoint of the Nunt'z.

In 1863 the Utes ceded the San Luis Valley to the white men. In return, they were given "in perpetuity" all land west of the Continental Divide. "Perpetuity" lasted five years. By 1868 white men in their relentless search for mineral had breached the Continental Divide, returning to Denver with stories of rich placers, glittering veins, and rubies as big as marbles. The location of this fabulous wealth was the forbidden reservation of the Utes; something had to be done.

A new treaty, the treaty of 1868, was forthcoming, again to the detriment of the Utes. The vague boundaries of the treaty of 1863 were tightened. This time an actual survey was made to establish the boundaries as all land west of the 107th meridian and all land south of a line fifteen miles due north of the fortieth parallel--an area encompassing approximately one-third of the total area of Colorado. When the imaginary lines were drawn, the Utes discovered that their best hunting country--the high peaks near the Divide--was now part of the white man's land. The Utes were assured that the "Great White Father" would provide for them.

Two agencies, one for the Grand River, Yampa and Uintah bands on the White River near present day Meeker and one for the Tabeguache, Muache, Weeminuche and Capote bands on the Rio de los Pinos near Cochetopa Pass, were established. A warehouse, an agency building, a schoolhouse, and buildings for a carpenter, a farmer, a blacksmith and a miller were erected at each of the two locations. Indian children between the ages of seven and eighteen were required to attend school; the "Great White Father" would provide a teacher for every thirty students.

The heads of families who wished to farm could select 160 acres of land and would receive seed and implements for four years as well as instruction from the farmer. Each head of a family would also receive one gentle American cow and five head of sheep. An individual over eighteen, but not the head of a family, could select 80 acres of land for farming purposes. Thirty thousand dollars a year was set aside for thirty years for clothing, blankets and other articles of necessity as determined by official reports as to the condition and wants of the Utes. An additional thirty thousand dollars a year, the appropriation of which was determined by the Secretary of the Interior, was to provide beef, mutton, wheat, flour, beans and potatoes until the Indians were capable of sustaining themselves.

The treaty of 1868 further provided that white violators of the treaty would be punished according to United States laws and would be required to reimburse the injured person. Indian violators would likewise be tried according to United States law. If the tribe refused to submit the violator to the proper authorities, the annual annuities would be reduced by an amount necessary to reimburse the injured person. Any time after 1878 the United States government, at its option, could withdraw the farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters and millers, but would continue to pay ten thousand dollars per annum to educate the Utes. The United States government would continue to retain the privilege of right of way for all roads, highways and railroads through the reservation as authorized by law.⁶

The Bureau of Indian Affairs found it difficult to deal with the

⁶U. S., Department of Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties, comp. and ed. by Charles J. Kappler (3 vols.; Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), II, pp. 990-96.

numerous chiefs of the entire Ute Nation. Although the official designation of Ouray as spokesman for the entire Ute Nation did not occur until 1873 with the signing of the Brunot Treaty, the Bureau considered Ouray the spokesman as early as 1868. The Utes considered this decision as a further indignity; a spokesman for the entire Nation was not in accordance with tribal law. Furthermore, although Ouray spoke both English and Spanish, a decided advantage for the Utes in their continued negotiations with the white man, he was only part Ute--his father was a Jicarilla Apache. The white man had spoken--like it or not, Chief Ouray would speak for all.

In 1868 Ouray protested the relinquishment of the hunting country and refused to ratify the survey establishing reservation boundaries. It made no difference; settlers were already edging over the reservation line. The federal government promised to remove the squatters; instead the Utes were forced to relinquish the area illegally occupied by the whites.

The San Juan country with its vast mineral wealth was officially ceded to the whites in 1873 with the signing of the Brunot Treaty. The Utes were permitted to hunt in the San Juan country as long as the game lasted and the Indians were at peace with the white people. Twenty five thousand dollars per annum was to be held in perpetual trust for the Utes to be dispersed or invested at the discretion of the President "for the use and benefit of the Ute Indians annually forever." A third agency was to be established for the Weeminuche, Muache and Capote bands at some suitable point on the southern part of the Ute Reservation. The provisions of the treaty of 1868 were reaffirmed except in regard to the newly relinquished land. Expressly reaffirmed was the provision that no unauthorized persons were to enter and/or reside on the reservation. The salary of Ouray, head-chief of the Ute Nation, was set at one thousand dollars per

annum for ten years, or so long as he remained head-chief of the Utes and at peace with the people of the United States.⁷

Even as provisions of the treaties of 1868 and 1873 providing for three agencies were written up to answer complaints regarding the Indians, complaints were rampant that these agencies were too far from military posts in case the Utes became troublesome. The clamor continued against the Utes for their idleness and wanton waste of property. The Shining Mountains were filled with fertile, mineral rich land which the white men believed should be and could be put to use if only the Utes could be removed.

In 1879 trouble at the White River Indian Agency provided the excuse for the removal of the Utes from the state. On September 19, 1879 the northern Utes, tired of Agent Meeker's attempts to destroy their nomadic and free way of life, massacred Meeker and eleven other men and kidnapped Meeker's wife, his daughter Josephine, Mrs. Shadrack Price and her two children. Major Thomas T. Thornburgh and a contingent of soldiers from Fort Steele, Wyoming were ambushed a mile inside the Reservation in the Milk Creek Valley on that same day. Thornburgh was on his way to the agency at the request of Meeker to arrest troublemakers and protect the employees of the agency. By crossing the Reservation line at Milk Creek with his troops, Thornburgh upset the precarious peace between the white men and the northern Utes. The Utes believed that the troops invaded the Reservation to arrest them and to drag them in chains to the hated Indian Territory. The Utes retaliated in the only way they knew. Major Thornburgh, ten enlisted men and a wagonmaster were killed in the ambush. Since

⁷ibid., I, pp. 151-52.

1863 the "intelligent and industrious citizens" living on the Western Slope had been against the "non-producing, semi-barbarous" people also living on the Western Slope. As a consequence of the Mecker Massacre the slogan the "Utes Must Go" was echoed not only by the whites on the Western Slope, but by the whites on the Eastern Slope as well.

In an article in The Leadville Herald, dated November 15, 1879, Lieutenant Governor Horace Tabor offered four resolutions which he had prepared:

WHEREAS, The citizens of Leadville have assembled this evening to listen to the recital of the foul murder committed on one of the leading citizens of the State at the White River Agency; and

WHEREAS, These Utes occupy the finest and richest portion of Colorado, and utterly refuse to cultivate the soil or allow others to do so,

RESOLVED, That the whole so called Ute Reservation is not worth the life of their best friend, whom they so foully massacred on the twenty-ninth of September.

RESOLVED, That we condemn the Indian policy of the United States Government in allowing our citizens to be murdered by the Indian fiends.

RESOLVED, That the Ute Indians must and shall be removed outside the border of our State, or that it will be our duty to make them peaceable Indians.

RESOLVED, That we heartily applaud the resolution and courage of Miss Josephine Mecker in telling the story of the outrages and sufferings endured by herself, her family and associates, and we commend her to the friendship and courtesies of those who desire to know the true inwardness and want of the principal of the noble red man.

The United States government yielded to the "Utes Must Go" advocates. A final treaty signed in March, 1880 made this desire for banishment of the Utes a reality. The Ute Nation ceded to the United States government all territory on their Reservation in Colorado except for two regions. One region, designated as La Plata River, Colorado was to be the future

home of the Southern Utes. The second region at the confluence of the Gunnison and Grand Rivers was to be the future home of the Uncompahgre Utes if a sufficient amount of agricultural land was available. Since a sufficient quantity of land was not considered to be available the Uncompahgre Utes were moved to the Territory of Utah in September, 1881. The White River Utes, perpetrators of the Meeker Massacre, were immediately removed to the Uintah Reservation, Territory of Utah. Victims of the Meeker Massacre and/or their families were paid set sums totalling \$3,500 annually for twenty years out of annuities designated for the White River Utes.

The fulfillment of any other provision of the treaty was contingent upon the surrender or apprehension of all guilty parties of the Meeker Massacre. Once all guilty parties were accounted for, the "Great White Father" would continue to provide the basic necessities--houses, wagons, agricultural implements, stock cattle, saw and grist mills--until the Utes could sustain themselves. Sixty thousand dollars in annuities due to the Utes from previous treaties, the payment of \$50,000 "annually forever" for the ceded Colorado land, payment for improvements on the ceded land, and an additional \$15,000 appropriated by Congress was to be distributed in a specified manner. The Southern Utes received one-third. The Uncompahgre Utes received one-half. The White River Utes received one-sixth.

A five-member commission, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, was to carry out the provisions of the treaty. The commission was to present the treaty to the Utes and obtain the consent of three-fourths of the adult males. They were further instructed to take a census of the Indians, ascertain the improvements made by the Indians on the ceded land and oversee their removal, location and settle-

ment. The final requirement of the commission was to make a full report of the land allotments including an accurate map of survey and the condition of the allotted land, locate and establish new agencies, estimate both the number of houses needed and their cost and the number of school-houses and teachers needed.⁸

In September, 1881 the Uncompahgre Utes were forced to leave the confluence of the Gunnison and Grand Rivers and begin a final trek to the Uintah Reservation. The policy advocated since 1863 that the "Utes Must Go" had borne fruit. Colorado could continue to seek her destiny.

⁸Ibid., pp. 180-86.

CHAPTER II
THE LUCK OF THE DRAW

Topographical work was of primary importance to Ferdinand Vandevcer Hayden in his survey of the Colorado Rockies (1873-1876) in order that an accurate atlas of the region could be produced as a tangible result justifying not only the survey, but the expenditure of the monies, from \$65,000 to \$95,000 each year, which had been appropriated by Congress. The knowledge and the skill of Hayden's chief topographer, James Terry Gardner, was invaluable for this formidable task. Gardner divided the territory into logical study areas, established the primary triangulation over the entire area and over each part upon which the secondary triangulation of the divisional topographers was based, and then participated in the study of each area. Another topographer of the Hayden Survey, William Henry Holmes became an acknowledged expert with his magnificent sketches and cutaway drawings of the earth showing the age and contours of the formations beneath the surface. William Henry Jackson, with his brilliant photography, also helped to dispel the myths of the territory.¹ The atlas which resulted from the painstaking mathematical work, magnificent sketches, cutaway drawings, and photographs completed by these men and others of the Survey gave prospectors and other interested persons a valuable tool--a reasonably clear conception of the features of the Colorado Rockies.

In the summers of 1873 and 1874 the remote Elk Mountains were explored.

¹Bartlett, Great Surveys, pp. 77, 79, and 81-82.

William Holmes discovered that the Elk Mountains were structurally different from most of the other ranges of Colorado. The Elks are composed of a series of layers of Paleozoic sediments thrust westward over one another. These rocks, often crumpled and highly metamorphosed, are cut by numerous sills, dikes and other intrusions which caused mineral enrichment locally. Because glaciers formed along the crests of the Elk Mountains, many of the valleys in the region are U-shaped. The mountains at the upper ends of these valleys contain horse-shoe shaped, deep, steep-walled recesses caused by glacial erosion. To Holmes the Elk Mountains were the most startling both in form and in color of any mountains in the United States.²

When the surveyors were finished with their tasks the Elk Mountains, especially in the area of future Aspen, were no longer nameless, untrodden, unknown peaks. Appreciative of the beauty of the fourteen thousand foot mountains which they conquered, each was christened with an appropriate descriptive name--Castle Peak, purple in color, named because of the striking towers along its ridges; the Maroon Bells, originally Maroon Mountain because of its dual cones, named because of its color; Pyramid Peak, known as Black Pyramid or simply Pyramid by the Hayden Survey, named because of its pyramidal outline; Capital Peak named also because of its form; and Snowmass Peak named because of the mass of snow in the amphitheatre on the eastern face.³ These men also named Treasure Mountain and Whitehouse Moun-

²W. H. Holmes, "Report on the Geology of the Northwestern Portion of Elk Range," [Eighth] Annual Report of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, Embracing Colorado and Parts of Adjacent Territories; Being a Report of Progress of the Exploration for the Year 1874, pp. 59-71.

³John L. Jerome Hart, Fourteen Thousand Feet: A History of the Naming and Early Ascents of the High Colorado Peaks (Denver: The Colorado Mountain Club, 1972 reprint of the 1931 second edition), pp. 21-22.

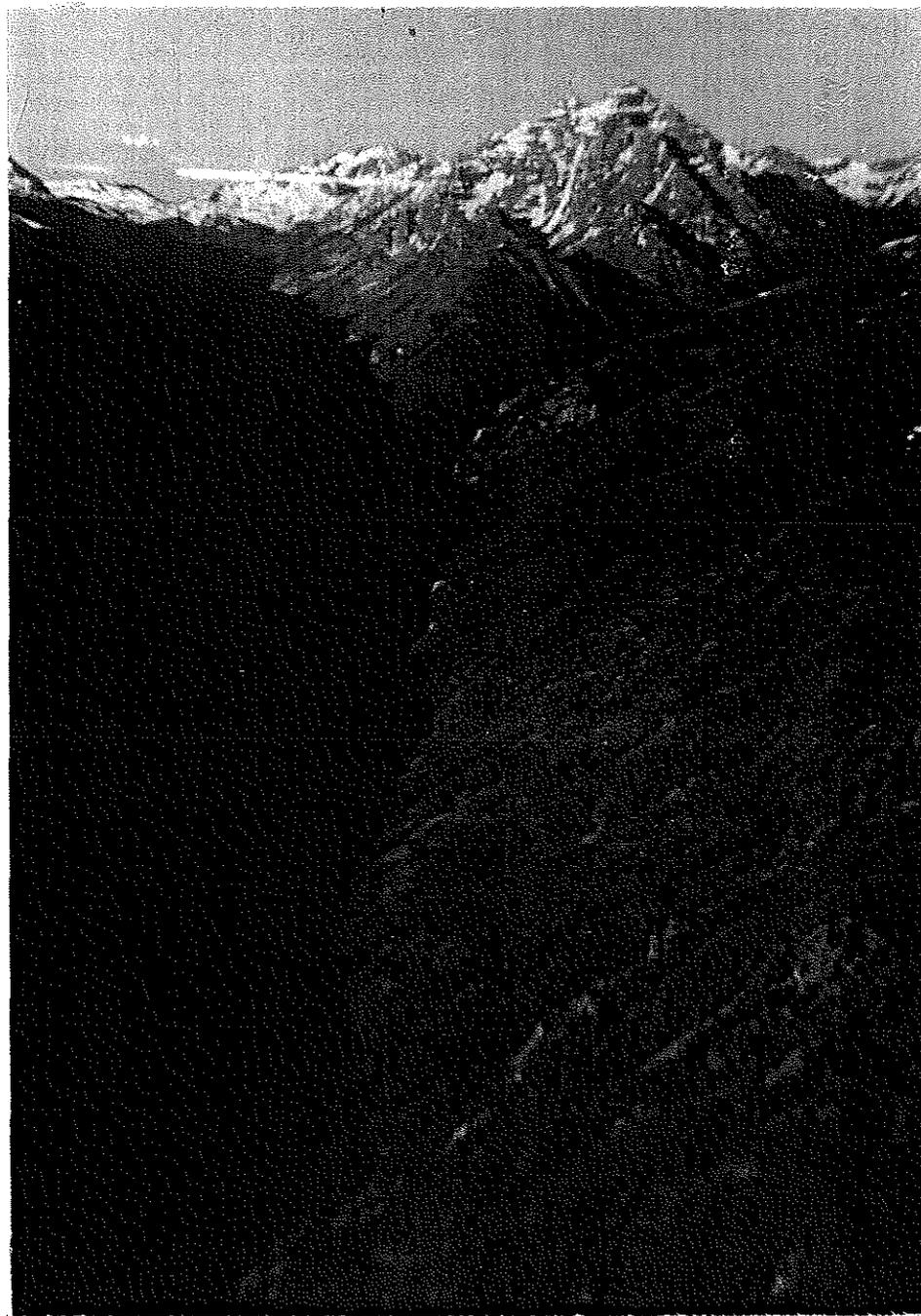
tain in the area of future Marble and, of course, Hayden Peak in the area of future Ashcroft. All of these names have remained as testimonials to the daring men of the Hayden Survey.

James Gardner's most difficult and dangerous climb occurred on August 20, 1873, when he tackled Snowmass Peak. Three times his assistant prevented Gardner from falling backwards by placing the transit rod against his back. Undaunted by his near mishaps, Gardner wrote of the beauty of the Elks with its many grassy meadows and thousands of wild flowers. Winding in and out of the cool shade of the aspen trees gave him a great feeling of solitude. William Byers, owner and editor of the Rocky Mountain News, who accompanied the surveyors in 1873 looked on a scene of total beauty beyond description from the top of Snowmass Peak. The mass of snow as described by Henry Gannett, a topographer with the Hayden Survey, was fully five square miles--probably the nearest approach to a glacier in the Rocky Mountains.⁴

The Elk Mountains were still extremely rugged and isolated when Hayden and his assistants finished their tasks, but the range was no longer terra incognita. In his reports of the area, Hayden was generous in his praise stating that the geology was the grandest and the most varied that he had seen in his lifetime of experience. According to Hayden, the area not only resembled the grandeur of the Canadian Rockies, it was the treasure vault of the world.⁵ With praise such as this it did not take long for prospectors to investigate the region and establish mining camps. Among the

⁴Bartlett, Great Surveys, pp. 86, 111; Hart, Fourteen Thousand Feet, p. 22.

⁵Bartlett, Great Surveys, pp. 110-11; George Gibbons Hayes, Getting Down to Bedrock (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Premier Press, 1960), p. 216.



Aerial view of Mount Hayden at the junction of Conundrum Creek and Castle Creek, 1976

numerous camps established were two of significance--Aspen and Ashcroft.

It is possible that the first prospectors of the region examined maps of the Geological and Geographical Atlas of Colorado and Portions of Adjacent Territory published in 1877 and noticed the Paleozoic limestones of the Elk Mountain range. Prospectors had learned through experience in the Leadville area that Paleozoic limestone known as "Blue" or Leadville Limestone contained the richest ore. Further investigation revealed that there were ores in the Castle Creek Valley similar to those at Leadville in rocks of the same age. Although prospectors found promising mineral in the region in 1879, they decided an expedient withdrawal from the area was necessary. Not only was winter approaching, but the prospectors were trespassing on the forbidden Reservation of the Ute Indians. At any other time trespassing on Indian land was not considered significant. That year it was.

In the fall of 1879 the Northern Utes staged an uprising at the White River Indian Agency killing all of the white men including Indian Agent Nathan Meeker and kidnapping all of the white women including Meeker's wife and daughter. Although a God fearing man, Nathan Meeker was misguided in his attempts to subdue the nomadic Northern Utes. The Utes did not wish to be farmers; farming was a degrading occupation for people who had lived and roamed freely with the land. The final straw in the series of indignities came when Meeker forced the Utes to plow up their race track. This final act of defiance cost Nathan Meeker his life and the Utes their homeland in the Shining Mountains. In the spring of 1880, prospectors safely returned to the Castle Creek Valley and continued to search for mineral bonanzas.

In May, 1880, two prospectors, C. B. Culver and W. F. Coxhead, on

their way to the Gunnison country, continued to find promising mineral as they traveled up Castle Creek. They became convinced that their bonanza could be found on the north side of the Elk Mountain range rather than on the south side. Since the two were short of supplies they camped on the present site of Ashcroft; Coxhead then returned to Leadville for needed supplies. While waiting for the supplies, Culver was so persistent in trying to divert others to prospect in the vicinity on their way to Ruby and Gothic that he became known by some of the miners as "Crazy Culver." He prevailed; by the time the needed supplies arrived from Leadville twenty-three men were in camp. Unofficially, Castle Forks City had begun. Although the camp originally derived its name from its location at a supposed fork in the waters of Castle Creek, the name met with disfavor and was shortly thereafter changed to Ashcroft.⁶

The formation of a Miner's Protective Association which occurred on June 17, 1880, was the first order of business for the new camp. Charles B. Culver was elected president with James Cochran elected secretary. In addition, a committee of five was appointed for investigation and complaint. Within two weeks of the first meeting of the Protective Association a courthouse was completed--the first sign of permanence in the new "city." Although not large--twenty-five feet by thirty-four feet--this building served as a community center during its existence.

With the first building completed, the Association deemed it advisable to officially establish a town since the population of the camp had grown to ninety-seven. Accordingly, a town company open to all who wished to join was organized. An official survey of the camp was made by Harry Wilkes, a

⁶Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

member of the company. The location was entered as Castle Forks Placer, United States Survey No. 2016 with the General Land Office at Leadville. Expenses incurred in the establishment of the community--\$540 for a water ditch a mile and a half long, \$200 for the courthouse and \$135 for the surveying--were partially covered by the townsite company admission fees--one dollar cash and one day's labor or five dollars cash.⁷

The new community was laid out into 840 lots, each twenty-five feet wide and one hundred forty feet deep, and comprised only the northern portion of the Castle Forks Placer. Two streets, each one hundred feet wide, were designated as main arteries--Fifth Street, the east-west artery, and Main Street, the north-south business artery which already contained the courthouse. All other streets were seventy feet wide and all alleys were twenty feet wide.⁸

A vital member of the fledgling community, the assayer, Professor Levi J. Colburn, received the honor of choosing the first lot after the official establishment of the town for his office. He selected a lot on the corner of Third and Main. Lots were then equally apportioned to the ninety-seven members of the townsite company, each member receiving eight lots by two separate drawings. After the two drawings the remaining lots were set aside to defray the association's expenses. In the first drawing each member of the company, as his name was called from the association's record book, stepped forward and drew a numbered slip from a hat to designate his turn in the selection process. Each member was then entitled to select one lot of his choice. "Dutchy," a local miner, began by

⁷Ibid.

⁸Town Plat, Ashcroft, Colorado, Plat Book Number One, p. 12, Pitkin County Courthouse.

selecting a lot on the corner of Main and Third which was eventually occupied by Jim Slater's saloon known as the Little Church on the Corner Saloon.

The second drawing which was somewhat more complicated than the first, entitled each member to seven lots. The seven lots a member received were determined by "luck of the draw." Two appointed tellers, Joe Lyons and James Boughton, each drew one slip from separate hats. The lot slip, drawn first, designated the number of a lot on either Castle Avenue or Main Street as well as the numbers of two adjoining lots on each of the other three streets. The other slip of paper drawn designated by number a name which appeared on the association's record book. Although a member did not have complete freedom in his choice of lots, each had to agree that the division of town lots had been completed in a traditionally democratic manner. After the division each member could use or dispose of his lots as he so chose.⁹

On August 12, 1880, the United States Postal Service established the post office for the new community approving the name of Ashcroft, Gunnison County, Colorado and appointed John R. Nelson as first postmaster. Louis T. Teuscher served as interim postmaster the following winter, receiving the official appointment on February 18, 1881.¹⁰

There are two conflicting stories, neither of which can be absolutely verified, pertaining to the name of Ashcroft. An enterprising miner, T. E. Ashcraft was in the vicinity in 1879 and established a camp called Highland at the confluence of Conundrum Creek and Castle Creek six miles down-stream from the future community of Ashcroft. Although Highland folded shortly after its inception, T. E. Ashcraft remained in the area. The community

⁹Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

¹⁰United States, General Services Administration, National Archives and Records Service.

of Castle Forks City supposedly was renamed for this man since he helped to spark its development. It is said that the 'a' became an 'o' through usage.

It is also possible that the name Ashcroft was derived from the community's location in a high mountain valley near a growth of mountain Ash trees. Croft is a word of Anglo-Saxon origin denoting a small, enclosed field.¹¹ The puzzle remains to this day. Ashcroft may have been named for a resident or it may have been indicative of the flora although the Ash tree is not a common tree native to the area.

On August 5, 1881, the name of the community was changed to Chloride. Since the mineral in the area was composed of seemingly vast pockets of chlorides, some of the miners felt that Chloride was a more fitting name for the community. Although the name was officially changed, the majority of the miners as well as the newspapers continued to refer to the community as Ashcroft. The majority prevailed; on January 3, 1882, Ashcroft again became the official name of the community.¹²

Sometime during the month of August, 1880, the young camp was shocked by the attempted establishment of a rival community. As a rival community, Hunley's Addition (also spelled Hundley) became a short-lived reality after the Ute Prospecting, Mining and Smelting Company, consisting of twelve heavily armed men, jumped one half of the town site, the southern portion of the Castle Forks Placer. These men erected a house, the lower portion

¹¹Ruth Estelle Matthews, "A Study of Colorado Place Names" (unpublished Master's thesis, Stanford University, 1940), pp. 236-37; Muriel Sibell Wolle, Stampede to Timberline: The Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of Colorado (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1969), p. 228; Len Shoemaker, Roaring Fork Valley: An Illustrated Chronicle (3rd ed. revised: Denver: Sundance Ltd., 1973), p. 35.

¹²National Archives and Records Service.

of logs and the upper portion of canvas, and let it be known that they would hold the land at all costs. The claim jumpers were quietly forced to acquiesce in their hopes when thirty-one unarmed residents of Ashcroft marched to the cabin, destroyed the notice of resistance by chopping down the tree on which it was posted, and gave the illegal inhabitants three days to vacate the premises.¹³ In August, 1881, this land was purchased by Isaac Cooper from Edward Hudson for \$1,120. According to the deed, the land had been located by Frank Enzensperger, attorney-in-fact for Edward Hudson, on December 12, 1879. On November 21, 1881, the plat of Hunley's Addition to Ashcroft, Colorado, a total of one hundred sixty acres, was filed for record in the Pitkin County Courthouse.¹⁴ The intended rival community of 1880 instead became an unofficial extension of Ashcroft in 1881.

As a mining community, Ashcroft would have failed immediately had it not been for two important mineral discoveries which revived faltering optimism. The first important strike in the vicinity occurred on May 20, 1880, when Jack King and Jim Richardson, partners of Cooper and Company found galena, gray copper and brittle silver on Bonanza Hill.¹⁵ The ore assayed from forty to 400 ounces. An even richer strike was unearthed in June, 1880, when T. E. Ashcraft located the North American on Bald Mountain. The ore reportedly assayed as high as 14,000 ounces of silver to

¹³Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

¹⁴Quit Claim Deed, Book One, p. 92, Pitkin County Courthouse; Plat of Hunley's Addition, Plat Book Number One, p. 10, Pitkin County Courthouse.

¹⁵The miners in early day Ashcroft had names for the numerous gulches, hills and mountains around Ashcroft. In many cases I have been unable to correlate these early day names with present day names.

the ton.¹⁶

With renewed dreams of success, miners again began to search in earnest. Numerous discoveries were soon made on Slate Mountain, a secondary peak to the east of Castle Peak. Two of these, the Montezuma and the Tam O'Shanter located by Atkinson and Chaney, proved to be very important not only for the continued mining activity of the district, but also for the continued life of Ashcroft. The Highland Chief located by Charles Bovard and Company and soon sold to Nelson and Smith for \$800 was another promising find on Slate Mountain in 1880. The Wichita and Grayback mines, each with a vein of high grade ore showing galena, gray copper and native silver, were found by Bob McCollum and Ike Boesch. L. W. Worthington located the Unicorn which joined the Tam O'Shanter on the west side of Slate Mountain, Montezuma basin.

A short distance south of Ashcroft, Charles Barg and Gus Moberg made a valuable strike on Hogan's Peak. An immense body of low grade ore found in the Silver Boy and the Gold Ring was worked during the winter of 1880-1881. The Pearl Group, locators unknown, comprised of the Pearl, Hoosier Extension, Douglass, Sterling, Real Del Monta, and Lake lodes on Pearl Mountain seemed to be rich in silver when first located in 1880. Leahy, Walsh, and Harrington were the locators of the Columbia on Brilliant Hill, one of the first discoveries of the district.

The founders of Ashcroft, C. B. Culver and W. F. Coxhead, were also busy locating the Captain Kid, one and a half miles west of Ashcroft, consisting of a well-defined vein of low grade ore which could be seen for a quarter of a mile. Two other valuable claims, the Little Lester and the

¹⁶Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

Blonde Mary joining the North American on Bald Mountain west of town, were also located by Culver and Coxhead.¹⁷

The spring and summer of 1880 were eventful. Not only had important discoveries been made and dreams of wealth rekindled, but a town had also been established. By the end of the first season several signs of permanence appeared in town. The courthouse, built with the perseverance and cooperation of the entire camp, and the assay office of Professor Colburn were in evidence on Main Street. All other permanent buildings were on Castle Avenue. James Cochran, Pat Cox, and Ed Hamilton were responsible for the town recorder's office. The post office was erected by Nelson and Smith. J. D. Parker built a small store and Thomas Combs framed a store for McCarthy and Flynn which was not completed until 1881. The Monaghan Brothers and Carney and Hillis were proprietors of small log saloons. A log cabin to be used both as a dwelling and store house for winter supplies by Bovard, McCullom and Boesch was also in evidence.

There was also a sign of permanence north of town. Jack Leahy, Phil Harrington and Pete Anderson located a ranch, fenced it, and built a cabin. Drury, Sweeney and others located the small strip of land between Leahy's ranch and town although nothing permanent was built. The new community had met adversity within its boundaries--the attempted establishment of a rival community--and prevailed.

Seven hardy souls, Peter Carney, Charles Bovard, Bob McCollum, Ike Boesch, L. C. Teuscher, Charley Barg and Gus Moberg, decided to remain in camp that first winter. The majority, though, sought winter quarters elsewhere after promising to return to Ashcroft no later than June 1, 1881, when

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 1-3.

the Miner's Protective Association for the Columbia Mining District would reconvene.¹⁸

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1.

CHAPTER III

BOOMING, BANGING, BLASTING

Ashcroft, still in a stage of raw infancy, received an immediate boost toward maturity in the spring of 1881. One of the first arrivals was a woman--the wife of C. B. Culver. Ashcroft was no longer exclusively a man's frontier. It is a matter of conjecture what thoughts Mrs. Culver had as she looked at the primitive conditions which still existed in Ashcroft after spending six long, arduous weeks on the road in the company of her husband and Peter O'Hara. Perhaps she shared the expectation, the excitement and the optimism of her husband or perhaps she was only fulfilling part of her sacred marriage vow--"For better or for worse until death do us part."

Soon after the arrival of these hardy travelers, Messrs. Flynn, Kinney and Company brought in an immense stock of groceries and mining supplies on jacks from Buena Vista. Flynn soon developed a reputation for fair dealing and business sense which held him in good stead with other members of the community. Walter W. Borom also brought in a large stock of groceries and mining supplies and likewise ran a good business.¹ Ashcroft's boom time had begun. How long it would last was anyone's guess.

The mining developments of the season of 1881 seemed to assure a long and glorious existence for the fledgling community on its way to maturity. In July the North American located in 1880 on Bald Mountain

¹Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

produced the richest rock yet discovered in the camp, over 10,000 ounces of chlorides and black sulphurets.² Discovery and location of mining properties continued at a furious pace. The Rocky Mountain Sun continually published glowing reports of Ashcroft and the Columbia Mining District.³

The Yellow Boy Group on Slate Mountain near the Tam O'Shanter consisting of the Inez, North Star, Yellow Boy and Bon Ton and owned by the Sowle brothers, Mc Carthy, Flynn, Davidson and Tappin, was worked with good results. Large quantities of ore were shipped to Leadville. In September, 1881, this group was known as the finest unsold property on Slate Mountain. C.B. Culver was encouraged by his discovery on Copper Hill. The Goddess of Liberty was a valuable claim assaying at 83 to 1,113 ounces of silver per ton.⁴

At the head of Pine Gulch above Crystal Lake the Tucker group, consisting of the Lost Treasure, Tucker, Smuggler, White Quartz and Horse Shoe lodes, was the scene of back breaking labor. Shafts were sunk to depths of ten to fifteen feet and tunnels ranged from thirty to sixty feet in length. Ores from the Lost Treasure assayed from 100 to 1,500 ounces silver to the ton. Assays of ore from the Tucker lode came in at 125 to 200 ounces of silver to the ton. The vein in the Smuggler was two feet in width with the ores assaying 40 to 100 ounces of silver to the ton. The value of the ores increased as more depth was gained. Below the Tucker.

² Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), July 16, 1881, p.2.

³ I have chosen to include only a few of the mines in the district in this chapter. To include more would not only have made the chapter lengthy, but also boring. A list of these and other mines in the district can be found in the Appendix.

⁴ Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1881, p. 1.

group to the north and west the Dickson, Blue Stocking, Nora or Captain, Mountain Elk, Alps and Little Minnie lodes seemed to have the same character of gray copper, galena and silver ores as the Tucker group.⁵

On September 3, 1881, a big strike was reported on Pearl Mountain. The Pearl Mining Company of Philadelphia, owners and operators of the Alycon lode, an extension of the Pearl lode, released assay reports ranging in value from 3,522 to 5,752 ounces of silver to the ton. Weekly reports continued throughout September. On September 10, the twelve assays of the previous week ranged from 3,000 to 6,000 ounces of silver. The vein, eight feet in width, could be traced for over 1,000 feet. According to the owners, offers for purchase of the Alycon extending into thousands of dollars had been refused. In November, Captain Jack Mc Carthy of Leadville sent an assay certificate to the owners for Alycon ore valued at \$12,613.44 of silver to the ton.⁶

Paying mineral in large quantities was unearthed on Castle Peak. The Eureka, Good Hope, Panther, Gertrude, Robin Hood and Porter lodes all radiated from one hub. The veins ranged from five to ten feet in each claim with mineral cropping out on the surface on all sides. Four feet from the surface rich chlorides were struck in the Panther lode. The average assay from the Porter was 100 ounces with well defined veins of galena thirty feet in width. The owners announced in September that a smelter would be erected to treat ore from the Porter and Panther lodes.

⁵ Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), October 1, 1881, p. 2.

⁶ Ibid., September 3, 1881, p. 2; September 10, 1881, p. 2; September 17, 1881, p. 2; and November 5, 1881, p. 2.

⁷ Ibid., August 13, 1881, p. 2; and September 3, 1881, p. 2.

Entrepreneurs from Leadville and points east seeking instant and un-
 bounding wealth came to Ashcroft throughout the season of 1881. Chicago,
 Illinois, Boston, Massachusetts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Cleveland,
 Ohio and New Haven and Hartford, Connecticut were a few of the home bases
 for these wealth-seeking entrepreneurs. Ashcroft could even boast of for-
 eign investment in its mining ventures. Money exchanged hands for all or
 part interest in various lodes throughout the Columbia Mining District.
 In July, 1881, the Tam O'Shanter and Montezuma mines were sold to Tabor
 and company for \$100,000. The terms were \$5,000 cash and further payment
 of \$95,000 in ninety days. Ore taken from the property during the ninety
 day period was to be left in sacks in the valley if they decided not to
 take the property after ninety days. On July 30, the latest run on the
 Tam O'Shanter ores was reported at 450 ounces of silver and thirty-six per cent
 lead. The Montezuma had three feet of solid mineral which assayed
 350 ounces of silver and a fair percentage of lead. Smithwitherson, an
 experienced miner and expert examining the property for Tabor, praised the
 Tam O'Shanter as being as good a claim as he had ever seen. The owners
 as of September, 1882, were William Parker, Jake Saunders, and Howard C.
 Chapin who retained one-half interest; H.A.W. Tabor, J.W. Smith, Jerome
 Chaffee and W.H. Bush held the other one-half interest. The editor of
 the Rocky Mountain Sun regarded the sale of the Tam O'Shanter and Monte-
 zuma to Tabor and his friends as a mistake.⁸

In August, three shifts were steadily at work so that fifty tons of
 ore could be shipped at one time. Ore had to be shipped to the La Plata
 works at Leadville since Ashcroft was still without desperately needed
 roads and smelters. The mill run averaged 467 ounces of silver to the ton.

⁸ Ibid., July 30, 1881, p.2; and September 10, 1881, p. 2.

during the month of August. In September, the owners announced that work would continue all winter and that a mill site would be staked out at the foot of Pine Creek. In November, the first ore car arrived in Ashcroft and was forwarded to the Tabor tunnel by McCarthy and Flynn. The Tam O'Shanter and Montezuma mines were considered to be the most fully developed mines in the Ashcroft area.⁹

The Unicorn located on Slate Mountain in 1880 by L. W. Worthington sold during the season of 1881 for \$60,000. The purchasers were two ladies from Chicago, Mrs. May and Mrs. Cook.¹⁰ The Stockholm group, the first properties located on Silver Mountain in 1880, were bonded for \$50,000. Although buyers were waiting, J. P. Flynn, the manager, refused to sell. The Silver Boy, the principal mine in the group, was improving rapidly. Its ore, a large body of gray carbonates, was similar to the ore of the Smuggler mine in Aspen. The veins in the two mines were reported to be identical in formation, dip and width. Ore from the Silver Boy was the first ore offered to the smelting company situated at the forks of Castle Creek one-quarter mile south of town. The east and west boundary lines of the Silver Boy were within ten rods of the toll road and the property was covered with timber making it a good situation for economical mining. Buyers were attracted to this property for other reasons as well. The property was well developed, it contained a body of high grade ore and there were no conflicts of ownership to settle. In September, Sandas, Chapin, and Dunbar secured water rights from Castle and Crystal Creeks at the foot of the Stockholm group of mines for a smelter.¹¹

⁹Ibid., August 13, 1881, p. 2; August 27, 1881, p. 2; and September 3, 1881, p. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., September 3, 1881, p. 2.

¹¹Ibid., July 16, 1881, p. 2; September 3, 1881, p. 2; and September 17, 1881, p. 2.

The Castle Peak Mining and Smelting Company was represented by a capital of \$2 million; the owners of the company lived in New Haven, Connecticut. By mid-August, 1881, a new town had sprung into existence. Kellogg, situated on Castle Creek about two miles above Ashcroft, was the location of a smelter erected by the Castle Creek Mining and Smelting Company, Messrs. Branthoven and Kellogg, principal owners. As the work progressed on the smelter Lew Davis started a boarding house. Operation of the smelter was inaugurated on September 1 although full operation did not occur until later that month. The smelter was not built for general use, but did have an indirect benefit for all mines in the district because it showed that other smelters should be erected. In late September the Castle Peak Mining and Smelting Company sold part of its property for several thousand dollars to a wealthy English company.¹²

Throughout the season mines were offered for sale. Entrepreneurs from Leadville and Chihuahua made offers to purchase the Pauline on Slate Mountain, but the owners refused to scale down the price of \$50,000. In October, Richard Stanhoppe, attorney-in-fact for Moffatt and Chaffee, made a further undisclosed offer and was turned down. The Little Tom on Slate Mountain was a property showing good galena at eighty feet and was believed to contain the same rich vein as the Tam O'Shanter. Mr. Hunt, owner of the Little Tom, accepted an offer for \$95,000. The Silver Islet of Slate Mountain showing sulphurets and native silver in fine grained heavy spar sold in September for \$60,000. Fifteen thousand dollars was refused for the

¹²Ibid., July 23, 1881, p. 2; August 13, 1881, p. 2; August 20, 1881, p. 2; September 10, 1881, p. 2; and September 24, 1881, p. 2.

Galena Chief which adjoined the Silver Islet.¹³ Other owners were not as fortunate although many, if they so wished, were able to sell part interest in their mines for as much as \$5,000.

The Unexpected located at the foot of Stewart's Peak at the head of Sandy Gulch provided a curiosity for the miners. Its vein ranging in width from twenty-two inches to three and one-half feet was of high grade chloride and galena. In August, Captain Thatcher, owner of the mine, placed on exhibition the "handsomest specimen of ore ever brought into camp." The specimen, a crystalization of spar embedded in galena weighing 208 pounds, was later shipped to Denver and New York for exhibition.¹⁴

With such vigorous mining activity in the area, it was little wonder that the miners constantly clamored for smelters; shipping ore to Leadville for reduction was too expensive for the majority. The local newspaper editor optimistically stated that Ashcroft could keep two smelters of 100 tons capacity constantly busy and that Aspen could likewise do the same. In September, the Newton Consolidated Mining and Milling Company of Ashcroft agreed to finance and build a smelter. The trustees of the town gave the company five acres due east of Third and Second Streets for this purpose. The company was not financially sound, however, and several liens were placed on their property for miners' wages and supplies. In October, J. F. Saunders bought eight and one-third acres of land for \$1.00 from the town trustees. He agreed to erect and to put into operation a smelter for the reduction of ores. Building of the smelter was to begin on or before June

¹³Ibid., August 13, 1881, p. 2; September 3, 1881, p. 2; September 10, 1881, p. 2; and October 22, 1881, p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., August 20, 1881, p. 2.

1882 and operation of the smelter was to begin on or before December 31, 1882.¹⁵

The first newspaper to represent Ashcroft began publication on July 16, 1881, in Aspen. The Ashcroft Herald, Thomas Z. Ferguson, manager, was affiliated with the Rocky Mountain Sun of Aspen. The paper continued as a separate publication until 1884 when it was no longer financially advantageous to the parent newspaper.¹⁶ The job of the newspaper editor in any mining camp was to laud the accomplishments of the camp and to taunt people into action to solve problems in the camp. The editors of the Ashcroft Herald and Rocky Mountain Sun did just that.

Throughout the summer months of 1881, the editor of the Rocky Mountain Sun pointed out the need for smelters in both Ashcroft and Aspen. The vigorous mining activity of the areas warranted at least a half dozen smelters. He was adamant in his praise that if given a chance both areas could rival the famed California Gulch. It was obvious to him that Ashcroft and Aspen should combine and be the state capital.¹⁷ They not only had first class hotels, their full quota of bars and billiard rooms and banks of all kinds, but they had delightful drives and the finest climate under the sun. One minor drawback in Ashcroft and Aspen was that no tailor was in residence in either place.¹⁸

¹⁵General Record, Book A, p. 542, Pitkin County Courthouse.

¹⁶Very few original copies of the Ashcroft Herald still exist. Those that do exist are in such poor condition that they are of little help to the researcher.

¹⁷Ashcroft and Aspen were not contiguous, but instead were separated by a distance of twelve miles. At the time of his statement a good road did not exist between the two communities.

¹⁸Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), July 20, 1881, p. 2; and August 20, 1881, p. 2.

Permanent growth in Ashcroft did not come easily. Although the real estate business was good with two honest firms in the field, many parties wishing to build were prevented from doing so due to the lack of lumber. The lumber yards were just not able to satisfy the demand for their products. The miners and capitalists who came into Ashcroft in 1881 were not there for their health. In September, twenty new buildings were under construction. The hotels were overrun; more accommodations were needed. Ashcroft was booming with its rich mines and enterprising citizens.¹⁹

In August, Davis H. Waite, County Superintendent of Schools for Pitkin County, issued an appeal to the residents of Independence and Ashcroft to each petition the state for a school so that Pitkin County could get her fair share of money. Eligibility was possible if the community had ten youth between the ages of 6 and 21. The ladies of Ashcroft gave a festival to raise money for the school fund. Three hundred dollars was raised, \$100 of which was turned over to the trustees. The rest of the money was stolen by Ferguson (first name not available). Ferguson was later apprehended by authorities in Denver and was jailed there. The money was not recovered.²⁰

On September 10, a notice to parents was published to inform the community of Ashcroft that school would commence on Monday, September 12, at 9:00 a.m. Classes would be held in the courthouse. J. P. Flynn, president of the School Board, and Henry Kunz, secretary, had contracted Miss Emma Perry to manage the scholars of School District No. 2. Parents and guardians were admonished to please be prompt with their children. The first

¹⁹Ibid., July 20, 1881, p. 2; August 20, 1881, p. 2; and September 17, 1881, p. 2.

²⁰Ibid., August 6, 1881, p. 2; Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

public school in Pitkin County opened with nine boys and girls in attendance; by the end of the first week nine more had enrolled.²¹ By December, eleven families were still in camp for the winter providing Miss Perry with fourteen students to instruct. Parents were encouraged to stop at the school to see for themselves the fine job being accomplished.²²

During the fall of 1881 Ashcroft was lauded as the boss mining camp of the state by the local newspaper. Another miners' union had been established and the population had increased to about one thousand. Gambling places were going full blast and the people were congratulating themselves on Ashcroft's second anniversary of existence. They were, in fact, lamenting that Ashcroft had yet to record its first birth, first marriage, or first death. On October 26, 1881, a most tragic and totally unexpected sudden death did occur--H. M. Zuern of Laureton, Pennsylvania, fell 1,800 feet to his death from a high trail on Quaker Mountain. The trail, along a narrow ridge, was, in places, scarcely wide enough for a foothold. The mountain sides were steep and jagged for nearly a quarter of a mile on either side of the trail. Zuern and his partner, Jay Craft, had been in the Ashcroft area for six months mining and prospecting. At the time of Zuern's death, the two were nearing completion of a contract for the Shebena mine about three and one-half miles west of Ashcroft. Zuern was buried on October 29 with the dubious distinction of having the first grave in the new graveyard on the top of a little hill north of and overlooking the town.²³

²¹School District No. 1 in Aspen opened its doors to scholars on September 19, a full week after School District No. 2 opened its doors.

²²Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), September 10, 1881, p. 2; September 17, 1881, p. 2; and December 3, 1881, p. 2.

²³Ibid., October 29, 1881, p. 2; Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

New businesses were constantly opening their doors to the many eager customers residing in Ashcroft. C. B. Culver started a boarding house on the corner of Main and Second. Mr. and Mrs. John Boulton operated the Riverside Hotel on Castle Avenue. On Tuesday evening, September 13, a surprise party was held at the hotel. The host and hostess knowing nothing of the party until its occurrence behaved admirably under the circumstances. Three other hotels also began business in 1881. The Spencer House, the Fonder Hotel and the Covert House, all on Castle Avenue, did not lack for business. A Thanksgiving party was held at the Covert House for the eleven families and 150 men still residing in Ashcroft for the winter. It was billed as the largest party ever held in Ashcroft, a diversion for the winter doldrums. The City Restaurant and Bakery owned by Bennett and Jordan on Castle Avenue also provided comfortable beds for the weary.²⁴

Richard Perry ran a boot, shoe and stationary store on Castle Avenue, presided over by his sister Emma when school was not in session. To provide fresh meat for Ashcroft, Charles Boesch opened a meat market on Main Street. The oldest store in Ashcroft was run by G. H. Smith and provided general merchandise and miners' supplies. Kinney and Company and W. W. Borom provided competition for Smith. By the fall of 1881, Captain McCarthy of Leadville and J. P. Flynn of Ashcroft had formed a partnership in which bought out both Kinney and Company and W. W. Borom. In October, the new concern ordered five car loads of goods and supplies for the next season's trade.²⁵

²⁴Ibid.; September 3, 1881, p. 2; September 17, 1881, p. 2; and December 3, 1881, p. 2; Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1881, p. 1.

²⁵Rocky Mountain Sun, (Ashcroft and Aspen); September 17, 1881, p. 2; October 29, 1881, p. 2; October 22, 1881, p. 3; and October 26, 1881, p. 3; Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 1.

The Teuscher brothers provided a valuable service with the Ashcroft Feed Stable. B. L. Sowle and Thomas Comb, knowing there was room for competition, built a corral at the corner of Castle Avenue and Third Street, one of the best locations in Ashcroft for a business of that kind. Bliley and Tyler provided hardware and stoves for the hard working miners. M. J. Galligan and Tilford and Middleton established law offices. Thomas Duffy known as one of the best mining experts in Pitkin County offered his services. For those who wished to buy real estate or mines, Brooks and Dunbar were the men to see. In September, it was reported that J. B. Brooks of the firm of Brooks and Dunbar found an arrowhead made of the finest silver while surveying on top of Silver Mountain.²⁶

For those who wished to relax or to relieve the winter doldrums, Ashcroft offered a glee club, a dancing club, politics and the legal establishment of Hunley's Addition. The Ashcroft Glee Club which met on Sunday evenings offered membership to both men and women since the Glee Club's repertoire was religious songs. A dancing club was also organized with Charles Bovard serving as president. Peter O'Hara was presented for County Commissioner to represent the Ashcroft area. Presumably O'Hara was a Democrat since Ashcroft reportedly had three registered Democrats for each registered Republican. Hunley's Addition, adjoining Ashcroft to the south, was officially established during the fall of 1881 under the auspices of Isaac Cooper. Professor Illsley and G. W. Hull surveyed the 160 acre tract into lots, blocks and streets.²⁷

²⁶Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), September 17, 1881, p. 2; October 8, 1881, p. 2; October 19, 1881, p. 2; October 29, 1881, p. 2; October 1, 1881, p. 4; November 12, 1881, p. 3.

²⁷Ibid., September 3, 1881, p. 2; September 17, 1881, p. 2; September 24, 1881, p. 2; October 19, 1881, p. 2; and December 10, 1881, p. 2.

The newspaper kept curiosity aroused with unexplained news items, such as "the Ashcroft boys are in hopes that the Aspen people will not hear anything about the mountain rat tragedy of the twenty-ninth. Keep it dark!" The newspaper also issued a news item about one of Ashcroft's most peaceful and lawabiding citizens, Amos Kindt, an old-time Indian fighter and buffalo hunter. His favorite pastime: was reportedly to go into secrecy and count scalps and dwell on happy Indian harvests of the past. Amos Terrell was supposedly collecting material for a new book on Kindt entitled "Kindt's Krimes or Paulina's Lover on the War Path."²⁸

With the numerous rich strikes and sales that became well known throughout the state and country and the humming of saws and banging of hammers, the ground work for an immense boom during the season of 1882 was well-laid. The known mineral resources of the area warranted tremendous expectations. Would Ashcroft's boom continue as all residents of Ashcroft hoped that it would?

²⁸Ibid., October 29, 1881, p. 2; and December 10, 1881, p. 2.

CHAPTER IV

AND GOD MADE MINES TO PUT THE DEVIL IN

A mining camp's success depended not only on the mineral richness in its region, but also on the spirit of its citizens. In January, 1882, the citizens of Ashcroft were gently reminded that the time had passed when they could take the law into their own hands. During the first week of the new year, S. B. Bruckman was asked by Peter O'Hara to leave town within ten minutes due to an unexplained misunderstanding. Bruckman, a mining and real estate broker from Leadville, had originally grubstaked Chaney and Atkinson, the locators of the Tam O'Shanter and Montezuma mines. The editor of the Ashcroft Herald protested the singular treatment accorded Bruckman and some of Ashcroft's angrier citizens threatened to put the newspaper out of business. Not wishing to be forced out of business, the newspaper appealed to the citizens' sense of justice and honesty. The incident involving Bruckman and the newspaper's protest of that incident, declared the Ashcroft Herald, should not be allowed to jeopardize Ashcroft's reputation of justice and fair play nor should it be allowed to force others who wished to take up residence in Ashcroft to look elsewhere.¹

Ashcroft was looking forward to a bright, new season with a predictable population increase. A synopsis of Pitkin County appeared in January,

¹Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), January 7, 1882, p. 2; and January 14, 1882, p. 2. Bruckman was forced to leave town because of a law suit he had instigated against the sellers of the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma properties. The law suit jeopardized Ashcroft's very existence. In light of this fact, the threat against the Ashcroft Herald is more understandable.

1882; it listed the population of Ashcroft as 500.² Attributes of the town included daily mail, a telegraph, school, good newspaper, and two smelters which were not yet sufficiently completed for use. Business could be transacted with Buena Vista and Leadville via Aspen and Independence.³

Ashcroft continued to prepare for the coming season. Even in January, lumber, at \$35 per thousand feet, was still in great demand. The Florer brothers of Leadville started a general supply store on Castle Avenue. Mrs. Mary Newton of Aspen announced that she would run a bakery and lunch stand to be opened early in February. Wilder and Company constructed a new saw-mill to help meet the demand for lumber. Dick Allen, Charles W. Franklin and Arthur Waite announced that they would each begin a newspaper early in the spring. Ashcroft was also hoping for a railroad by then. The town was definitely growing; new arrivals were a daily occurrence. Town incorporation was needed, consequently, on January 23, a meeting was held for that purpose. A committee was set up to collect money to defray the expenses of incorporation. Voting on the resolution of incorporation would occur in the early spring.⁴

The meeting on incorporation was almost held in vain. On Tuesday, January 24, Ashcroft had a narrow escape from fire. The stovepipe on a Mr. Stockman's residence fell onto the roof, unnoticed. The roof was set aflame when Stockman stoked the stove that morning. Prompt action by the

²Since only eleven families and 150 men were in Ashcroft in December, 1881, this figure is either erroneous or refers to an earlier, undisclosed date.

³Rocky Mountain Sun, (Ashcroft and Aspen), January 7, 1882, p. 2.

⁴Ibid., January 14, 1882, p. 2; January 21, 1882, p. 2; January 28, 1882, p. 2.



Unidentified store and miners in early-day Ashcroft. (Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

Ashcroft pail brigade prevented disaster.⁵

Since November of 1881, the value of town lots steadily increased. During the month of December over 600 Ashcroft lots sold to buyers in Leadville at prices ranging from \$50 to \$100 each. In February, 1882, lots were sold for \$150 to \$400 each and were still advancing. Pueblo businessmen, hoping to locate in Ashcroft as soon as buildings could be built for them, purchased \$8,000 worth of lots the second week of February. Ashcroft was thriving; two toll roads and two daily stage lines, one to Leadville and one to Buena Vista, served the community. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad already serving Crested Butte eighteen miles away was doing preliminary survey work for a railroad in the Ashcroft area. Ashcroft was surrounded by forests of spruce and pine; suitable clay was available for the manufacture of brick and there was an abundance of lime. The district supposedly had an inexhaustible supply of materials for smelting, building and manufacture.⁶

The local newspaper estimated that 5,000 people were waiting for the season to open sufficiently so that they could go to Ashcroft. Enterprising entrepreneurs were selecting building sites and letting contracts for construction. Andy McFarlane's saw mill was running night and day; 150,000 feet of lumber had been ordered. The Riverside Hotel and the Pioneer Saloon were expanding. Old-timers were returning to camp undaunted by deep snow and bad roads. Merchandise for grocery stores, drug stores, hardware stores, clothing stores, billiard rooms, saloons and dance halls was on its way to meet the expected demand. By spring, Ashcroft would even have the luxury of a good barber shop. The town trustees were planning for the

⁵Ibid., January 28, 1882, p. 2.

⁶Ibid., February 25, 1882; p. 1.

town's permanency. The Catholic Church was given two lots on which to build suitable houses of worship. Father McCarthy announced that both a church and a school would be built on the lots for the many Catholic adherents in Ashcroft. According to the trustees, lots would be given to all other institutions and denominations of a similar character that wished to aid in the further development of Ashcroft.⁷

Ashcroft, in its third year of existence, had yet to record its first marriage. On February 21, 1882, the townspeople rejoiced when one of the prominent men of the district, John O'Connell, married Miss Lizzie Barlett of Golden. Two days later Phillip Carbary and Miss Mary Perry, daughter of Judge Richard Perry, were joined in matrimony.⁸

The children of Ashcroft enjoyed a holiday since the Christmas break. The school had not been able to continue due to a shortage of funds; the \$200 stolen by Ferguson had not been recovered and no attempt been made to raise more funds. Emma Perry had gone to Bowman in January to instruct students in that region. On March 20, 1882, the children's holiday ended; school resumed at 9:00 a.m. in the courthouse. By summer the town trustees had given two lots to the school board for a building; bonds had yet to be sold for the building by the first part of June. In mid-July Miss Perry finally received part of the back pay which was owed to her.⁹

On March 25, the Rocky Mountain Sun issued an appeal to working men, warning them of conditions in Ashcroft that springing.

⁷Ibid., February 4, 1882, p. 2; February 11, 1882, p. 2; and February 18, 1882, p. 2.

⁸Ibid., February 25, 1882, p. 2.

⁹Ibid., January 14, 1882, p. 2; March 18, 1882, p. 2; June 3, 1882, p. 2; and July 22, 1882, p. 2.

Until the first of May, men who earn a living by their muscle stay away. Due to the snow the mines cannot be worked. Ashcroft is at 10,000 feet elevation.

If you have a few hundred dollars to spare, this is the place for you RIGHT NOW. Real estate investments will pay handsomely and businesses started will flourish providing continued revenue so you can mine. We have enough liquor stores. We want businesses to give Ashcroft a solid basis, to supply cheap food and clothes.

Our mineral is rich and composed of true fissure veins of high grade minerals. To men of means and knowledge of this business, a fine opening presents itself. We are a band of brothers. If we do not have room, Aspen will. Independence, Aspen and Ashcroft, one and inseparable.

Our camp is full of life, of business, of schemes and of chances. Wait until the month of May, then come and work at whatever you can get to do.¹⁰

March 27 was heralded as a very important day for Ashcroft; the election for town incorporation was held. Out of the seventy-five votes cast, seventy-two were in favor of incorporation. The local newspaper was quick to point out the reason for the light vote; only those living in Ashcroft at the time of the last election and also living in the area to be incorporated could vote. Otherwise the editor was certain that over 500 votes would have been polled. Peter O'Hara and L. W. Worthington were mentioned as possible mayoral candidates. The town filed Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State on April 22.¹¹

Hunley's Addition was not included in the incorporated section of Ashcroft. As of the first part of April, ten business houses and residences were in evidence in the addition. Two of the businesses were fair sized; a hardware firm occupied a one story twenty-five by fifty foot

¹⁰Ibid., March 25, 1882, p. 2.

¹¹Ibid., April 1, 1882, p. 2; April 29, 1882, p. 2; April 8, 1882, p. 3; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), April 23, 1882, p. 8.

building and a bakery occupied a twenty-five by thirty-five foot building. The other eight buildings were relatively small, twelve by fourteen feet. Some thirty additional lots were cleared for building and lumber was being delivered. The local editor tersely commented that the streets like the town existed only in name. J. P. Flynn sold his store on the corner of Third and Castle Avenue in Ashcroft proper and began selling lots in Hunley's Addition. Father McCarthy, realizing that there was ill feeling between Ashcroft proper and Hunley's Addition, decided to build the Catholic Church on the boundary line of the two areas so as not to show favoritism. This decision must have met with approval; within a few hours after making his decision known, he raised \$5,000 for the building.¹²

Several forms of entertainment were available to Ashcroft residents by the end of March. The dancing club was reorganized and named the Ashcroft Social Club. The twenty members decided to hold a weekly hop, the first one of which was held on Tuesday evening, March 21. For those who would rather participate in the game of chance, keno, poker and faro were available. The faro table was especially popular; the dealer was a female. Excitement ran high throughout the camp when Mother Duffy of Leadville arrived with seven scrub females for her dance hall. The first week of April, the editor of the local newspaper lamented that Ashcroft like all first class towns, was infested with tramps. It seems that on April 3, three ruffians entered the establishment of McCarthy and Flynn and demanded food and lodging. Flynn, rising to the emergency, informed the intruders in no uncertain terms that he kept neither an eating house nor a lodging house.

¹²Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), April 8, 1882, p. 2; and April 15, 1882, p. 2.

He further advised them to skip, which they did.¹³

On Friday morning, March 31, Ashcroft recorded its second death since the camp's founding. James Baker of Denver died of brain fever, the first natural cause of death to be recorded. He was laid to rest in the cemetery overlooking the town.¹⁴

The first municipal election for the newly incorporated town was held on April 25. Prior to the election two caucuses were held to nominate suitable candidates for the offices of mayor, recorder and trustees. During the first caucus two gentlemen vied for the mayoral nomination, B. L. Sowle and L. W. Worthington. Two ballots were required before B. L. Sowle was declared the nominee. Messrs. Brooks, Boyd and Ryan vied for the nomination of recorder. John B. Brooks received the honor after two ballots were cast. Peter Kearney, Charles E. Boesch, Thomas Combs and J. M. Leahy were nominated as trustees. The second ticket was determined a week before the election. Peter Lonergan was nominated for mayor, William Boyd for recorder, and Peter Kearney, A. S. Teuscher, J. C. Monaghan and John W. O'Connell for trustees. Peter O'Hara and P. W. Dunbar ran as independent candidates for trustee. On the day of the election only old-timers were allowed to vote, thereby strictly adhering to the voting law. Peter Lonergan was elected mayor, William Boyd was elected recorder and Peter Kearney, A. S. Teuscher, J. C. Monaghan and Charles E. Boesch were elected trustees.¹⁵

Ashcroft's second newspaper, the Ashcroft Journal, began business on May 2, 1882. The editor, D. H. Waite, apologized to the readers for the

¹³Ibid., March 18, 1882, p. 2; April 1, 1882, p. 2; and April 8, 1882, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), April 7, 1882, p. 3.

¹⁴Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), April 1, 1882, p. 2.

¹⁵Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 3.

difficulties which had occurred in getting the first issue printed. Although the press and materials ordered for the newspaper from Chicago were still in Granite due to the condition of the roads, Waite was able to publish the first issue with help from the Aspen newspapers. The Aspen Times offered to print the first issue for Waite and the Rocky Mountain Sun offered to sell Waite a bundle of paper. The Sun's offer was not taken since Waite received paper from Leadville by jack train. The Journal's aim was to be a paper representative of the business and mining interests of Ashcroft. Its regular day of publication was Saturday although its first issue appeared on a Tuesday; terms of subscription were set at \$3.00 per year. The Journal suspended publication the first part of November, 1882, due to financial difficulties and was put up for sale.¹⁶

In mid-May the Ashcroft Water Company was incorporated with a capital stock of \$50,000 at \$5.00 a share. The directors were L. W. Worthington, Thomas Combs, Peter O'Hara, J. B. Brooks, B. L. Sowle and J. Ryan. At the town trustees' meeting held on May 13, the citizens of Ashcroft presented a petition to be allowed to bring water into town, primarily from Devaney Creek; the petition was referred to the finance committee. H. W. Lane presented a petition dealing with the organization of a hook and ladder company; it also was referred to the finance committee.¹⁷

In April, 1882, John W. Overman was elected as marshall of Ashcroft with John W. O'Connell his deputy. Although no details were given it was reported that in May, 1882, O'Connell accidentally shot himself through the

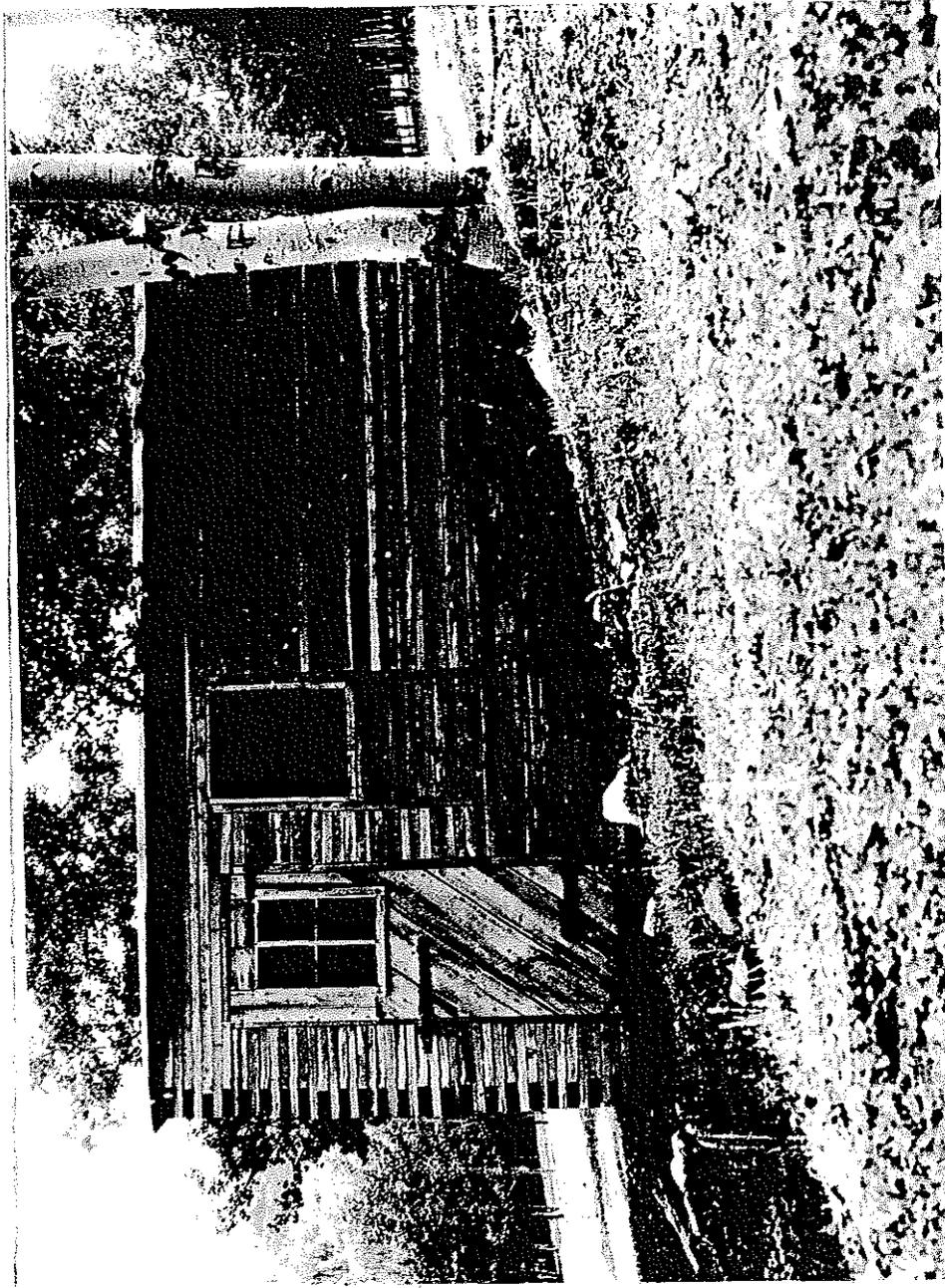
¹⁶Ibid., May 2, 1882, p. 2; Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), November 11, 1882, p. 2. A copy of the first issue of the Ashcroft Journal has been preserved. Copies of the paper are being sold to help defray the expenses incurred in the restoration of Ashcroft.

¹⁷Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), May 20, 1882, p. 2.

foot after he captured an escaped prisoner from county jail. The city jail was completed in May; a soiled dove or prostitute was its first occupant. In less than two weeks another dove was in trouble due to an altercation with her madame. Her mistress had ousted her from the premises for drunkenness. In retaliation, the dove grabbed her poodle and threw him through the window of the establishment. She was then jailed for disorderly conduct. It is no wonder that Judge Henry Kunz had all he could do to make the boys and girls keep the peace.¹⁸

Social events occasionally occupied the residents of Ashcroft. The grand opening of Colonel H. C. Clark's new hotel, the Saint Cloud, was celebrated in grand style. The event was enjoyed by the elite of the county on May 10; an engraved invitation was a prerequisite for admission to the ball billed as "entertainment such as the East enjoys." Ashcroft also began planning its Fourth of July celebration the latter part of May. J. P. Flynn's suggestion of a free dinner on the green was accepted. Eight committees were formed to inaugurate the plans; John Overman was selected as Grand Marshall for the day and Judge Joseph H. King of Aspen was asked to read the Declaration of Independence. In anticipation of the Fourth, Ashcroft formed a baseball team, sponsored by the Saint Cloud, to challenge the Aspen Nine. Not to be out done, South Ashcroft (Hunley's Addition) formed a baseball team, known as the Terrier Nine, and challenged the Saint Cloud team. The stage lines announced that a reduction of rates to and from Ashcroft would be in effect from July 1 through July 6. By the end of May, several hundred dollars had been subscribed to finance the grand

¹⁸ ¹⁸ Ashcroft Journal, May 2, 1882, p. 3; Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), May 27, 1882, p. 2; June 3, 1882, p. 2; and June 10, 1882, p. 2. The jail is still standing; it is used for storage by Ashcroft Ski Touring Unlimited.



The Ashcroft Jail (Courtesy of Len Shoemaker)

event. All proceeds from the evening entertainment would be donated to the county Exposition fund to pay for the transportation of ore and the printing of a pamphlet advertising the event. Ashcroft was going all out to make its first organized celebration of the Fourth one that would not be forgotten.¹⁹

Optimism was the byword. The town trustees continued to pass ordinances on such items as sidewalks, liquor, poll taxes, contingency funds and vagrancy to regulate the growing community. On Monday, June 5, a force of 15 men were ordered to work on the streets. In return for \$4.00 per day in city script, they were to grade the streets, dig gutters and build sidewalks and crossings. Another force of men were put to work laying water mains into town.²⁰

The hum of saws, the bang of hammers and the shouts of teamsters added to the crescendo of excitement. Jack-trains and wagon loads of freight began arriving from Buena Vista the latter part of May. On May 29, Borom and White packed in 8,000 pounds of provisions and were sold out in two days. Throughout the season, large businesses carried from \$10,000 to \$40,000 in stock; the smaller merchants carried from \$1,000 to \$9,000 in stock. An average of 350 letters were received and delivered at the post office each day; an average of ten registered letters were received with twenty-five registered letters sent out. The fourteen saloons in town did a booming business. Families and single men poured into Ashcroft daily. Work resumed in the mines; there was work for all at good wages. The going wage for miners in 1882 was from \$3.50 to \$4.00 per day, for mechanics from

¹⁹Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), May 20, 1882, p. 2; May 27, 1882, p. 2; and June 3, 1882, p. 2.

²⁰Ibid., June 3, 1882, p. 2; and June 10, 1882, p. 2.

\$3.00 to \$3.50 per day and for laborers \$3.00 per day. The local newspaper predicted a population of 3,000 by July. The boom had definitely arrived.²¹

Although the more boisterous elements of society got into trouble periodically, serious crime was almost nonexistent. During the 1882 season there were only two robberies reported involving Ashcroft residents; neither crime was solved. The last week of June a Mr. Dodson was asleep in his tent when someone stole his pants containing \$115 in cash, a silver watch and a fine gold chain. The pants were later found outside the city limits, but there were no clues as to the thief. The second robbery involving an Ashcroft resident occurred in August as the victim was returning to Ashcroft after a business trip. C. F. Abbey of the firm of Abbey and Hallett was held up by novice road agents twelve miles from Tincup; \$325 was taken. Law authorities were able to follow the robbers' trail for seventy miles before losing it.²²

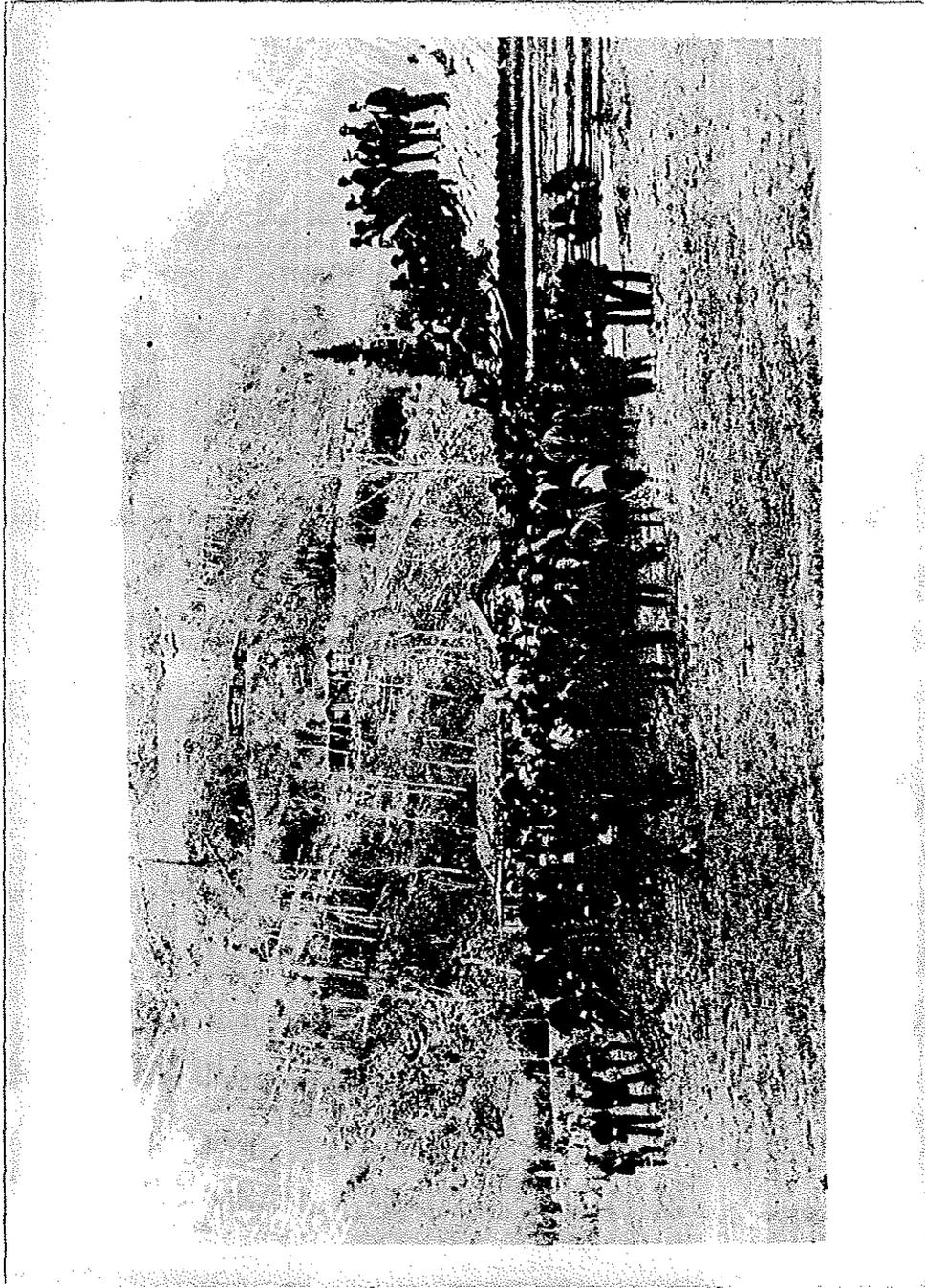
The Fourth of July celebration lived up to the expectations of the planners. An estimated 3,000 spectators were in attendance. The Saint Cloud baseball team beat the Aspen Nine, eleven to six; J. P. Flynn hosted a champagne dinner at the Saint Cloud Hotel for the team and their guests. The afternoon was devoted to speeches and races of all types. Speakers included the Honorable Judge King, Levi Colburn, Lee Worthington and other notables of Ashcroft society. A foot race between Loebe and Niter was won by Loebe. The wheelbarrow race pitted Boyd against Monaghan who won. John O'Connell and his jack led the field of seven in the jack race and

²¹Ibid., June 3, 1882, p. 2; June 10, 1882, p. 2; June 17, 1882, p. 2; July 8, 1882, p. 1; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), June 5, 1882, p. 1.

²²Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), July 1, 1882, p. 2; and August 19, 1882, p. 2.



Main Street of Ashcroft, July 4, 1882 (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)



Fourth of July in Ashcroft, 1882 (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

Frank Enzenberger was astride the winning horse in the horse race. The afternoon festivities were concluded by the Ashcroft Glee Club singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee." That evening two dances were held; the Pentland Hotel hosted one in Ashcroft proper and a grand ball was held at McWilliams Hotel in South Ashcroft. A display of fireworks ended the day long celebration.²³

On Monday, July 10, Borom and White started the first jack train and pony express from Ashcroft via Pearl Pass to Crested Butte. Wagons would not go over Pearl Pass until the latter part of September. Borom and White were then able to use their finest four-mule team which stood fifteen to sixteen hands high and was worth \$1,000. Under the care of J. Allen, an excellent driver and fine teamster, these mules could reportedly haul a larger load than any other team in the county.

For the convenience of the travelers using the Pearl Pass road, Wilkinson and Fonda as well as Bennett and Jordan opened boarding houses. Fonda's twenty-four year old daughter provided barbering services and Mr. Roberts opened a saloon.²⁴

The grand opening of the Elma Hotel on the corner of Fifth and Washington was celebrated on August 1. Built under the direction of M. C. Sharpless, the hotel contained twenty-two rooms, thirteen of which were sleeping rooms. A fine large parlor was on the second floor. A tasty and neat bar was available for the refreshment of the guests. Forty couples were in attendance for the dance from 10:00 p.m. to midnight and the deli-

²³Ibid., July 8, 1882, p. 3.

²⁴Ibid., July 15, 1882, pp. 2-3. All of these establishments were on Pearl Pass, but I have not been able to determine their exact location.

cious midnight supper. After the supper, dancing was resumed until 5:00 a.m. Shortly after the Elma opened, other hotels began closing due to a lack of business.²⁵

To many people, Ashcroft was regarded as a new camp in the season of 1882 since not much had been written about it. In actuality it had been in existence for three years and numerous lodes of varying quality were being worked throughout the district. The mines were generally above timberline with many of the more prominent groups at the very crest of the Elk Mountain range. The altitude of the mines would seem to have been a disadvantage, but instead was more of an advantage. Above timberline the veins were exposed and were almost entirely free of the debris and waste usually found below timberline. The mineral was found in strong true fissures varying from three to twenty feet in width and carrying pay streaks about one-quarter of the width of the vein.

During the winter of 1881-82, the General Land Office at Leadville began receiving applications for mining patents from the Columbia Mining District. One such application was for the Tam O'Shanter located on Slate Mountain; this application was made on February 3, 1882. The Tam O'Shanter had produced enough paying mineral to warrant the application. Each 100 tons of ore shipped from the Tam O'Shanter netted Lt. Governor Tabor and the other owners an average of \$86.50 per ton. The property also had over 500 feet of shafts, tunnels and crosscuts.²⁶

Shortly after the mining patent application was filed, the Tam O'Shanter owners became embroiled in litigation proceedings which dragged on for six years. Horace Tabor had agreed to pay \$100,000 for one-half

²⁵Ibid., August 5, 1882, p. 2; and August 19, 1882, p. 2.

²⁶Ibid., February 18, 1881, p. 3; and February 25, 1882, p. 1.

interest in the Tam O'Shanter and Montezuma in July, 1881. At the end of the ninety day period, \$95,000 was deposited in the Bank of Leadville as was required by the contract. The deed was taken out of escrow and was properly recorded. In February Tabor received notice that a conflict had arisen between Atkinson, Chaney and Bruckman regarding the title to the Tam O'Shanter and Montezuma. S. E. Bruckman laid claim to a one-third interest in the mines since he had furnished funds for Chaney and Atkinson who had made the discovery. Tabor immediately enjoined the bank not to release any of the funds on deposit until the title was clear. Due to Tabor's enjoiner to the bank, Chaney and Atkinson decided that Bruckman and Tabor were co-conspirators, trying to obtain the valuable Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma property without paying the agreed price and filed an additional suit for return of the property. On March 6 the Honorable Judge Marshal of District Court ruled that there would be no immediate forfeiture in the case. The plaintiffs, Tabor and Smith, were ordered to pay the money or forfeit the property. Tabor insisted that the money would be paid, but not until he received full rights to the property. Litigation was continued until December, 1882, when the court-appointed referee, Willard Teller, ruled in favor of Tabor giving him the rights to the property and declaring that there had been no collusion between Tabor and Bruckman. Atkinson appealed the decision; the Colorado Supreme Court ruled in favor of Tabor in 1888.²⁷

²⁷ *Ibid.*, February 4, 1882, p. 2; February 18, 1882, p. 2; March 11, 1882, p. 2; August 26, 1882, p. 2; May 12, 1888, p. 2; Duane A. Smith, *Horace Tabor: His Life and Legend*, (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1973), pp. 190-93.

Atkinson and Chaney never received the \$95,000. The Bank of Leadville failed before the title was clear and the \$95,000 was lost.

Tabor was understandably reluctant to invest more money in the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma properties until the litigation was settled. Ashcroft was dependent on the mines for survival; no other properties were as well developed or as productive. In April, 1882, Tabor announced that within a short time, work would begin on a smelter to treat the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma ores. By the middle of May, men were again at work in the Tabor tunnel, but in less than a week the Montezuma shut down for reasons unknown to outsiders.²⁸

Eight men had been at work during the winter of 1881-82 running the Tabor tunnel to 460 feet and had struck a large body of mineral. If litigation had not intervened, the Montezuma would have employed a large force of men by May. Hopes were still high that Tabor would build the promised tramway, estimated price \$40,000, erect the smelters and furnish work for at least 500 men.²⁹

By mid-July bids were accepted by the manager of the Tam O'Shanter group for shipment of 100 tons of ore daily to the railroad in Crested Butte. During the winter, 270 mules were used to transport ore to Crested Butte at an estimated cost of \$10 per ton. The Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines were open again; hopes of success were revived. Wall and Witter had 160 mules ready to put on the freight line between Ashcroft and Crested Butte; Rockwell and Bicknell had sixty mules ready for use.³⁰

Snow hampered efforts above timberline until the first part of July. Now everyone, including Tabor, was making up for lost time. Borom and

²⁸Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), April 1, 1882, p. 2; May 13, 1882, p. 2; and May 20, 1882, p. 2.

²⁹Ibid., July 8, 1882, p. 1.

³⁰Ibid., July 1, 1882, p. 2; July 15, 1882, p. 2; and October 28, 1882, p. 2.

White secured a contract to supply the Tam O'Shanter with 300 cords of wood and 200 bushels of coal. If W. F. Coxhead succeeded in finishing the road, Borom and White would have an even easier job of fulfilling their contract. By the end of August, forty men were at work on the Tam O'Shanter road; one-half mile was finished. The contract ran for thirty days; the road was finished on October 5 at a cost of \$6,000. Miners who wished to work for Tabor were paid \$3.50 per day for nine hours of labor. By the first of September all who asked for work at the Tam O'Shanter were hired. The mine manager contracted Bowles to build a boarding house at the Tam O'Shanter and Boesch to furnish 40,000 pounds of beef.³¹

In October the Tam O'Shanter was still the leading representative of Ashcroft. The vein contained an average of five feet of paying ore averaging 350 ounces of silver to the ton. The tunnel cut the vein 600 feet below the surface. On the surface the ore was heavy galena. A large storehouse was built for supplies and the miners were trying to get out 500 tons of ore before winter set in. Work continued even as winter set in; by the first part of December, 2,000 tons of ore was on the dump. In the Montezuma, the body of ore continued to increase with development. Seven tons of ore was the daily output of the Montezuma for one week of December. Enough ore had been taken out to pay for the developments of 1882. Tabor and the people of Ashcroft could breathe easier. Ashcroft was not dead.³²

Although the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines were considered the lifeblood of the camp, other mines were also producing during the season of

³¹*Ibid.*; August 26, 1882, p. 2; September 2, 1882, p. 2; September 23, 1882, p. 2; and October 7, 1882, p. 2.

³²*Ibid.*; October 7, 1882, p. 3; November 25, 1882, p. 2; December 2, 1882, p. 2; December 16, 1882, p. 2; and December 23, 1882, p. 2.



Aerial view of Montezuma Basin and the road built in 1882

1882. The newest area of promising mineral was to the west of Ashcroft in the Conundrum basin. As of June, the most promising claims were the Saint Elmo, Daisy, Homestake, Midnight Bell, Colorado Central, Badger, Conundrum and Jackson. The Saint Elmo on West Castle Creek reportedly contained twenty inches of solid silver glance. The assay on fifty pounds of ore ran 800 to 10,000 ounces of silver. J. D. McCarthy, S. R. Walters and others were encouraged with their rich strike in the Goddess of Liberty on Cooper Mountain to the east of Ashcroft. The outcroppings on the Goddess ran twenty ounces of silver; at a depth of ten feet, the run was 1,113 ounces of silver. The Colorado Coal and Iron Company began testing the galena ores in both the Conundrum and Cooper Gulches and were pleased that the ore proved to be of a superior quality.³³

The Wichita on Slate Mountain contained high grade galena, gray copper and native silver. John F. Saunders, the owner, hoped to build a tramway from the mill site in Hunley's Addition to the main shaft, a distance of about three miles. The ore of the Wichita ran 40 to 250 ounces. On Pearl Mountain the Alycon and Pearl lodes were still producing significantly; eleven tons of ore from the Pearl netted its owners \$9,000. The Alycon was even richer; twenty-four selected samples assayed from 287 to 11,163 ounces of silver making a net average of over \$3,000 per ton.³⁴

In July the weekly output of the Ashcroft area was reported to be 1,500 tons or an average of 215 tons daily. The daily output in December was reported at 100 tons. Although many of the mines occasionally reported extremely rich strikes; many of the mines were not able to main-

³³Ibid., February 25, 1882, p. 1; June 10, 1882, p. 2; July 15, 1882, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), August 5, 1882, p. 2.

³⁴Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), July 1, 1882, p. 2; July 22, 1882, p. 2; July 8, 1882, p. 4; October 7, 1882, p. 3.

tain steady development. Ashcroft was hindered in development for three primary reasons. The ore was deposited in isolated pockets, there was no smelter within the Ashcroft area, and the transportation costs to the nearest smelter were prohibitive for the majority. In December an unknown benefactor offered to haul one ton of ore from each claim in the district free of charge to the smelter at Aspen to give it a start. The cost of securing a patent was prohibitive for the miners; in Aspen a patent could be secured for \$250, but many did not have the capital needed.³⁵

It was announced on June 3, 1882 that Brooks and Bethune had formed a partnership and planned to build a sampling works to buy ores. Backed by \$100,000 capital, the works would be located on Castle Creek on the boundary of Ashcroft proper and South Ashcroft. Brooks was the assayer; Bethune would run the smelter. The machinery would include two crushers and one twenty-five horsepower engine. Gold, silver and lead ores would be purchased and/or treated. The payment for gold would be \$18 an ounce, for silver \$1 per ounce; treatment would cost \$20 per ton. No charge would be made for crushing, sampling and assaying ores purchased by the sampling works in lots of one ton or more. By July the sampling works was running day and night and the owners were buying all the ore offered for sale.³⁶

Brooks and Bethune did so well with their sampling works that in August they announced they were building a smelter of thirty tons capacity which they hoped to have in operation by the middle of September. The new building would be larger and would include an engine house. Two water-

³⁵Ibid., June 17, 1882, p. 3; July 1, 1882, p. 2; December 16, 1882, p. 2; and December 30, 1882, p. 2.

³⁶Ibid., June 3, 1882, p. 2; June 24, 1882, p. 2; and July 8, 1882, p. 4.

jacket furnaces, a Blake blower and a Jackson cut-off engine would furnish the power. The charge for treating ore was \$20 per ton. In September a contract was signed with the Tam O'Shanter; they agreed to deliver thirty tons of ore a day to the smelter once it was operational. Inevitably, the machinery was delayed; Ashcroft was still waiting for the smelter blow out in December.³⁷

The ebb and flow of life continued. Ashcroft was given a boost on September 18 when its first birth, a baby boy born to a Mr. and Mrs. Haas, was recorded. On September 21, Judge Kunz in his capacity as Justice of the Peace united H. W. Foster and Nellie Ham in marriage. Two deaths occurred; Charles Reed died of pneumonia on August 29 and William Boyd, Town Clerk, died of typhoid fever on October 13. On Monday, October 9, school opened for the winter term with Emma Perry as the teacher. It was reported that several families were on their way to Ashcroft to spend the winter. Others were leaving camp to spend the winter at the hot springs on the Grand River. The editor of the Rocky Mountain Sun reported that E. A. Kinney of Ashcroft had been in Aspen on October 17. Kinney offered to bet \$1,000 that by 1885 Ashcroft would be the best camp outside of Leadville in Colorado and would have a large population. The editor stated, "It seems like old times to hear these Ashcroft gentlemen talk. Their camp is going right on and will prosper with our own in the spring."³⁸

³⁷Ibid., August 5, 1882, p. 2; August 12, 1882, p. 2; August 19, 1882, p. 2; September 23, 1882, p. 2; November 25, 1882, p. 2; and December 2, 1882, p. 2.

³⁸Ibid., September 2, 1882, p. 2; September 23, 1882, p. 2; October 7, 1882, p. 2; October 14, 1882, p. 2; and October 21, 1882, p. 2.

CHAPTER V

MOUNTAIN SHEEP NEED NOT APPLY

A mining camp's existence in western Colorado was dependent on two major factors--mineral and accessibility. The lure of mineral riches was so great that it seemed as if those searching for the "great bonanza" ignored all environmental obstacles. No pinnacle was too steep, no crevice too small, no stream too deep to prevent careful scrutiny. Once that careful scrutiny yielded results, problems began. Many a mining camp died, not because mineral was lacking, but because the camp could not overcome its problems of isolation. No matter how rich the mineral in its region, if environmental and/or economic barriers prevented the establishment of a proper transportation system, the camp was doomed.

The first prospectors who investigated the mineral possibilities of the Elk Mountain region came from Leadville. To reach the region they crossed over Hunter's Pass (later known as Independence Pass) on foot or on horseback making their own routes since no trails or roads existed. The atlas published by F. V. Hayden as a result of his survey of the Colorado Rockies enticed these adventurous prospectors to explore the Elk Mountains on their way to the Gunnison country. Because of these investigations the mining camps of Aspen and Ashcroft were established in 1880.

Those who wished to travel to the new camps by wheeled vehicle in 1880 could not use Hunter's Pass. To reach Aspen and Ashcroft by wagon, travelers left Buena Vista and continued over Cottonwood Pass at an elevation of 12,126 feet, a steep, rough road barely passable, but one that was a

major route to Tincup, Hillerton and eventually Aspen in 1880. Once in Taylor Park the travelers left the Buena Vista-Hillerton road at a point northeast of the present day Taylor reservoir to strike northward to the foot of the Taylor Range. Then their next major obstacle confronted them-- Taylor Pass. At the base of Taylor Pass on the west of the Taylor Range, the new mining camp of Ashcroft welcomed all who wished to stop and take up residency. Those who wished to push on, followed Castle Creek downstream to the infant camp of Aspen.

In the spring of 1880, the Aspen Town and Land Company talked about constructing a road from Aspen to Taylor Park. H. P. Gillespie tired of the talk and decided that action was needed. Consequently, he organized the Roaring Fork Improvement Company, had the route surveyed, and hired an Aspen mining firm, Stevens and Company, to construct the road. Work was immediately started both at Aspen and Grandview (later called Bowman), the two ends of the proposed route. The Aspen crew, which started earlier than the Grandview crew, soon had a road built to Ashcroft. Work on both sides of the pass was then pushed as fast as possible, but wagons started traversing the pass before the road was completed.¹

One of the earlier pioneers of the Roaring Fork region David Robinson Crocker Brown described his long, arduous trip to Aspen. Brown, an employee of H. P. Cowenhoven, accompanied his employer when he decided to relocate after selling his grocery store in Black Hawk. The original plan to move to Arizona was changed when the travelers met William Blodgett at Twin Lakes. Blodgett had just come from Aspen over Hunter's Pass and convinced Cowenhoven that Aspen, not Arizona, was the land of opportunity.

¹Len Shoemaker, Pioneers of the Roaring Fork (Denver: Sage Books, 1965), pp. 71-72.

Blogett advised the travelers that it was impossible to go over Hunter's Pass with wagons, but that it was possible to use an old government road from Buena Vista to reach Taylor Park. He had heard that a man by the name of McFarlane had taken a water wheel and some provisions that way. Just how McFarlane had gotten from Taylor Park over the range to Castle Creek, he was unable to say. Blodgett had said enough. By the next evening Cowenhoven's group was camped at Cottonwood Springs. It took two days to cross Cottonwood Pass and one more day to cross Taylor Park to reach the road construction camp at the foot of the Taylor Range.

Although the men at the road camp advised Cowenhoven that wagons would never make it to the top of Taylor Pass, the group continued undaunted. The wagons did make the top in a day and a half, but then the troubles began. It was necessary to keep to the top of the ridge above timberline so that McFarlane's wagon tracks could be seen. At the head of the south fork of Castle Creek (now known as Express Creek), they left the ridge and negotiated a steep incline; the wagons negotiated the incline without difficulty. Just at timberline the lead wagon became enmeshed in a bog due to the inexperience and/or carelessness of the driver. A day's travel time was lost extracting the mules and wagon from the mess. Half a day's labor was wasted in an unorganized effort to remove the unloaded wagon. Brown finally convinced Cowenhoven that a Spanish windlass, pries and the mules would do the trick. Within an hour the front wheels were up on the sod and the mules pulled the wagon to safety. Brown, not wanting any more delays of this type, drove the lead wagon from then on.

Less than a mile from the bog, a sheer forty foot drop, the first of many, impeded their progress. After packing the supplies down, the two wagons were lowered by ropes. The same technique was employed at each

drop off they encountered. It took the group two weeks to go ten miles. A very sidling side hill required slow and careful driving, but at last they saw Ashcroft one thousand feet below them. To reach Castle Creek required one more day of tedious labor. Using axes to remove trees, a chain for rough locks, and ropes to steady the wagons, two men from Ashcroft helped the group negotiate that last thousand feet. Following Castle Creek twelve miles downstream to Aspen required another day and a half. Brown's first view of the Roaring Fork Valley occurred on July 21, 1880. He recalled, "It was the most wonderful sight I ever beheld." The trip from Black Hawk had taken forty seven days.²

The Taylor Pass toll road was not officially completed until late September, 1880. Its completion helped assuage Aspen's and Ashcroft's fears of isolation. Immediately after completing the road, Stevens and Company started a stage line between Aspen and Buena Vista. The tolls charged for use of the road were: single animals, \$1.00; team and wagon, \$2.50; and four-horse outfits, \$5.00. George F. Elrod of Aspen drove the first wagon over the completed road. The large freight wagons of Atkinson and Holbrook, Aspen, were the first of many freight wagons that hauled ore and supplies over the pass.³

The toll road, built at an elevation of 11,928 feet, was closed due to heavy snows shortly after it was completed. Although the road closure again isolated the Castle Creek Valley, the seven men who wintered in Ashcroft adequately survived. When the road was reopened the following spring, hundreds of people poured into the Castle Creek Valley. When William Bald-

²Ibid., pp. 44-47. David Brown remained in Aspen the rest of his life and became one of Aspen's wealthiest citizens. He died at home June 29, 1930.

³Shoemaker, Roaring Fork Valley, p. 36.



Aerial view of Taylor Pass, 1976

erson, manager of the Roaring Fork Improvement Company, announced in August of 1881 that he hoped to keep a force of men at the top of Taylor Pass during the winter months to clear the road, the residents of Ashcroft enthusiastically praised the company. The Taylor Pass road was needed to provide access into and out of the camp all seasons of the year. In November, J. B. Brooks reported that walking was good over the toll road. He had walked the distance in three hours.⁴

The fear of isolation continued to plague the residents of Ashcroft. One way the fear could be dispelled was through an adequate and regular mail service. The National Mail Company received the contract to deliver mail to Ashcroft and Aspen and subcontracted a man named Lawton to do the actual delivery. In July, 1881, the local newspaper editor made a terse comment about mail delivery. He stated unequivocally, "Eighteen hundred dollars a year is what contractor Lawton gets for NOT delivering the mail to Alpine, Ashcroft and Aspen." No mail had been delivered since July 2. The postmaster of Ashcroft, Louis T. Teuscher, notified the Postmaster General and the Attorney General of the United States about the matter. The first part of August the newspaper announced that Barlow and Sanderson would deliver the mail, but the editor did not know whether the arrangement was permanent or temporary.⁵

Later that month E. W. Parker, manager of the southern division of the National Mail Company, apologized for the erratic mail service and stated that the problem would not occur again. In November the mail delivery was again irregular; snows on Cottonwood Pass delayed the carrier. The news-

⁴Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), August 6, 1881, p. 2; and November 19, 1881, p. 2.

⁵Ibid., July 20, 1881, p. 2; and August 6, 1881, p. 2.

paper editor suggested that the Post Office officials consider changing the route since the road was completed between Leadville and Independence. The new route was twenty five miles shorter than the Bucna Vista route, therefore, mail delivery would not only be faster, but less costly. Mail arrived ahead of schedule in December and the newspaper editor asked a rhetorical question. "Could it be that the threat of losing the route due to inadequate service is spurring the National Mail Company on?" A week later the local postmaster announced that on and after January 1, 1882, Ashcroft would receive an eighteen hour mail delivery from Leadville.⁶

As H. P. Gillespie was putting his plans for a toll road from Aspen to Taylor Park into action, B. Clark Wheeler began to promote plans for a toll road from Aspen across the Continental Divide to Twin Lakes. The proposed toll road provided a shorter, more direct route to the smelters at Leadville, but Wheeler was unable to finance the project in 1880. A good trail was constructed from Aspen to Seaton's Ranch, eight miles above Twin Lakes that first season. An express and jack-train service, organized by Wheeler, operated between Aspen and Granite, the nearest railroad outlet of the Denver and Rio Grande, until the toll road was completed in 1881. Wheeler had competition; long lines of jack-trains threaded their way to Granite and Leadville packing ores to the smelters for four cents a pound. William Blodgett, Frank Thompson and Walter Seaton organized and operated a jack-train to pack and haul ore directly to the Leadville smelter from the Spar mine. The difficult time-consuming task was not a profitable venture, but with diligent persistence they prevailed.

The jacks returned to Aspen loaded with supplies for the camp. Those

⁶Ibid., August 13, 1881, p. 2; November 19, 1881, p. 2; December 24, 1881, p. 2; and December 31, 1881, p. 2.



Jack train on trail crossing Independence Pass (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

with loaded wagons had to surmount the difficulties presented by the Taylor Pass toll road, but one jack whacker proved that an unloaded wagon could be packed over "the hump." In June, 1880, J. B. Girard transported a wagon by jacks from Twin Lakes to Aspen. According to the report, this feat took a month's time and about 3,000 man-hours of strenuous effort to accomplish.⁷

In the spring of 1881, B. Clark Wheeler obtained financing for the toll road over Independence Pass. The name of the original pathway was changed from Hunter to Independence when miners on the west side of the summit struck rich ore on the Fourth of July, 1880. C. L. Moore of Independence made a survey of the proposed route from Twin Lakes crossing the Continental Divide at an elevation of 12,095 feet and following nearly the same route as the jack trail. The estimated distance of the survey from Twin Lakes to Aspen at that time was said to be forty-three miles. Wheeler contracted Dr. J. E. (Doc) Rice, a resident of Twin Lakes, to build the road. The difficult task of construction was finally completed the latter part of November, 1881. Doc Rice received \$10,000 for the job. Snow conditions prevented much use of the road that winter although it was officially opened for use on January 1, 1882.

Those who crossed Independence Pass paid the same toll charges as those who crossed Taylor Pass. Tolls of \$1.00 for single animals, \$2.50 for a team and wagon and \$5.00 for four-horse outfits were collected at one of three toll-gates, Weller, Bromley, or Twin Lakes. Weller and Bromley were stage stations for the Carson Stage Line started in 1882 by J. C. (Kit) Carson and his brother. Weller Station, on the west side of Independence Pass, was built about one-quarter of a mile below Lincoln Creek and the

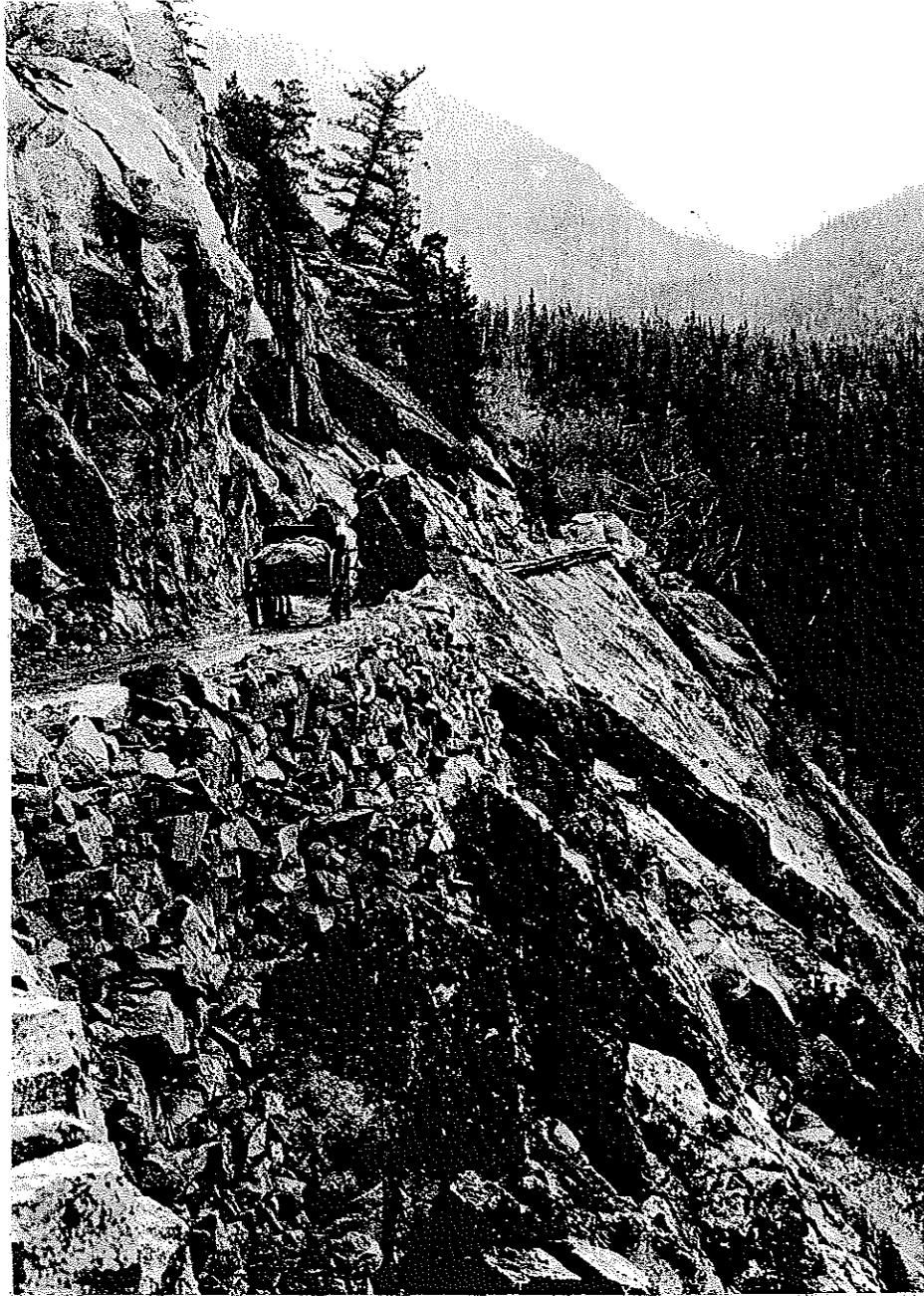
⁷Shoemaker, Roaring Fork Valley, pp. 31-32.

Roaring Fork and could house, if necessary, fifty to sixty persons overnight. Bromley Station, about three and one-half miles east of the pass in Lackawana Gulch, also gave good service to the stage company and its customers. In the spring and fall, service at each station included transferring passengers to sleds for the trip across Independence Pass.

Travelers were not restricted to the two stage stations if they wished to obtain food and/or lodging. On the east side of the pass accommodations were available at Four-mile Park above Twin Lakes or at Seaton's Ranch near the forks of Lake Creek or at Halfway House in Mountain Boy Park. Boarding houses were provided by William Langstaff and Theodore Ackermann at Independence on the west side of the pass. Before reaching Aspen travelers could also stop near the junction of Lost Man Creek at Blowers Place or at Junction House, a log house built at the confluence of Lincoln Creek and the Roaring Fork. Delicious wild berry-dried fruit pies were available for \$1.00 at Curtis' eating-house, six miles above Aspen. The pies sold as fast as Lizzie Curtis could bake them even though the price was four times the usual rate of twenty five cents a pie. Weary travelers could also stop at the Cotton Ranch two miles further on. Without these rest stops, travel on the rugged, narrow toll road would have been almost impossible.⁸

In 1881, transportation into and out of Ashcroft was decidedly better than the previous season. Although the Rocky Mountain Sun editor lamented that Aspen and Ashcroft had but one road connecting them, a road built by Eastern capitalists, it did provide needed access to the camp. The daily stage line from Buena Vista to Ashcroft and Aspen over the Taylor Pass toll road was of immense benefit to the whole district. Ore could also be trans-

⁸Ibid., pp. 30 and 48; Shoemaker, Pioneers of the Roaring Fork, pp. 90-94.



Independence Pass (Courtesy of Len Shoemaker)

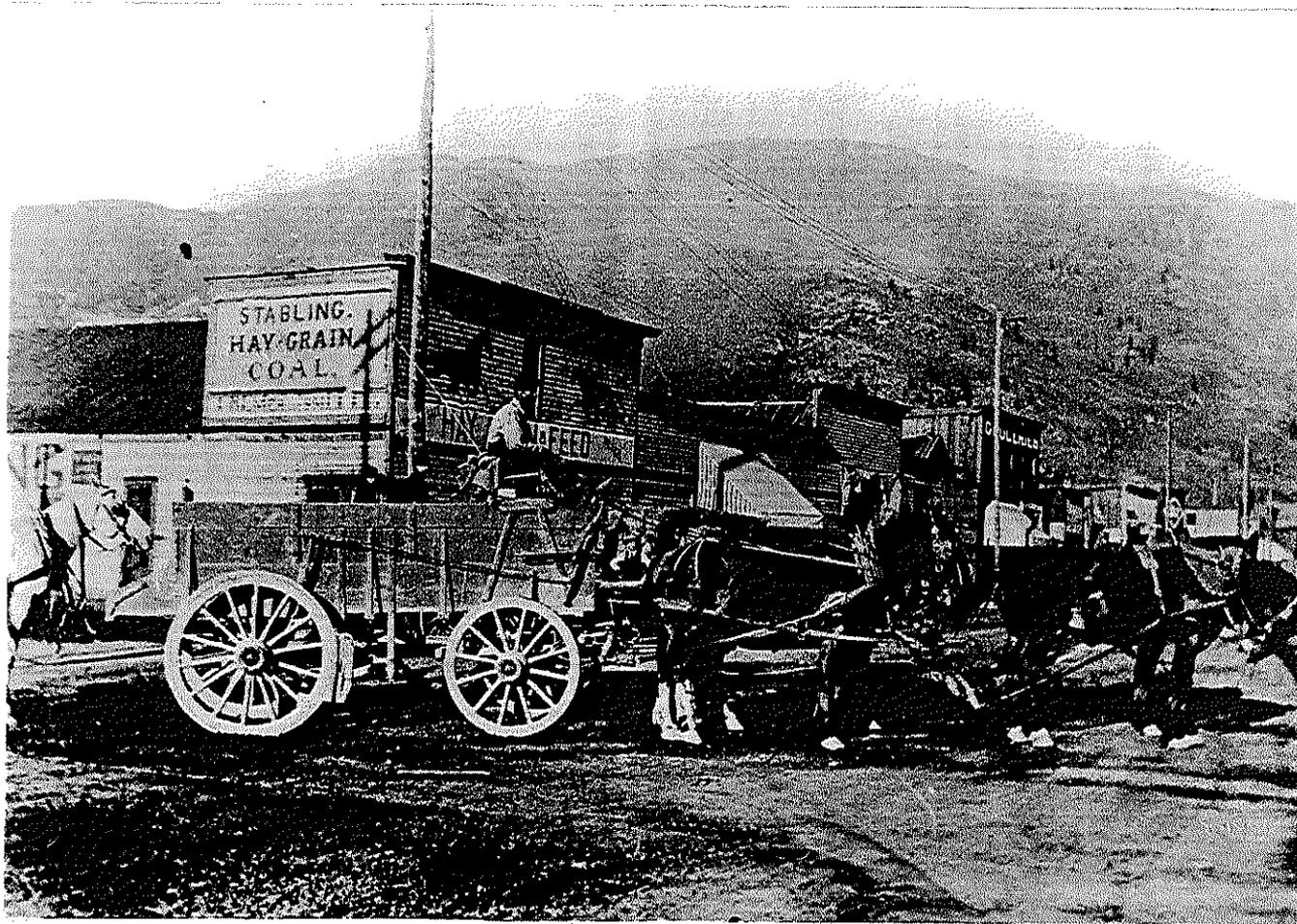
ported by wagon over the toll road or by jack-train over the trail on Independence, but both ways were expensive. In September the miners of Tincup proposed building a road to connect that camp to the Union Pacific tracks eleven miles away. The editor of the Rocky Mountain Sun praised this proposed endeavor since ore from the Ashcroft district could be freighted over the Taylor Pass toll road and then shipped to smelters at a lower cost.⁹

The completion of the Independence Pass toll road in November enabled freighters to haul ore to the Leadville smelters at a cheaper rate. By jack the rate was four cents a pound; by wagons the rate was three to three and one-half cents a pound. A stage line to Leadville also became a reality with the opening of the toll road. In December the Rockwell and Bicknell Stage Line of Leadville announced that they would run a daily stage to Chipeta (Independence), Aspen, and Ashcroft as soon as conditions were favorable to travel on the Independence road. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad announced that they would sell coupons to Chipeta, Aspen and Ashcroft in cooperation with the stage line and would advertise Pitkin County in their private railroad publications.¹⁰

The erratic mail service which Ashcroft and Aspen experienced during 1881 forced the camps to consider other means of communication. In August a Citizens Association was formed to help the county representatives from Ashcroft, Independence and Aspen work out a solution to the communications problem. By September the communities of Ashcroft and Aspen started a telegraph line to Crested Butte. The citizens committee, Charles A. Hallam, George W. Thatcher and William Balderson of Aspen, J. P. Flynn, L. J.

⁹Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), August 27, 1881, p. 2; and September 10, 1881, p. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., December 3, 1881, p. 2; and December 17, 1881, p. 2.



Ore wagon on an Aspen Street (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

Colburn and J. B. Brooks of Ashcroft, hired the Gunnison and Aspen Telegraph Company to construct the line. The line followed the toll road from Aspen to Ashcroft and then continued through upper Castle Creek crossing the range on the Pearl Pass trail and following Brush Creek down to either Gothic or Crested Butte, a distance of fifteen miles from Ashcroft. Ashcroft hoped that within thirty days the telegraph line would give them daily news of the outside world.¹¹

Duskin, superintendent of construction, and his crew were digging post holes between Ashcroft and Highland by the second week of September. He announced that poles would be set on September 19. Poles were provided by the people of Aspen and Ashcroft. J. P. Flynn, chairman of the joint telegraph committee, announced subscription rates for Ashcroft. To the top of Pearl, rates were one pole or \$1.00; to Crested Butte, rates were one pole or eighty cents with a proposed completion date of October 10. Although the poles were set, the line was not in operation by the third week of October; the wire had not arrived. The Rocky Mountain Sun editor tersely commented that the delay was due to a "useless Republican ring" that had been associated with the enterprise. By the third week of November the wire, which had finally arrived, was stretched over the range as far as Ashcroft. On December 20, the crews finished stretching the wire to Aspen. Residents were hopeful that telegraphic communication would start by the first of the year, but by May the line was still not in operation.¹²

¹¹Ibid., August 27, 1881, p. 2; and September 17, 1881, pp. 2-3.

¹²Ibid., September 17, 1881, p. 2; September 24, 1881, p. 2; October 22, 1881, p. 2; November 19, 1881, p. 2; December 3, 1881, p. 2; December 10, 1881, p. 2; and December 24, 1881, p. 2.

On May 13, the Rocky Mountain Sun announced that the telegraph operator was in Ashcroft and that the line would be in working order by Monday, May 15, but by May 27 the line was still not operational. The telegraph company refused to put in the battery; the company insisted that \$175 was due them for erecting the poles between Aspen and Ashcroft. The joint telegraph committee insisted that the telegraph company was in error. According to the agreement, the committee was to provide poles to be placed on the ground 100 feet apart which they had done. No further payment was required of the committee to erect the poles. By June the telegraph line which did not withstand the winter snows, was down in a half dozen places between Aspen and Ashcroft preventing its use. The telegraph line evidently was never put into use. If it was, The Rocky Mountain Sun neglected to report the fact.¹³

In February, 1882, the National Mail Company announced that it planned to start two lines of daily coaches between Ashcroft and Buena Vista. The company may have put the stage into service. In July the stage fare between Ashcroft and Buena Vista was listed as \$8.00, but no specific stage line was mentioned. In June it was rumored that a four-horse line of coaches would soon be put on the road from Saint Elmo to Ashcroft. The stage would leave Saint Elmo on the arrival of the South Park train each morning, arriving in Tincup in time for dinner and reaching Ashcroft for supper. Whether the line actually went into service is unknown. The distance of the proposed stage line was twenty miles shorter than any other road between the railroad and Ashcroft and as the editor of the Sun pointed out, the distance could be made easily by daylight. The stage line of Wall

¹³Ibid., May 13, 1882, p. 2; May 27, 1882, p. 2; and June 3, 1882, p. 2.

and Witter put on a four-horse Concord coach in June and made daily trips between Aspen and Ashcroft. Maxwell and Ewing were Ashcroft agents for the line and announced that the round trip fare to Aspen on Sundays was \$2.00. The line was discontinued in July. The Carson Stage Line continued to operate between Ashcroft and Leadville; they also carried the mail making the run from Leadville to Ashcroft in eighteen hours.¹⁴

Mail delivery continued to be one of the prime topics of interest throughout 1882. As of January 1, 1882, mail was to be delivered through Leadville rather than through Buena Vista. There was a delay in letting the Leadville contract; as of the first part of February the postmaster at Ashcroft had received no bids to carry the mail via Leadville, but had failed to notify the Post Office Department. On May 11 Ashcroft received its first daily mail delivery from Leadville. Ashcroft also continued to receive mail through Buena Vista. The residents continued to complain that receiving mail through Buena Vista actually delayed the mail from the East by one day. They asked post office officials to investigate and remedy the situation at the earliest possible moment. The mail from Leadville arrived in Ashcroft at 11:00 p.m. each evening and left Ashcroft at 5:00 a.m. daily. The service from Buena Vista was only tri-weekly, arriving on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and departing on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In August mail from Buena Vista began to arrive daily; the stage line found it expedient to provide residents of Ashcroft with one day service to the railroad. The mail service from Buena Vista was discontinued in Novem-

¹⁴Ibid., February 4, 1882, p. 2; June 24, 1882, p. 2; July 29, 1882, p. 2; and June 17, 1882, p. 3.

ber when the contract with the National Mail Company expired.¹⁵

Transporting ore to the smelters was easier in 1882. In February T. M. Davis of Leadville arranged to transport ore to the Leadville smelters from Aspen with a new train of eighty jacks using the Independence road. Because of the spring runoff the mine owners experienced problems in ore transport. Both toll roads--the Taylor Pass toll road and the Aspen-Ashcroft toll road--were in very bad shape. The companies quit collecting tolls for a time instead of fixing the roads. The stage lines had to furnish horses so that their passengers could get to Aspen and Ashcroft from the Independence road. The roads were fixed by June and ores could be transported by wagon again. In December Isaac Cooper notified the keepers of the toll gates on the Aspen-Ashcroft road to allow all teams to pass free that were engaged in hauling coke, coal or ore. He was lauded for his commendable public spirit.¹⁶

In 1881 the winter doldrums were relieved momentarily with the announcement that preliminary surveys for a railroad up Cottonwood Pass, via Hillerton, Virginia City, Ashcroft and Aspen had been established and that H. J. Watering would be in charge of a more complete survey. By February, 1882, the survey was nearly complete; the work of building the road would start in early spring. In May the company building the Buena Vista and Gunnison Railroad announced that it expected citizens interested in the line to subscribe money and labor. By June ties were laid on the south side of Cottonwood and the proposed completion date to Tincup was October.

¹⁵Ibid., February 4, 1882, p. 2; May 13, 1882, p. 2; July 29, 1882, p. 2; August 26, 1882, p. 2; October 21, 1882, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), November 1, 1882, p. 3.

¹⁶Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), February 4, 1882, p. 2; April 8, 1882, p. 2; June 24, 1882, p. 2; and December 16, 1882, p. 2.

1. If they were successful, plans included extending the line through Taylor Park and over the Taylor Range running the line as near as possible to the mines around Ashcroft. The line would then extend to Aspen following Castle Creek downstream. In March, 1882, articles of incorporation were filed on another railroad. The Denver, Hot Springs and Pacific Railway, incorporators, C. A. Hallam, S. E. Hopkins, O. E. French, Charles Bennett and Daniel Dreifus, planned to build a branch line from Aspen to Ashcroft. All the citizens of Ashcroft enthusiastically lent their support to both railroads and continually publicized that Ashcroft was soon to have a railroad in 1882. The railroads never materialized because the companies lacked the necessary capital.¹⁷

Although the railroads never materialized, the third major route into Ashcroft did. By the end of the season of 1882 the Pearl Pass road was open for traffic. The certificate of incorporation for the Ashcroft and Crested Butte Toll Road Company was filed for record in February. Isaac Cooper, one of the incorporators, promised to put a large force of men to work on the road as soon as snow conditions allowed him to do so. In March the Crested Butte, Ashcroft, and Gothic Toll Road Company filed their articles of incorporation. Cooper's company would build from the Ashcroft side; the other company would build from the Crested Butte side. In April Flynn and Freeman, representatives of the two companies, presented the county commissioners with a petition stating the benefit the Pearl Pass road would have on both counties. In May the Pearl Pass road issue was again on the agenda of the commissioners. L. J. Colburn of Ashcroft informed the commissioners of Pitkin County that the Denver and Rio Grande

¹⁷Ibid., November 26, 1881, p. 2; February 4, 1882, p. 2; March 4, 1882, p. 2; May 27, 1882, p. 2; July 15, 1882, p. 2; and June 10, 1882, p. 3.

Railroad agent promised that that company would make a road from Crested Butte to connect with a road from Ashcroft. The Denver and Rio Grande agent requested that the road be a free road and asked the commissioners to appoint men to view the proposed road as soon as possible. The commissioners approved a bond in the sum of \$100 signed by several parties at Ashcroft to view the road. Fred A. Patten, C. V. Noble and J. W. Overman were appointed to view the proposed county road from Ashcroft to the top of the range.¹⁸

In June a mass meeting was held in Ashcroft with Mayor Lonergan presiding. The meeting's purpose was to discuss a direct free wagon road from Ashcroft to the Rio Grande railway in Crested Butte, a distance of eighteen miles. The road would place Ashcroft fifty miles nearer to a railroad outlet. Freighters would no longer have to haul to Leadville. Eleven delegates, Flynn, Colburn, Lonergan, Meire, Coxhead, Brooks, Sears, Covert, Gelder, Noble and Ewing, were chosen to confer with Gunnison County citizens and Rio Grande officials. Pitkin County appropriated enough money for their portion of the road after receiving offers of assistance from Rio Grande officials, the Gunnison News-Democrat and Isaac Cooper. On June 9, Commissioner Coxhead returned from Gunnison with the assurance of the Gunnison County Commissioners that they would meet the Pitkin County road at the county line. The Denver and Rio Grande Railroad contributed \$2,400 to each county for the road. The completed road would increase the ore shipments on the Rio Grande and eventually the

¹⁸Ibid., February 18, 1882, p. 2; March 11, 1882, p. 2; March 18, 1882, p. 2; April 22, 1882, p. 2; and May 7, 1882, p. 2.

railroad planned to construct a branch line to Ashcroft over the road.¹⁹

Commissioner Turley received a letter from Dr. Bell, vice president of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, asking permission for the chief engineer of the railroad to survey the county road of Pearl Pass in conjunction with the county surveyer. The request was granted at the June meeting of the commissioners. The pay for the laborers constructing the road was set at \$5.45 per day instead of \$6.00; P. Meeney was appointed as a committee of one to take charge of the construction. Meeney appointed P. M. Williams as the overseer of construction on the road. On Tuesday, June 13, seventy-five men began the construction.²⁰

In July the expected date of completion for the county road was sixty days. The residents of Ashcroft were enthusiastic; the road not only would bring Ashcroft fifty miles nearer to a railroad outlet, but would have reduced the freight rate for ore from \$60 a ton to \$10 per ton. It was estimated that the cost of supplies would be reduced by at least one-third. The road would give life to the district and insure immediate and permanent success, according to the road's supporters. Major Henry Fulton visited the area in July to establish a smelter at either Crested Butte or Gunnison. The smelter was to be located near the railroad. The freight rate of \$10 a ton to Crested Butte or \$11 a ton to Gunnison meant that smelting would be cheaper there than in Ashcroft. J. P. Flynn announced that there were 100 families in Crested Butte waiting for the completion of the Pearl Pass road so that they could become residents of Ashcroft.²¹

¹⁹Rocky Mountain News (Denver), June 5, 1882, p. 1; Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), June 10, 1882, p. 2.

²⁰Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), June 17, 1882, p. 2; and June 24, 1882, p. 2.

²¹Ibid., July 1, 1882, p. 2.

Work progressed on the road even in steady rain. By July 15, the road was completed to within one and one-half miles of the summit on an easy grade. Seventy-five men were still working to make the Pearl Pass road "one of the best roads in the county" and hoped to have it completed in about three weeks. The estimated cost at that time was \$10,000. J. A. Kinney and L. J. Colburn circulated a petition in August for a mail route from Crested Butte to Ashcroft via Pearl Pass. They obtained 850 signatures in five days. Barlow and Sanderson were waiting to start a double line of coaches from Crested Butte to Aspen. The first stages and wagons went over the road in September. In October the road was blocked with snow, but would be reopened in the spring.²²

According to the statistics released, the construction cost of the Pearl Pass road overran the \$10,000 estimate. The twelve miles on the Gunnison side were built for \$14,000; the five and one-half miles on the Ashcroft side were built for \$35,000. Part of the cost difference was accounted for because of the width of the road. From Crested Butte to the top, the road was eight feet wide; from Ashcroft to the top, the road was twelve feet wide. According to the 1882 statistics the highest point reached was 13,200 feet. The elevation of Pearl Pass is actually 12,705 feet; whether the 1882 statistic was a miscalculation is not known. In October of 1882, a Mr. Dodge of the Denver and Rio Grande wrote Eben Smith, manager of the Tam O'Shanter, asking him if he would take charge of the work on the Gunnison portion of the Crested Butte road if the railroad would widen it to the twelve foot width of the Ashcroft side. Smith

²²Ibid., July 1, 1882, p. 2; July 15, 1882, p. 2; August 12, 1882, p. 2; August 19, 1882, p. 2; September 9, 1882, p. 2; and October 28, 1882, p. 2.



Aerial view of Pearl Pass and Pearl Mountain, 1976

accepted the assignment.²³

Ashcroft was no longer isolated. Although it did not have a railroad, it did have three roads into the camp. The mining camp did not have a working telegraph, but it did have a daily mail service. The costs of supplies and of freighting ores were lower. Ashcroft's mines were producing. The "Wonder of the West" looked forward to the 1883 season with great anticipation. Residents were certain that Ashcroft's permanency was guaranteed.

²³Ibid., September 30, 1882, p. 2; and October 28, 1882, p. 2.

CHAPTER VI

FADING EMBERS

Ashcroft awakened from her winter hibernation in April, 1883, as people returned to camp for the new season. On April 21, Judge Goddard rendered his decision in the case of Tabor vs. Atkinson upholding the decision of Willard Teller, the referee. Goddard's decision meant that Tabor could continue to work the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma property and the denizens of Ashcroft were elated. The decision was an auspicious beginning for the 1883 season.¹

Two other events were also considered good omens for the new season. Brooks and Bethune received the machinery for the smelter on April 21 and were busily putting it in order so that the blow in could be scheduled for the second week of May. James McCarthy heralded the opening of the season on Monday, April 23, when he went to the top of Copper Mountain and unfurled the McCarthy flag on the McCarthy lode at an elevation of 13,000 feet. The previous year the same place was not reached before June 1. Considerable snow still lay on the higher mountains, but prospecting was possible at lower elevations and activity resumed in earnest.²

By the first part of May, miners were working every day and some good shipments of ore were made. The Tam O'Shanter was going full blast with twenty-five men employed. Eben Smith announced that the force would be

¹Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), April 21, 1883; p. 2; and April 28, 1882, p. 2.

²Ibid.

increased when the smelters blew in. Other companies that had patented their properties promised to work them vigorously. The Isaac Cooper mines on Mount Cooper held great promise. The Chris Colla and the Keno lodes were considered to be of greater value than the Tam O'Shanter; the Keno vein when first struck gave fifty-two ounces in silver. The mineral vein in both lodes was said to be 80 to 300 feet wide. It was rumored that the Elgin Smelter Company of Leadville would move its plant of machinery to Ashcroft as soon as the roads over the range would permit the move. As of May 8 Borom and White began to pack ore by jack-train to the smelter from the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines. The week before there had been trouble at the mines which upset everyone in Ashcroft. An absurd race conflict had erupted with the miners of all nations combining against the Cornishmen. John Tyach, foreman of the mines, had hired six of his countrymen known as "Cousin Jacks." The men were warned not to go to work, but they did. The other men began to complain that they got potatoes only once a day, the breakfast mush was only half cooked, the dining tables were not clean and Tyach was domineering. They ordered Tyach and his men off the hill. Order was restored when Eben Smith, the manager, returned from Leadville.³

Hallett made Crested Butte over Pearl Pass on May 4 with his pack train signifying the opening of Pearl Pass for the season. The retailers started to get shipments of supplies of all types. Borom and White ordered a 2,000 pound safe and announced that they would soon open a large grocery and forwarding house. McBride and Carroll received a new pool table regarded as an excellent choice by those who used it. Others announced the

³Ibid., May 5, 1883, p. 2; May 12, 1883, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), May 2, 1883, p. 2.

opening of new businesses; Mrs. H. P. Noble opened a branch store of millinery and fancy goods and the McCullom brothers opened a saloon. On May 20, Mrs. Farrell reopened the Saint James Hotel for the season.⁴

Charcoal was delivered to the Brooks and Bethune smelter which was to blow in on Monday, May 14. Delays occurred; on the 19th the smelter owners announced that the blow in would occur when they received ore from the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma. By May 26 they were still waiting for the delivery of a water pipe. On June 1 the long awaited event finally occurred. The blow in was just a test, but was very satisfactory. Five tons of Tam O'Shanter ore was used which ran 145 ounces of silver and thirty-seven per cent lead. At 6:00 p.m., four 100 pound bars of bullion were poured consisting of five-tenths ounce gold and 190 ounces silver valued at \$270 per bar. Only a small part of the bullion was extracted from the ore for the test run. The smelter did not continue to run due to the lack of ore although Eben Smith announced that wagons would begin hauling ore to the smelter on the 21st if road conditions were favorable. The bars of bullion produced during the test run were placed on display at the Post Office bookstore.⁵

The Pearl Pass road improvements got underway the third week of June. C. V. Noble supervised forty men who worked to widen the Crested Butte side from eight feet to twelve feet, sloping the banks and dressing up the area. Alteration of the road in a few places to give an easier grade was also done. The Gunnison County Commissioners appropriated \$8,000 to finish the road. Borom's and Hallett's jack-trains continued to make regular trips

⁴Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), May 5, 1883, p. 2; May 12, 1883, p. 2; and May 19, 1883, p. 2.

⁵Ibid., May 5, 1883, p. 2; May 12, 1883, p. 2; May 19, 1883, p. 2; May 26, 1883, p. 2; June 2, 1883, p. 2; and June 9, 1883, p. 2.

to Crested Butte despite the construction. A road was also constructed up Pine Creek for the Tam O'Shanter property; jack-trains began using the road in mid-July. The Montezuma road was repaired so that the 3,000 tons of high grade ore mined during the winter could be shipped to Denver.⁶

James Goodwin, Pete Lonergan and James Sullivan, owners of the J. P. Junior on Slate Mountain, announced the discovery of a large vein of galena ore which ran seventy-four per cent lead, sixty-eight and three-tenths ounces silver and one and six-tenths ounces gold to the ton. The ore, according to the owners, would be shipped to the Brooks and Bethune smelter for reduction. With the J. P. Junior discovery, there were eleven claims capable of producing ten to 100 tons of a good smelting ore daily in the district, according to the Rocky Mountain Sun editor. He did not state the ten other claims to which he was referring. The Columbia lode on the north side of Castle Creek one-half mile below Ashcroft on Brilliant Hill, was being worked extensively. Phil Harrington, J. B. Walsh and J. M. Leahy had struck free milling gold and silver ore as well as a vein of iron. The owners wished to treat their ore at once and offered an interest in the property to anyone erecting a five-stamp mill. They were willing to sign a contract guaranteeing enough ore to run the mill the entire summer. This discovery buoyed the residents of Ashcroft; to them it proved that the foothills surrounding Ashcroft contained vast mineral wealth and that ordinary miners, not just rich capitalists, could succeed.⁷

The residents of Ashcroft again wished to celebrate an old-fashioned Fourth of July, one that would at least equal if not top the celebration of

⁶Ibid., June 9, 1883, p. 2; June 23, 1883, p. 2; and July 14, 1883, p. 2.

⁷Ibid., June 23, 1883, p. 2.

1882. Two public meetings were held to discuss the celebration. Mayor Walter Borom was able to entice only a few to speak at either meeting. The Sun's editor commented, "Others were as dumb as oysters." Two secret meetings were called by dissidents in an attempt to exclude some of the community. A grand ball was held at the Elma Hotel and the miners were given a holiday; the celebration was considered a success even though it did not equal or surpass the celebration of 1882.⁸

The trouble occurring over the Fourth of July celebration seemed to be indicative of the downturn in Ashcroft's expectations in general. The editor of the Sun admitted that business was dull, but he was sure that the "stayers" in Ashcroft would reap a benefit and advised them to "Hold your grip." He reminded his readers that new and rich strikes had been reported on West Castle, Slate Mountain and Brush Creek with assays as high as \$400 to the ton. His faith in Ashcroft had not diminished and he was certain that business and mining would improve. A week later the town presented a dormant appearance due to, paradoxically, the flourishing condition of the area. The Montezuma mine employed every available man in town; mineral was being taken out of both the shaft and the tunnel in all the drifts and levels. Ore bins were being constructed so that ore could be hauled to the smelters in Ashcroft and Crested Butte. Others had joined the exodus to Tellurium Creek, a tributary of the Taylor River, where rich strikes were alluring enough to attract stalwarts of Ashcroft such as Sowle and Hallett. Hallett succeeded in unearthing a rich vein six to ten feet wide which assayed forty to sixty per cent copper and 40 to 150 ounces of silver. The editor of the Sun commented, "There is considerable excitement

⁸Ibid., June 16, 1883, p. 2; June 23, 1883, p. 2; and July 7, 1883, p. 2.

in the neighborhood over this strike." Repairs were started on the telegraph line between Crested Butte and Aspen on August 3. The Leadville, Aspen and Grand River Telegraph and Telephone Company was incorporated; J. B. Wheeler announced that the line would be extended from Aspen to Leadville and would be operational within sixty days.⁹ Perhaps the stayers in Ashcroft would reap the benefits that the editor had prophesied.

The smelter continued to have problems. Unidentified parties had placed attachments against the smelter in July. Although these were withdrawn in August, no ore was delivered to the smelter from the Tabor mines. Bethune originally agreed to treat the ore for \$12.50 per ton with a promise of special railroad rates instead of the set price of \$20 per ton. The contract was agreed to verbally, but still no ore was delivered. Bethune then agreed to treat the ore for \$15 per ton regardless of railroad rates and although Tabor said to go ahead, no contract was made and no ore was delivered. One hundred tons of coke was delivered to the smelter on Tabor's orders without consulting Bethune and yet the ore from the Tabor mines continued to be shipped to Crested Butte. The owners of the smelter and the residents of Ashcroft asked why, but received no answers. In September Tabor leased the smelter and the mining camp held high expectations of renewed life and activity within the district.¹⁰

It was rumored that the new superintendent of the Tam O'Shanter group, Charles Pishon formerly superintendent of the Matchless mine at Leadville, would make additions to the smelter to increase its capacity. S. T. Tyson was placed in charge of the smelter. Because of the leasing of the smelter,

⁹Ibid., July 21, 1883, p. 2; July 28, 1883, p. 2; and August 4, 1883, p. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., August 11, 1883, p. 2; August 18, 1883, p. 2; and September 8, 1883, p. 2.

an unidentified correspondent to the Rocky Mountain Sun was certain that Ashcroft would experience a renewed boom in six months and would attract the capitalists who had ignored the hidden bonanzas. His letter concluded:

Now is the time to make a fortune in this valley. Claims can be bought cheaply and an interest can be secured on most reasonable terms. There is a wonderful feeling of confidence here among claim owners; they are all determined to stand by their properties assured that they have a good thing. Look out for grand times in this country.¹¹

The wonderful feeling of confidence did not last. Charles Pishon continued to have the Tam O'Shanter group ore hauled to Crested Butte and did not start up the Ashcroft smelter. The group was producing enough ore to require forty-four mule teams to haul the ore to Crested Butte and the people of Ashcroft could not understand why the smelter was not in operation. Pishon had discovered that the smelting of ore in Ashcroft was too expensive; the area did not furnish the variety of ores necessary for a smelting mixture. The lack of an operating smelter placed an unwanted burden on other mine owners in the district. Their mines did not have the rich ore of the Tam O'Shanter group and they could not afford to haul their ore to Crested Butte. Besides the lack of an operating smelter, Ashcroft had one other drawback which was greatly affecting the camp. The school had not been in session for nearly a year; the newly elected school board had done nothing to remedy the situation and many families were leaving town so that their children could get schooling elsewhere.¹²

The serenity of Ashcroft was further disturbed by an arsonist who plied his "art" twice during the 1883 season. On July 29 at 4:00 a.m. the

¹¹Ibid., September 8, 1883, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), September 12, 1883, p. 2.

¹²Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), September 8, 1883, p. 2; September 19, 1883, p. 2; and October 6, 1883, p. 2.

Saint James Hotel was consumed by fire. Mrs. Farrell, the proprietress, lost all of her effects and did not recover her loss since the insurance coverage had just lapsed. This adversity helped destroy the buoyant feeling in the camp. On September 30, the arsonist was again successful; at 1:00 a.m. fire destroyed the Elma Hotel. Sharpless, Clark and Murphy, the residents of the hotel at the time of the fire, escaped unharmed. Two weeks prior to the fire a pile of shavings with a partly burned candle was found in one of the empty rooms by Kincaid, owner of the building. The next day a fire was discovered near a flue that had not been in use for a month. Insurance coverage for the building and its furnishings had become effective just three weeks earlier; McMurchy, the insurance agent at Aspen, had written the policy for \$4,000--\$1,000 on furniture and \$3,000 on the building. Even with the insurance reimbursement, Kincaid lost \$10,000; he had paid \$9,000 for the building and had furnished it at a cost of \$5,000. The arsonist was never found.¹³

H. A. W. Tabor, his wife Baby Doe and Claudie and Steve McCourt were in Ashcroft on September 10 checking on conditions at the Tam O'Shanter. Tabor informed Pishon that he was returning to Denver to complete arrangements for starting the Ashcroft smelter. On September 10 George Bethune of the Brooks and Bethune smelter went to Aspen and mortgaged his one-third conditional interest in the smelter to the Aspen bank for \$200. He then left the county taking with him his partner's son Louis. Brooks brought charges of kidnapping against Bethune for his action and the people of Ashcroft continued to wait in vain for the starting of the smelter. By the latter part of October the majority of people, like George Bethune, gave up hope and moved to Aspen. By the fall of 1883 Aspen, which had been

¹³Ibid., August 4, 1883, p. 2; and October 6, 1883, p. 2.

in existence for four years, was a place of new opportunity. High grade silver ore was uncovered in the Spar mine, the first of many great strikes in the Aspen area. Other bonanzas, such as the Washington, Vallejo, Emma, Durant, Mollie Gibson, Newman, Aspen and Smuggler lodes, enticed the disgruntled residents of Ashcroft to move to Aspen.¹⁴

In November Charles Pishon, manager of the Tam O'Shanter group, returned to Leadville to resume his position as manager of the Matchless. Under Pishon's management the Tam O'Shanter group had yielded its first substantial dividend since Tabor's purchase; the dividend was said to be \$18,000. John Tabor, brother of Horace, assumed management of the mines and immediately signed an agreement with the Aspen smelter to deliver forty tons of ore to the facility. James Magee agreed to deliver the ore at a rate of eight tons a day. If the Aspen facilities were satisfactory Tabor stipulated that a large contract would then be arranged. On December 5 a contract to deliver 2,000 tons of ore to the Aspen smelter was sent to Leadville to be signed by Horace Tabor and J. W. Smith. Fulfillment of the contract began on December 27 with Borom and White agreeing to deliver sixteen tons of ore daily.¹⁵

Snow was an annoying problem during the winter of 1883-84. Snowslides occurred a month earlier than usual resulting in the death of C. H. Davis. On November 25 Davis and George Kelly were on their way to the Rainstorm mine in Traveler's Gulch above Ashcroft to work the night shift when they were caught in an avalanche. Both men were carried 200 feet downhill where

¹⁴Ashcroft Herald, September 15, 1883, p. 2; Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), September 22, 1883, p. 2; and October 17, 1883, p. 2.

¹⁵Rocky Mountain Sun (Ashcroft and Aspen), November 24, 1883, p. 2; December 1, 1883, p. 2; December 8, 1883, p. 2; December 15, 1883, p. 2; December 22, 1883, p. 2; and December 29, 1883, p. 2.

they were found in two feet of snow two hours after the mishap. Davis was killed instantly; Kelly survived although he remained a cripple for life due to the brutality of the avalanche. Travel on Pearl Pass ceased the first week of December and did not resume until the second week of June due to the enormous snowfall. Slides closed the road from Aspen to Ashcroft; mail was delivered on snow shoes from February until June. The road was finally made passable by burning the piles of timber which had accumulated on top of the twenty feet deep snowdrifts. The fire melted the snow to a depth of ten feet and the rest was cleared by manual labor. Slides on the Montezuma road prevented the delivery of ore to Aspen in February. By March the men working the mines returned to Ashcroft on snow shoes since it was impossible to take provisions to them. Surface water and the impassable condition of the road prevented the resumption of work on the Tam O'Shanter mines for four months.¹⁶

In July, a special correspondent to the Sun chided the mine owners of Ashcroft. "Zulu" pointed out that development of a mine was necessary if the mine was to be profitable. Good properties were lying idle, properties that "Zulu" felt could be as productive as the Tam O'Shanter group. These properties would not be productive by sitting and waiting; mineral would not grow on the surface in the Rocky Mountains. Hard work was necessary to keep Ashcroft in the forefront of mining activity. Miners in the Pine Creek area were willing to work. The severity of the winter and deep snows prevented much work until July, but prospectors were going to work with renewed optimism. The Traynor lode near the mouth of Pine Creek was producing good lead ore. The Michigan group in the same vicinity promised rich

¹⁶Ibid., December 1, 1883, p. 2; December 8, 1883, p. 2; February 9, 1884, p. 2; March 15, 1884, p. 2; May 31, 1884, p. 2; and June 7, 1884, p. 2.

rewards for W. H. Philport, its developer; a twenty-six inch pay streak of mineral yielded 67 to 312 ounces of silver in sample returns. Just across the range on Pearl Pass, the Snowdrift had carbonate ore assaying 25 ounces of silver, \$5 in gold and sixty per cent lead.¹⁷

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The Castle Peak Mining Company was working diligently as was the Express Group Gold and Silver Mining Company. Prospects were good for continued development. The Tam O'Shanter group continued to produce ore averaging 100 ounces silver to the ton, but major businesses in Ashcroft started to locate elsewhere. The firm of Abbey and Hallett located in Tincup, and the firm of Boesch and Kunz moved their meat market to Aspen. Aspenites began buying the empty houses in Ashcroft and moving them to Aspen. On October 1 the oldest business in Ashcroft closed its doors; C. H. Smith, hardware merchant, decided to relocate in Aspen. The town was dying, but the mines continued to work and ship ore. In October, the Michigan group shipped enough ore to pay all the expenses of development and make a profit besides. Shipments of ore continued from the Michigan group, the Iron Lode on Copper Mountain and the Tam O'Shanter group throughout November. In December, the Tam O'Shanter closed for the winter; due to snow conditions, it was too expensive and too dangerous to keep the road open to the mines.¹⁸

Death stalked the high country that winter and spring, but succeeded in claiming only two of its intended victims. December 27, H. J. Russell, superintendent of the Express Group Mining Company arrived in Ashcroft

¹⁷Ibid., July 26, 1884, p. 2; and August 30, 1884, p. 2.

¹⁸Ibid., August 30, 1884, p. 2; September 6, 1884, p. 2; September 20, 1884, p. 2; October 4, 1884, p. 2; October 25, 1884, p. 2; November 1, 1884, p. 2; November 8, 1884, p. 2; November 15, 1884, p. 2; December 6, 1884, p. 2; and December 20, 1884, p. 2.

after a fifteen day journey from Saint Elmo. He had been caught on Taylor Pass in a severe snowstorm, but managed to survive. His courage, fortitude and sense of duty in getting his men and supplies through the ordeal was highly praised. The week of January 4 a woman packer attempted to cross Pearl Pass in the dead of winter. A heavy snow storm enveloped her when she reached the top of the pass. She survived through the night by walking back and forth; by morning the snow fall nearly reached her waist. Alex Adair, the mail carrier from Crested Butte, saved her from certain death; when he found her, her clothing was frozen stiff and it was doubtful if she could have survived another hour in her condition.¹⁹

Snow slides succeeded in claiming two victims. February 20, Owen Sweeney and W. A. Riley were walking along a flat at the foot of the mountain directly back of Ashcroft when the snow broke above them. Sweeney was caught in the resulting avalanche, but Riley succeeded in keeping on the surface of the snow. An intensive search was immediately begun, but an hour lapsed before the body was uncovered. Alex Adair, the mail carrier who had saved the woman packer in January, was killed by a snow slide on March 28 while crossing Pearl Pass on his accustomed daily trip. His two companions were not able to reach him in time to cheat death. The week of April 4 Dave and Tom Mitchell and Jim Richardson were buried in the cabin beneath a snow slide at Cooper's Camp. They dug through five feet of snow to reach safety.²⁰

In January, R. A. Coleman, bookkeeper of the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines, was arrested on a charge of forgery. Coleman, who invested all of

¹⁹Ibid., January 3, 1885, p. 2; and January 10, 1885, p. 2.

²⁰Ibid., February 21, 1885, p. 3; April 4, 1885, p. 2; and April 11, 1885, p. 2.

his salary in mining, bought an interest in the Prince Albert lode on Copper Hill and employed several men to work his portion of the claim. With the closure of the Montezuma-Tam O'Shanter in December, Coleman was no longer able to pay his employees. As bookkeeper of the mines, Coleman was responsible for filling out and distributing payroll checks which were signed in advance by the manager. On the last pay day two blank, signed checks were left; Coleman took one and eventually filled it out for \$400. Coleman did not deny the charges, but asked John C. Eames, manager of the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines, if Eames did not remember telling him that he could do so. The \$400 was to be considered a bonus. Eames denied giving Coleman the check or permission to use the check. The counsel for the defense made the plea that under the statutes the offense was a misdemeanor. Coleman was bound over to the Pitkin County jail to await further action. In February, the Sun announced that Messrs. Bassinger, Bolland, Mattison and Goodloe deserved the thanks of every taxpayer in Pitkin County for going Coleman's bond and relieving the county of a heavy, useless expense. The amount of the bond was not disclosed nor was any further action against Coleman reported.²¹

Work continued in the mines at lower elevations as long as possible during the winter. Charles Pinger who was working two claims near the Pearl Pass road above Ashcroft had to stop work in January due to deep snow. He transferred his men to the Fanny Vance on Mount Good Hope east of Ashcroft hoping to sink a shaft. The scheme was given up when he realized that the ground was located on all sides of the Fanny Vance. Others were trying to work claims on Mount Good Hope, but the depth of snow on the mountain prevented the delivery of supplies in February and all work was suspended

²¹Ibid., January 10, 1885, p. 2; and February 7, 1885, p. 2.

until spring. The Traynor lode on Pine Creek, one-half mile up from the confluence of Pine Creek and Castle Creek, was found to contain a fifteen inch streak of decomposed quartz carrying large quantities of silver wire in mid-February. This strike revived the faltering hopes of the residents of Ashcroft.²²

By spring more finds on Mount Good Hope caused new locations to be filed in that area. Most of the ore was galena, but rich pockets of silver were also unearthed. These discoveries acted as a charm on the camp. The few vacant buildings that were left standing after the exodus to Aspen the previous summer were rented. The machinery was replaced in the Brooks smelter that had been rented to the Aspen concentrating works and hopes were high that the smelter would begin operation; Brooks was in the process of interesting Eastern capitalists in investing in the smelter so it could go into operation. Work was also advancing in the Pine Creek area, Conundrum Gulch and Sandy Gulch below Ashcroft. Shipments of galena ore to Crested Butte were possible, but only after months of work.²³

Henry Webber displayed confidence in the Michigan group at the head of Pine Creek. He leased and bonded a half interest in the group in April although work on the three claims was postponed due to snow. At the time of the lease, ore was on the dump ready to be shipped and Webber put three shifts to work as soon as it was possible to do so. John Jennings was hired as superintendent and by July the main fissure vein was opened showing a large body of high grade quartz ore full of copper. It was reported that the ore ran well in silver and gold although no specific statistics

²²Ibid., January 10, 1885, p. 2; January 31, 1885, p. 2; February 21, 1885, p. 2; and February 28, 1885, p. 2.

²³Ibid., February 28, 1885, p. 2; March 14, 1885, p. 2; March 21, 1885, p. 2; April 11, 1885, p. 2; and May 23, 1885, p. 2.

were given. By August Joe Lockerby, the ore sorter, was sacking some fine looking galena and sulphuret ore. Work was stopped on the group in the latter part of August for unknown reasons; although the stoppage was reported as temporary, no further work was reported for the remainder of the season.²⁴

Other activity in the Pine Creek region during the season included the Traynor lode which had a vein of black lime, carrying galena, copper and iron, and wire silver; assays averaged 100 ounces of silver. The Dauntless, an extension of the Traynor on the opposite side of Pine Creek, contained the same character of ore as the Traynor. James Drury, Pat Sweeney and Mike Hogan continued to work throughout the season. Patience seemed to bring results for two Danes who worked for three years developing their claim; in August of 1885 they struck a vein of quartz and sulphuret ore which was considered important although further details were not released. Two Swedes successfully uncovered considerable quantities of white iron and galena in the Buffalo lode below the Michigan group. Other paying lodes in the Pine Creek area during the season of 1885 were the Silver Islet, Alpine, Fox and Sedalia group. Only those claims in the Sedalia group which were not patented were worked.²⁵

The editor of the Rocky Mountain Sun reported that there were valuable properties which with work could produce good results, but no work was being done. By August, 1885, forty one claims in the Columbia Mining District were either patented or secured by receiver's receipt, and yet very few of these were being worked. Patenting claims in the district seemed to

²⁴Ibid., April 18, 1885, p. 2; May 30, 1885, p. 2; June 13, 1885, p. 2; July 4, 1885, p. 2; August 1, 1885, p. 2; and September 5, 1885, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), July 3, 1885, p. 6.

²⁵Rocky Mountain Sun (Aspen), May 9, 1885, p. 2; August 1, 1885, p. 2; August 29, 1885, p. 2; and September 5, 1885; p. 2.

signal the end of work on those claims. One group which was not worked during the season was the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma. Jake Sanders tried to obtain a lease on the property, but could not come to terms with Tabor. Sanders wished to work the group as he saw fit, but Tabor wished him to work only the main Tabor tunnel. The impasse was not resolved and the group remained idle. Ore was hauled to Aspen to fulfill the contract made in 1884; John Traynor completed the contract on August 28, 1885 hauling the last of the ore taken out during the summer and fall of 1884.²⁶

Traveler's Gulch at the foot of Castle Peak was reached by a good trail built from the main county road to the head of the gulch. Charles Pinger and his sons leased the Dreadnaught and Hybernia mines in the gulch during the 1885 season and obtained ore which with careful sorting ran \$500 to the ton. Dennie Wringe worked the Savage group all season and by September pay ore was found although specific statistics were not disclosed. James Drury, owner of many claims in the gulch, had two average runs made on Catalpa ore. The Hewitt sampler certified 161 ounces silver and Miller and Slack certified 156 ounces. The ore was unearthed at a depth of fifteen feet and indications were favorable for a continuance of the vein in width and richness as more depth was reached. These successes revived Ashcroft's spirit since the gulch was a new region of investigation; it was considered devoid of mineral after mining experts evaluated mineral from the gulch in 1882. Persistence of a few men seemed to prove the experts wrong.²⁷

Gus Carlson, a claim owner on the Pearl Pass road, was warned by the Sun editor to be careful or he would become a bloated mine owner. On July

²⁶Ibid., August 22, 1885, p. 2; and September 5, 1885, p. 2.

²⁷Ibid., September 5, 1885, p. 2; and September 12, 1885, p. 2.

29 Gus arrived in Ashcroft with specimens of magnetic iron ore which he claimed ran seventy per cent. He had a shaft fifteen feet deep and measured ten feet of the mineral which he was sure was not all of it. He had had no ore assayed nor had anyone else seen his claim. The Highland Mary, a new location in the 1885 season, showed eight feet of a vein which appeared to be all mineral. Assays on some iron carbonates gave seventy ounces silver. The claim was owned by J. B. Brooks and was one and one-quarter miles above the Kellogg smelter, not thirty feet from the Pearl Pass road. John Vicent was pleased with the Cumberland lode, west of Pearl Pass and hoped to work all winter. The spirit of the holiday season was enhanced by the announcement that J. H. Walker was working the Ben Butler's Success lode opposite the Kellogg smelter on Castle Creek. Although he had not experienced great success, he was working in exactly the same black coal lime that was found in Aspen Mountain. The area was heavily impregnated with white iron as well as copper and lead. He was willing to give an interest to responsible parties who were willing to drive the tunnel another thirty to forty feet to the dolomite lime. Indications were that a substantial reward could be gained.²⁸

Mount Good Hope was a promising area just opposite the town. The Puzzle, the Big Mack, the Fanny Vance, the Joe Pete and the Jim Blaine lodes all produced quantities of lead and silver. J. B. Walsh told Aspenites that the lights seen on Aspen Mountain at night were nothing in comparison to the lights on Mount Good Hope. Lodes in Conundrum Gulch were yielding silver and copper and the area was worked with renewed hope. Monument Gulch near Ashcroft was another area yielding promising indications of sil-

²⁸Ibid., August 1, 1885, p. 2; August 29, 1885, p. 2; October 24, 1885, p. 2; and December 26, 1885, p. 2.

ver. Pine creek was the scene of an attempted claim jump although no particulars came to light. The scheme was aborted after shots were fired. In September Peter O'Hara and Joe Vonah came to blows over mining property. O'Hara knocked Vonah down and jumped on him. O'Hara was arrested and tried before Judge Perry; he was bound over for \$200 pending the result of Vonah's injuries.²⁹

Silver Mountain, south of Ashcroft, was the location of the Silver and Gold Express Mining Company. H. J. Russell, superintendent of the company, built a road from Taylor Pass to the various properties owned by the company. Hoisting machinery was installed and two shifts were kept busy all season. Indications from the Express properties as well as other properties on the mountain seemed to be a continuation of the lime belt from Aspen. In August, Larson and Nelson struck three feet of fine looking mineral in a claim on Silver Mountain. Although neither the type of mineral nor the assay report was disclosed, it was reported that the strike was considered important enough to get the whole town drunk. The Copper Queen, the Gipsy Queen and the Glenco claims were yielding oxide of copper, sulphurets, gray copper, spar and iron. All claim owners were positive that Ashcroft would yet prove the financial savior of Pitkin County.³⁰

During the 1885 season the hum of saws and the pounding of hammers were not heard for the first time in Ashcroft's five years of existence.
Vacant buildings were rented for a few new businesses, but the great days

1885
 The
 demise
 of
 Ashcroft

²⁹Ibid., May 9, 1885, p. 2; June 27, 1885, p. 2; July 11, 1885, p. 2; July 18, 1885, p. 2; August 22, 1885, p. 2; September 26, 1885, p. 2; October 3, 1885, p. 2; October 17, 1885, p. 2; and December 19, 1885, p. 2.

³⁰Ibid., March 7, 1885, p. 2; April 18, 1885, p. 2; July 11, 1885, p. 2; August 15, 1885, p. 2; September 5, 1885, p. 2; September 26, 1885, p. 2; November 14, 1885, p. 2; and December 5, 1885, p. 2; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), July 3, 1885, p. 6 and November 11, 1885, p. 6.

had passed. In April a municipal election was held which was considered a farce by all concerned. A total of five votes was polled for the six positions on the ticket. The newly elected mayor, Louis Teuscher, was still in Aspen for the winter. He was informed of his election by Jim Goodwin and was quite surprised to hear of the honor conferred. S.I. Hallett was elected clerk and recorder with Robert Long, L.P. Anderson, A.W. Riley and Charles Wurenburg elected trustees. Snow prevented prospecting above timberline until mid-June. Some areas could not be reached until August, but prospecting yielded results even late in the season.

The staunch supporters of Ashcroft refused to acknowledge the camp's problems. Capital was needed to develop the mines in the area, but investors were not interested in a marginal camp. High grade mineral production was sporadic and the mines which were capable of low grade production could not be profitably worked. No operating smelter existed in Ashcroft and no cheap transportation system was available to ship ore to smelters in Crested Butte, Leadville or Aspen. A majority of residents and businesses had relocated in more prosperous camps. Ashcroft, however, refused to die. Stalwarts believed that the camp was a sleeping lion that would awaken with a roar the whole world would hear. They were certain that the roar would be heard. The unanswerable question was, "When?"

CHAPTER VII

OH WHERE, OH WHERE, WAS THE RAILROAD?

Ashcroft no longer had the attributes of a permanent, prosperous camp. The ^{Roman} Catholic church building which was to be erected on the boundary line between Ashcroft and Hunley's Addition in 1882 had never been built for some reason. Monthly services were held if time, weather, and population count were favorable. The ^{Roman} Catholic ^{Priest} father usually held services in Aspen and alternated his journeys to Ashcroft and Glenwood Springs during the summer months. School sessions ended in 1882 due to the lack of funds and families had moved elsewhere. According to the Colorado Business Directory, the population of the camp had decreased from a tally of 500 in 1882 to 100 in 1886. During the height of the mining season Ashcroft could still boast that her population was close to 250, an unofficial estimate given by the local miners when they were asked. Although the camp's zenith had passed, faith in her mining potential did not wane. Each new year was heralded with positive declarations of impending wealth and renewed success for the camp.

In January, 1886, the treasurer of Ashcroft, O. D. Smith, announced that there was a grand total of \$5.60 in the treasury. He stated unequivocally that the sum would remain intact. Although efforts were made to draw on the fund, warrants were returned each time. Smith declared that residents always attempted to draw on the wrong fund. It was not reported whether Smith was successful in his efforts or if more funds were collected during the season. A municipal election was held in April and was solidly

Democratic. Eighteen votes were polled for the one ticket in the field. James Goodwin was elected mayor, A. Larson was the new clerk and recorder and Felix Kinney, Jack Traynor and B. Munson were trustees. The trustee positions were evidently decreased by one since four trustees were elected the previous year. Two men did not arrive in time for the vote. Pitkin County Assessor Clark and Louis Teuscher intended to run for mayor and clerk, but since the voting had taken place by the time they arrived, they immediately returned to Aspen. In contrast to the eighteen votes cast in Ashcroft, there were 1,364 votes cast in the Aspen municipal election.¹

1886

In March one of the pioneers of the Ashcroft area died of pneumonia. J. H. Walker who was working the Ben Butler's Success lode across from the Kellogg smelter succumbed at 11:10 p.m. March 26 at Mike Sweeney's cabin. He was 51 years old and owned considerable mining property near Ashcroft and a store property on Hyman Avenue in Aspen. The Ashcroft mail carrier nearly lost his life on June 3. The bridge over the East River below Crested Butte Mountain washed out making it necessary to ford the river. The carrier and his horse were carried down stream by the force of the water and were rolled under the water a couple of times. They finally reached the opposite bank, shaken but unharmed. Disaster was averted in mid-July when guns were used in an attempt to collect an overdue bill. No names were disclosed, but it seems that one man tried to collect a board bill from another and threatened to use the gun in his hand, if necessary. The delinquent's brother stepped in, also with a gun, and told the collector to shoot if he was so inclined. Needless to say, the altercation ended in a stale-

¹Rocky Mountain Sun (Aspen), January 9, 1886, p. 2; and April 10, 1886, p. 2.

mate. No shots were fired. Whether the bill was collected was not reported.²

Two other items of significance were reported in July. C. F. Perkins sub-let the contract for carrying mail between Saint Elmo and Tincup and between Ashcroft and Glenwood Springs to the Western Stage line. Perkins continued to carry mail by horseback between Aspen, Gothic and Crested Butte. Certificates of incorporation for the Aspen, Ashcroft and Taylor Range toll road, with William Sayer, H. A. Day and G. D. Johnstone as directors, were filed with the Secretary of State. Capital stock was listed as \$5,000. The toll road was subject to a sheriff's sale in June; J. P. Snyder purchased it for \$350. As terms of the sale the old company, Roaring Fork Improvement, was given six months to redeem their ownership and a judgment creditor was given an additional three months to bring suit against the old company. The new company was an outgrowth of the sheriff's sale. Although the road was no longer extensively used by travelers, numerous freighters still used the road and requested that the new owners repair the road.³

The Sun editor reported the fluctuation of silver prices from December 1885 to September, 1886. Silver declined to \$1.02 an ounce in December and continued to decline to \$1.01 7/8 in January. The price rallied in February by one-half cent to \$1.02 3/8. In June silver was selling at \$.99 1/2 and in September the price was \$.96 1/2. During the same period the price of lead varied from \$4.65 to \$4.75 1/2.⁴ These prices influenced the min-

²Ibid., March 27, 1886, p. 2; June 5, 1886, p. 2; and July 17, 1886, p. 2.

³Ibid., July 17, 1886, p. 2; and July 24, 1886, p. 2.

⁴Ibid., December 26, 1885, p. 2; January 9, 1886, p. 2; February 20, 1886, p. 2; June 5, 1886, p. 2; and September 11, 1886, p. 2.

ing activity around Ashcroft in the 1886 season. Only those properties which were backed by capital were worked. During the season many properties were sold either by sheriff's sale or by the owner for all or part interest. To be productive machinery was necessary, especially since as more depth was reached water problems began. In January Judge J. W. Robinson inspected the Taupheus and Croesus mines near the Taylor Pass road, a mile and one-half above Ashcroft. These claims were being developed in conjunction with the Silver and Gold Express Mining Company of Bloomington, Illinois. The veins showed spar, galena and copper which assayed very high according to reports. Two men were making preparations for a large engine and hoist to be placed on the properties in the spring. Horace Devereux purchased a half interest in the Iron lode, Cooper Camp, at a sheriff's sale on January 18. The price was \$125 and he immediately began a trail to the property so that iron fluxing ore could be hauled to Aspen where it was in great demand.⁵

Charles Gentry was willing to secure a lease and bond on the Cleveland group, two miles above Ashcroft, in March. The mineral milled twelve ounces of high grade silver to the ton with promising indications of increasing value as more depth was reached. Gentry bonded the property for \$50,000. Other claim owners in the locality of the Cleveland group watched with interest; the Cleveland was one of the most promising claims on Silver Mountain and success or failure determined whether other mines in the vicinity were worked. Considerable locating and relocating occurred in the Silver Mountain vicinity in April, but prospecting was delayed due to snow. By the end of May, work was stopped temporarily on the Cleveland group until a whim, a vertical horse-powered drum used as a hoist, could be built

⁵Ibid., January 9, 1886, p. 2; and January 23, 1886, p. 2.

1
 Carbonate Hill
 near Pearl Pass

and installed to remove the water. Considerable spar, galena and iron were taken out by the end of June. As more depth was reached the ore continued to look better with a great deal of copper stain present. Enough ore was obtained to rekindle interest in the area and to make the mine profitable for Gentry.⁶

The four to ten feet of snow between Ashcroft and Pearl Pass did not stop B. Munson and Pete Engstrom from working their Carbonate Hill lode near Pearl Pass. The ore ran from twelve to thirty ounces silver and from forty to sixty per cent lead. They worked all winter and packed their supplies six miles on snowshoes.⁷ The majority of miners were without capital; they had a set of tools, a roll of blankets, a month's supplies, a burro, willing hands, and perseverance and faith in their prospects. Very few made profitable income; some were unable to make expenses, but still the activity went on. Each was certain that his claim held hidden wealth. Even low grade mineral could make a profit for the miner especially since the Denver and Rio Grande led the residents of Ashcroft to believe that a branch line would be constructed to Ashcroft from Aspen when the railroad reached there. ✓

In January, 1887, the possibility of a railroad into Ashcroft took second place to a more immediate concern. Ashcroft was without a post office and mail delivery even though the Western Stage line coaches passed through camp twice daily on their way to and from Saint Elmo and Aspen. Postmaster General Symmes awarded the mail contract to the lowest bidder, one who did not make a living at the established price and gave up the

⁶Ibid., March 13, 1886, p. 2; April 10, 1886, p. 2; April 24, 1886, p. 2; May 29, 1886, p. 2; June 26, 1886, p. 2; July 10, 1886, p. 2; and July 24, 1886, p. 2.

⁷Ibid., April 10, 1886, p. 2; and April 24, 1886, p. 2.

delivery of mail. Those who bid a fair price that enabled them to live and deliver the mail winter and summer were ignored. People in the Ashcroft district had to travel twenty miles to post a letter to Glenwood Springs or Leadville. Bob Long traveled to Aspen in January to pick up the mail and learn what was happening in the world. The residents eventually employed someone to pick up the mail twice a week although the service continued to be erratic. In May a route to Crested Butte was again established although it was both difficult and dangerous to cross Pearl Pass.⁸

1887
RR

Mining activity was extensive during the 1887 season. No great strikes were made, but that did not seem to matter. Most of the miners were sacking their ore in anticipation of the completion of a railroad. The Denver and Rio Grande laid track into Aspen during the season arriving on November 1, and promised to lay track to Cooper's Camp, five miles above Ashcroft the following season. Most of the ore that was dug out by hard labor was low grade. It could only be a profitable mining venture if the railroad reached Ashcroft. The Montezuma-Tam O'Shanter was not worked since most of the high grade ore had been taken out. Tons of low grade ore were present in the group, but no one was able to secure a lease on the properties. Tabor left no one to guard the property and since it had not been worked since 1884 everything was in a state of disrepair. It was estimated that \$5,000 worth of property had been carried off or destroyed by exposure for want of proper care. Jake Saunders secured a two year lease on the properties which began on May 1, 1888. The residents of Ashcroft and the county considered the lease to be of great importance.⁹

Three miles north of Ashcroft the Tenderfoot and Puzzler lodes were

⁸Ibid., January 15, 1887, p. 2; and May 7, 1887, p. 2.

⁹Ibid., May 26, 1887, p. 2; and December 10, 1887, p. 2.

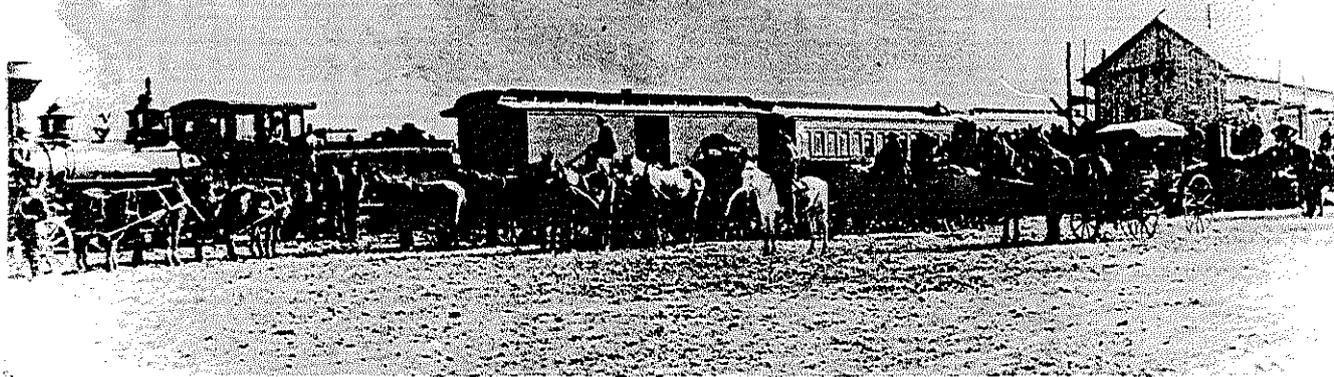
worked. When located in 1885 these lodes had created a sensation since their discovery opened up a new mining section. The ore found in a lime formation similar to Aspen gave great promise of proving up as extensive and rich as the mineral deposits of Aspen. The mineral was a lead carbonate which was very desirable as a fluxing ore. Its merchantability depended on the availability of a railroad. The Colorado Midland announced that it hoped to tap this rich section as soon as possible. In December the miners working the Puzzler mine located on the Aspen-Ashcroft road encountered mineral at 140 feet. Assays gave twenty five to forty ounces silver and fifty per cent lead.¹⁰

On November 1, 1887, when the first Denver and Rio Grande narrow gauge train steamed into Aspen optimism was extremely high throughout the area. In Ashcroft, residents were positive that the camp would experience a new boom in development. Thousands of tons of low grade ore could be mined and Ashcroft once again could rival Aspen in mineral production and growth. Those who left Ashcroft to relocate elsewhere would be sorry. They would definitely miss out on the expected bonanza. Residents were further encouraged by the announcement that the Colorado Coal and Iron Company had acquired the title to a very large body of excellent iron ore. The company made the purchase after careful and thorough examination and were definitely satisfied with its value. The iron ore was located at Cooper's Camp above Ashcroft, and the Colorado Midland as well as the Denver and Rio Grande announced its intention to tap the area.¹¹

The first woman in Ashcroft in the spring of 1881; Mrs. C. B. Culver,

¹⁰Ibid., January 8, 1887, p. 2; and December 31, 1887, p. 2.

¹¹U. S., Bureau of Mines, Mineral Resources of the United States. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 28.



First Denver and Rio Grande train into Aspen November 1, 1887 (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

had obviously lost the zest and enthusiasm for the region by 1888. In January it was announced that she was seeking a divorce. The news was disclosed in a report of a snow slide which involved her husband. C. B. Culver and B. F. Wilson were reported as missing from their cabin on Pine Creek. Searchers reported that their cabin was as they left it--grub on the stove, the fire banked and bed rolls ready for occupancy. It was surmised that the men lost their lives on Copper hill where they were reportedly working. Rescuers were unable to reach the scene of the mishap. C. B. Culver was one of the original founders of Ashcroft.¹²

1888

The Express group on Silver Mountain was worked that winter. Supplies were sent to the mine by Crowther, the winter manager, so that work could continue on the tunnel. Carbonates were found at a depth of about 150 feet. A drift run from the incline at the above depth encountered four feet of carbonate ore. This strike gave courage to the owners of claims in the vicinity. H. J. Russell was to bring an air compress plant for the tunnel on his return from Illinois. The company hired fifteen men to mine the ore so that the shipment of the mineral could begin as soon as the roads were passable. The large bodies of ore were reported to be of a good grade, similar to the Aspen ore. The Hidden Treasure and Dauntless were also worked. Mineral was exposed in the Hidden Treasure; William Lipps had succeeded in driving a tunnel 500 feet to cut the vein. The Dauntless was in the vein and three assays returned forty, seventy five and one hundred ounces respectively. Others waited not only for more favorable weather to work their mines but also for the promised railroad construction to occur. Transfers of mining property continued throughout the winter. Owners wished to have capital

¹²Rocky Mountain Sun (Aspen), January 14, 1888, p. 2.

available for development as soon as the railroad arrived.¹³

In April, the Sun announced that the Denver and Rio Grande would begin constructing a branch to Ashcroft after the May meeting of the company. If the construction was completed the output of ore in the Ashcroft area would greatly increase. The Colorado Coal and Iron Company, the Gold and Silver Express Mining Company and the Tam O'Shanter properties all would be major shippers. Smaller properties would also be able to market their ores. The first week of June surveyors began surveying a railroad grade to Ashcroft. Everyone was hoping that the survey crews would soon be followed by the pick and shovel brigade. In July Aspenites were reminded that a railroad branch to Ashcroft would also benefit them:

The talk of a railroad to Ashcroft has of late assumed a phase which gives a most hopeful look to the project. Nothing official can now be given, but officials do not hesitate to state that the scheme has been favorably received. Ashcroft is the equal of Aspen in mineral resources, and their development will do more for our camp (Aspen) than the development of any other section of the county. The Aspen public should give its aid and influence to bring Ashcroft to the attention of capitalists.

Ashcroft waited for the Denver and Rio Grande in vain. For financial reasons the railroad never laid track although survey work was done.¹⁴

Early in the season of 1888 the residents of Ashcroft had no way of knowing that the Denver and Rio Grande would not make good on its promises. They were extremely excited over the survey work. Residents had another reason for elation that season. In May the Colorado Supreme Court confirmed Horace Tabor's title to the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma properties. Expectation was high that Tabor would put the properties in order for extensive produc-

¹³Ibid., January 21, 1888, p. 2; March 3, 1888, p. 2; and March 17, 1888, p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid., April 14, 1888, p. 2; June 9, 1888, p. 2; and July 7, 1888, p. 2.

1888
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tion. If Tabor reopened the mines and if the Denver and Rio Grande completed the branch to Ashcroft, the camp's success was assured. The price of bar silver went down to \$.91 per ounce the first week of June, the lowest price ever reached at the time. Lead also followed suit and dropped to \$3.90 per 100 pounds. Ashcroft's chance for renewed success was slowly waning.¹⁵

In an effort to convince the Denver and Rio Grande that a branch line was profitable, mining activity in the Ashcroft area was stepped up. Mines such as the Unicorn which had not been worked for several seasons were reopened. Efforts were redoubled to convince investors that Ashcroft was the area in which to make money. Many claims were surveyed for patents; others were eligible for patenting, but the owners were unable to raise the necessary funds. Work went on in such places as Brilliant Hill and Spar Hill on the west side of Castle Creek near the town. Gold, silver, copper, lead and iron deposits were found. The Morning Star on Brilliant Hill contained considerable high grade ore. The Mineral Wonder contained spar and carbonates, assaying twenty to fifty ounces of silver and a fair percentage in lead. Between these two lodes was the Columbia which contained a large body of carbonate ore and occasional pockets of high grade chlorides; gold was also extracted from the ore. The Spar mine was appropriately located on Spar Hill. Its ore was different than any other found in the district according to reports. The copper found was capable of being cheaply concentrated into a marketable grade of copper ore.¹⁶

The Yellow Boy adjoining the Montezuma on Slate Mountain, the Cumberland and Silver King on Brush Creek, the Mazeppa on Poverty Flat and the

¹⁵Ibid., May 12, 1888, p. 2; and June 9, 1888, p. 2.

¹⁶Ibid., June 30, 1888, p. 2; and July 7, 1888, p. 2.

Dreadnaught in Traveler's Gulch were a few of the many mines that seemed to uncover high grade ore during the season. As usual with more development the high grade ore was found to be only pockets and not continuous veins. The majority of claims of Silver Mountain were owned by poor men who could not develop their workings as completely as the Express group. Mineral was present, but so were water problems. Silver Mountain was purported to be a "wealthy man's nest egg" if he invested in the area. The boosters of the area stressed the fact that the song of the Rocky Mountain Canary echoed from every gulch while the frequent blasts of giant powder silenced the shrill whistle of the woodchuck and the plaintive bark of the cony. It was also pointed out that the summer tourist who camped near timberline could enjoy the novelty of gathering a snowball with one hand and a bouquet of violets with the other. Travel to Ashcroft increased daily; the Ashcroft stage did a paying business during the summer of 1888. One item that was not emphasized that season was the tri-weekly mail service. Boosters were afraid that if this were widely known, it might frighten investors especially if the investors were to find out that Ashcroft had once had daily mail service.¹⁷

South of Spar Hill and west of Silver Mountain rose the rugged slopes of Slate Mountain. The mountain consists of a high, narrow ridge rising from 500 to 2,000 feet above timberline. Beginning in high, abrupt cliffs and ledges at the mouth of Pine Creek and running in a southerly direction nearly three miles, then turning at almost right angles at the mouth of Montezuma Gulch and running in a westerly direction for over two miles, it merges into the West Castle Divide near the base of Castle Peak. On this

¹⁷Ibid., June 30, 1888, p. 2; July 7, 1888, p. 2; and July 14, 1888, p. 2.

mountain were located some of the oldest and best known mining properties in the district. Geologically nearly all of the rocks of different periods and formations can be found on its flanks and crest. A vein often traversed several different formations within the length of a single claim. Each rock carried a different kind of ore, therefore, pockets of high grade copper ore and larger bodies of lower grade lead ores in combination with iron sulphides and gold were sometimes found within a few feet of each other in the same claim. The whole mountain seemed to be covered with a network of mineralized veins running in every direction. The strongest veins ran east and west with a dip of from forty five to ninety degrees so that on the part of the mountain running north and south, the veins ran across it. On the western end they ran with its general course.¹⁸

A few of the more prominent properties on Slate Mountain worked during the 1888 season were the Traynor located on the northern slope near the level of Pine Creek, the Dauntless an extension of the Traynor, and the Skull group above the Traynor on the backbone of the ridge and running down part way on each side. The Traynor and Dauntless had streaks and pockets of galena and copper showing wire silver and assaying as high as 1,100 ounces. Three of the seven claims in the Skull group were productive. The Creedmore showed a ten-foot vein of iron, calspar and quartz carrying pockets of sulphurets assaying 7,000 ounces. The Traveler adjoining the Creedmore showed a fifteen inch pay streak of 100 ounces of silver and sixty per cent lead. A continuous streak of fine grained galena assaying 400 ounces was located in the Pan-Handle. On the eastern slope of Slate Mountain below the Skull group was the Sedalia group. The

¹⁸Ibid., July 21, 1888, p. 2.

Sedalia and Burton lodes showed considerable bodies of lead ore with occasional streaks and pockets of rich ore assaying from 500 to 800 ounces of silver and from a trace to one-half ounce gold. Other claims on the mountain such as the Little Paulina south of the Sedalia group and the Wichita east of the Montezuma showed large bodies of lead ore that were too low grade to ship unless and until the railroad got to Ashcroft. All of the claims on Slate Mountain were above timberline. Four miles of rough trail to the nearest wagon road meant that only high grade ore was shipped during the season. Many prospects would have been paying mines assuring the permanent success of Ashcroft had a railroad been running into the camp.¹⁹

The claims on Dreadnaught hill, a spur running out from the eastern base of Castle Peak, were not developed enough in 1888 to prove their extent and value. Mineralization in the area consisted of pockets of exceedingly rich ore. A specimen from the area gave returns of 95 ounces gold and 700 ounces silver. On the northern slope of the hill in Montezuma gulch and on the southern slope of the hill in Traveler's gulch high grade ore was found and profitably shipped. In August a few capitalists journeyed to Ashcroft to examine mining property which buoyed the spirits of the hard working miners. Pearl Basin otherwise known as "Poverty Flat" was one area in which financial help was needed. All the prospects in the basin were owned by poor men who could not afford to do extensive development work. The eastern half of the three square mile region is within the iron belt and a major part of it is covered by enormous beds of slide from ten to one hundred feet deep. The western half which consists of a number of parks, shows a series of ledges and bluffs crossed by a group

¹⁹Ibid.

of parallel east and west fissure veins. Those veins nearest the iron belt showed low grade lead and iron like the Iron, Orion, Chippie and Mayflower lodes. Those veins farthest away from the belt, such as the Pecos, Esmeraldo, Copper Chief and Brooklyn lodes, showed carbonate and gray copper with the galena. Twenty eight samples taken across a two-foot body of ore in the Pecos gave an average of twenty six and one-half per cent lead, twenty ounces silver and a trace of gold. In the Brooklyn a streak of talc on the foot wall assayed eighty six ounces silver and six tenths of an ounce gold. The Copper Chief in an open cut showed gray copper that assayed 400 ounces silver. The owners were hopeful that one or two pay mines could be opened up before the end of the season.²⁰

The last week of August, 1888, the owners of the Dreadnaught lode on Dreadnaught hill shipped 120 sacks of ore to the Rust Sampler in Aspen. At the head of Pine Creek, James Coughlin unearthed 140 to 182 ounce mineral and work was again started on the Little Brittain on Conundrum Mountain, the Catalpa in Traveler's Gulch and the Mæzeppa in Pearl Basin. Sam Babbitt announced in September that he secured a lease on the Montezuma dump. A large train of jacks was used to pack the ore from the dump to Aspen. In mid-November, the Express group management packed \$5,000 worth of supplies to the mine on Silver Mountain so that the newly completed tunnel could be connected to the incline. The expense was covered by a strike of good mineral which was uncovered the previous month. In December the Express group was still working twelve men and uncovering large amounts of lead ore. The Pecos Mining and Milling Company in Pearl Basin worked its lode in December. A streak of iron and copper assaying

²⁰*ibid.*, July 28, 1888, p. 2; August 4, 1888, p. 2; and August 11, 1888, p. 2.

seven to twenty ounces of silver and \$6.00 in gold and a streak of galena ore from six inches to two feet thick running forty five per cent lead and twenty ounces of silver was mined in the first week of December.²¹

In November an interesting news item appeared in the Sun. The item succinctly summarized the town life of Ashcroft at that time of the year.

Ashcroft has a population at the present time of seventy people. At the election seventeen votes were cast. There are four married and two unmarried ladies in the camp. There is one Bible and that is owned by Mr. Parker who leads the Sunday prayer meetings. The stage plies between Ashcroft and Aspen three times each week.²²

Through the 1888 season mine owners exhibited a bona fide intention to work their properties so that the Denver and Rio Grande rail connection would be made. The rail connection was not made. It is highly probable that the Denver and Rio Grande officials were unable to justify the expenditures necessary to construct the branch and were unwilling to take an economic loss. In June, 1889, the Pitkin County Railroad Company was incorporated by Horace Tabor and six Denver associates. The proposed line was to be built from Aspen to Tourtelotte Park, Richmond Hill and Ashcroft. Plans did not specify how the line would be constructed from Aspen at 8,000 feet to Tourtelotte Park at 10,500 feet or whether the line would go around the 11,400 foot ridge of Richmond Hill to reach Ashcroft at 9,500 feet. According to Robert Ormes in his book Railroads and the Rockies, the line would have been feasible if it was built as a giant switchback, running first up Castle Creek to Ashcroft and then back on an

²¹Ibid., August 25, 1888, p. 2; September 15, 1888, p. 2; October 13, 1888, p. 2; November 17, 1888, p. 2; and December 15, 1888, p. 2.

²²Ibid., November 17, 1888, p. 2.

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1888 ✓

ascending line to Tourtelotte Park.²³

In August that same year the Aspen and Ashcroft Railroad Company was incorporated to locate, construct, operate and maintain a single or double track railroad, telegraph and telephone line from Aspen to Tourtelotte Park, Richmond Hill and Ashcroft, together with such extensions, branches and side tracks as the business might demand. Directors for the first year were Ira W. Pendleton, L. M. Babcock, J. T. Cornforth, E. S. Kassler, John Dougherty, J. Sanford Betts, and D. J. Hutchinson. This company was simply a reincorporation of the Pitkin County Railroad Company with an increase of capital stock from \$300,000 to \$500,000. The Sun announced that the railroad, thirteen miles long, was to be built at once. The line was to run up Tourtelotte Park a mile and one-half south of Aspen and 2,000 feet higher in elevation than Aspen and then over or along Richmond Hill and then to Castle Creek and Ashcroft. The half-million dollars in capital stock never materialized. A third proposed railroad was incorporated in November, 1889. The Aspen and Southern Railroad planned to build along Castle Creek instead of Richmond Hill. This railroad also proved to be a paper railroad.²⁴

As a viable mining camp, Ashcroft was doomed, but the residents refused to give up. The Express group on Silver Mountain was still the center of attention for Ashcroft claim owners. More development work was done to prove this section of the Aspen lime belt than anywhere else in the district. Like claims in Tourtelotte Park, it contained large bodies of low grade mineral with occasional pockets of high grade with indications

²³Robert M. Ormes, Railroads and the Rockies. (Denver: Sage Books, 1963), p. 311.

²⁴Rocky Mountain Sun (Aspen), August 17, 1889, p. 2; Ormes, Railroads and the Rockies, pp. 73-4.

of opening up into big pay ore when they succeeded in getting under and beyond the break, a mass of short and blue lime. A large amount of money was expended on dead work, but the owners were certain that a few thousand dollars more would place the group on a paying basis. The Alleghany located between the Jim Blaine lode and Express group was worked by Fitzgerald and Long and showed a large iron and spar contact.²⁵

Quite a number of claims had considerable shipping ore on the dump and were only waiting for a railroad to become shippers. The Dreadnaught was reopened early in the season after being closed for the winter due to the danger of snow slides. This mine was a regular producer and shipper of high grade ore during the previous season with some ores assaying 1,300 ounces silver and \$60 in gold. Bailey and Carolson were taking out considerable lead ore from the Pecos on Poverty Flat in preparation for the railroad. Horace Tabor announced that work would not be resumed on his Ashcroft properties, the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma, until a railroad was built to Ashcroft. He expressed the opinion that a road would be built during the 1889 season. Tabor was one of the incorporators of the three paper railroads during 1889. In August the Montezuma proved to be the only shipper in Ashcroft. The shipments were made by Sam Babbitt, lessee of the dump, who employed twelve to fifteen men throughout the season. Optimistically the Sun editor stated, "The Ashcroft people can rest easy, however, as a railroad is pushing in their direction."²⁶ He might have more truthfully told the Ashcroft people to rest in peace since a railroad never got to Ashcroft.

²⁵Rocky Mountain Sun (Aspen), March 30, 1889, p. 2.

²⁶Ibid., March 30, 1889, p. 2; June 8, 1889, p. 2; and August 10, 1889, p. 2.

Ashcroft, still unaware that a railroad would never reach the camp, experienced better times during the winter of 1889-1890. Buoyed by plans of the proposed railroad incorporated by Tabor, the Cleveland, Express, Silver King and Elmira lodes continued to work. James Fitzpatrick, working the Tom Hendricks, uncovered a large body of lead. Ashcroft was capable of being a large producer of lead ores if means of marketing her ores were available. Aspenites were again reminded by the Sun editor that Aspen produced only dry ores and Ashcroft had large bodies of lead ore in connection with silver. Because of the good demand for lead ores, Aspenites were encouraged to do all they could to assure the building of a railroad to Ashcroft. The average price of silver for the week ending Friday, January 17, was ninety seven cents, opening at ninety six and one-half and closing at ninety seven and five eighths. The average price of lead for the same period was \$3.80, opening and closing at \$3.80. The above quotations showed a marked advance in the price of silver, having reached a higher point than had been quoted for two years. In lead there was a slight decline of five cents on 100 pounds.²⁷

In February an important strike of valuable ore was reported from the Express group. The ore was said to run ten ounces in silver and from sixty to seventy per cent in copper. The Express group reduced its force to four men in April due to the heavy snow and the difficulty of getting in supplies. The Cleveland reduced its force to three men for the same reasons. Four men worked on the Puzzler below Ashcroft. Lipps and Dawson cut a four-foot body of heavy lead ore on the two hundred foot level. The same chute was cut on the one hundred foot level which proved up a large body of ore low in silver, but running as high as seventy per cent lead.

²⁷Ibid., January 11, 1890, p. 2; and January 18, 1890, p. 2.

A large body of mineral was unearthed on the Mazeppa iron lode running sixty seven per cent iron and five ounces silver. H. J. Russell working his Big Four group on Cement Creek obtained ore low grade in silver, but running heavy in lead. It paid \$60 per ton. Ore prices advanced by September, 1890. Silver sold at \$1.15 1/2, copper at \$16.75 and lead at \$5.07 1/2. It must have been extremely frustrating to the denizens of Ashcroft that they did not have a railroad.²⁸

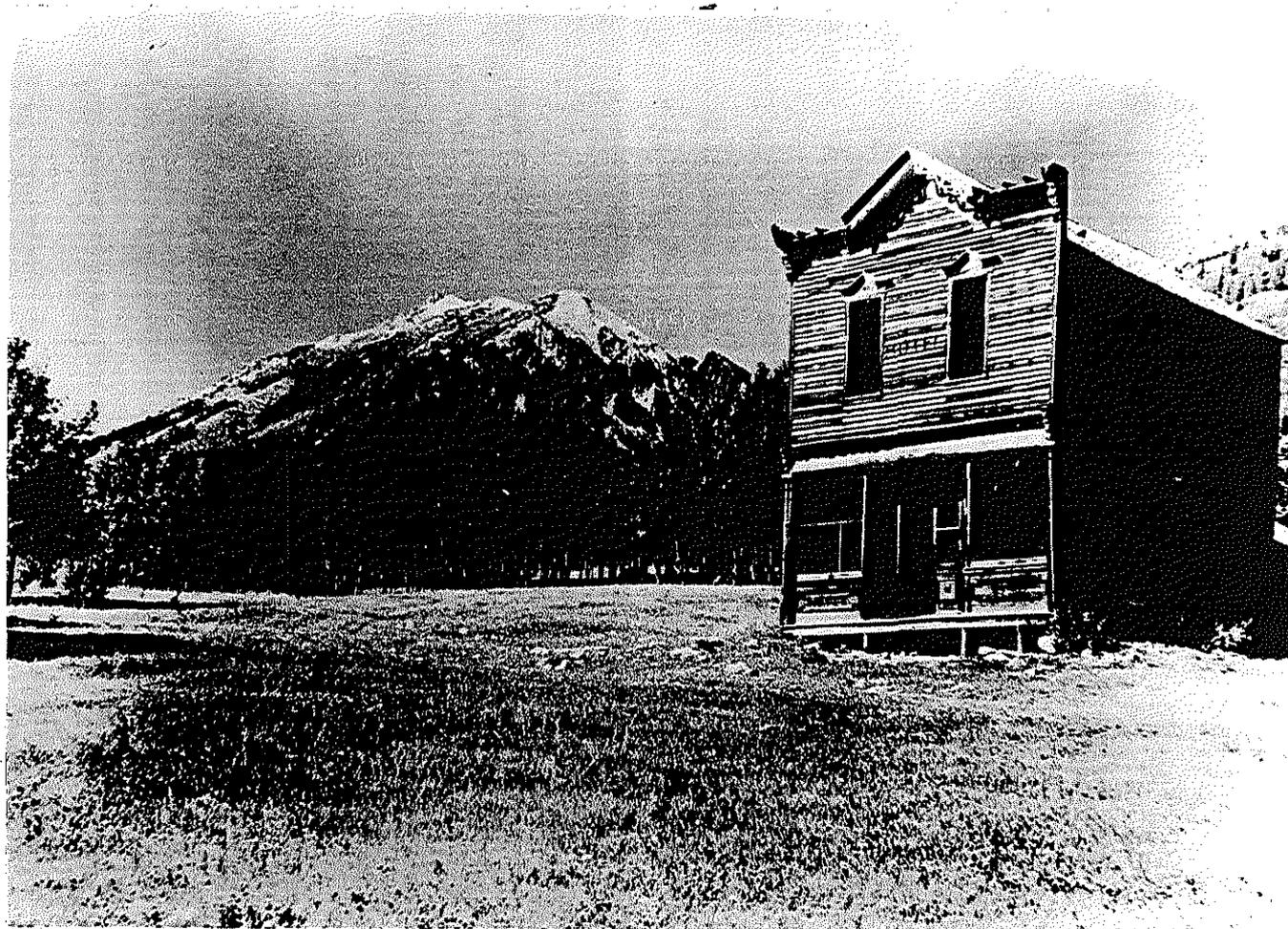
During 1891 two major claims were in the news. The Gold and Silver Express Mining Company increased its capitalization to \$3,000,000. Purchases of the Atlanta, Magnolia, Silver King, St. Louis, Silver Bell, Little Gertrude and Washington claims made a total of seventeen patented claims owned by the company. The company's main tunnel on Silver Mountain was in 1,700 feet. Indications were strong that mineral was in the immediate proximity. It was again predicted that the Express group would in the near future take a place among the famous bonanzas which made the name of Pitkin County known the world over. M. H. McLaughlin perfected arrangements to work through the winter of 1891-92 on the Yellow Boy group

of mines on Slate Mountain, adjoining the Montezuma. Local lore had it that the Yellow Boy was named for the Chinese cook at a local bordello. He reportedly had an argument with the Madam. She was jealous of his popularity as a cook and thought the men of the camp were visiting her establishment only for the Chinese cooking. The Chinese cook ended the argument by throwing a meat cleaver at the Madam and then headed for the hills. It was the cook who is said to have originally located the Yellow Boy Claim. McLaughlin planned to run a tunnel from the north side of

²⁸Ibid., February 8, 1890, p. 3; April 5, 1890, p. 2; September 13, 1890, p. 2; and September 20, 1890, p. 2.

local lore but some tales

*"Yellow Boy" was a
the origin of a mine
w/ cleaver*



Hotel View, the bordello with the Chinese Cook (Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

Slate Mountain at a point opposite the Montezuma tunnel. If McLaughlin was not disappointed in the tunnel he planned to join with the Montezuma people during the 1892 season to build a tram down Pine gulch to Castle Creek. Further information on the Yellow Boy is lost to history.²⁹

Very little information is available on Ashcroft's history from 1891 until the turn of the century since the Aspen newspapers did not have an Ashcroft correspondent. In 1894 it was reported that while the drop in the price of silver caused the total or partial suspension of mining activity in the Aspen and Ashcroft districts, the Tam O'Shanter and Express lodes continued to work without interruption, but with reduced forces. The Tam O'Shanter employed twenty men to break ore and sort it into bins and workings. The ore was held for a better price and to save transportation charges. If silver were at a legitimate price the Tam O'Shanter would have been a bonanza according to the report. Although the price of silver was not stated the report concluded that fifty ounces of high grade ore would not pay the expenses of mining, sorting and transportation. The Express group was working a large body of mineralized spurs. The ore was likewise being stored; a sample of the ore assayed as high as sixty per cent copper, forty to seventy five ounces silver and several dollars in gold. Colorado Fuel and Iron made preparations to develop the Cooper Camp iron mine. Hematite iron over one hundred feet thick was present. The ore averaged seventy two per cent iron and four ounces silver to the ton. The company stated that the iron ore available at Cooper's Camp was the best quality of iron ore they owned, but that it was unmarketable since

²⁹Ibid., August 29, 1891, p. 3; and October 17, 1891, p. 3; Stuart Mace, private interview held at Ashcroft, Colorado, June 8, 1975.

no railroad facilities were available.³⁰

One other brief news item pertaining to Ashcroft appeared in 1899. In February of that year it was reported that J. J. Reiner arrived in Aspen on snow shoes to obtain supplies after being snowed in for two months. He reported that a party of five men were working the Express group. They were snowbound, but had provisions to last for weeks. Dan McArthur, postmaster of Ashcroft and its only resident during the winter of 1898-99, stayed by the town. He was isolated from the rest of the world until about June 1, 1899.³¹

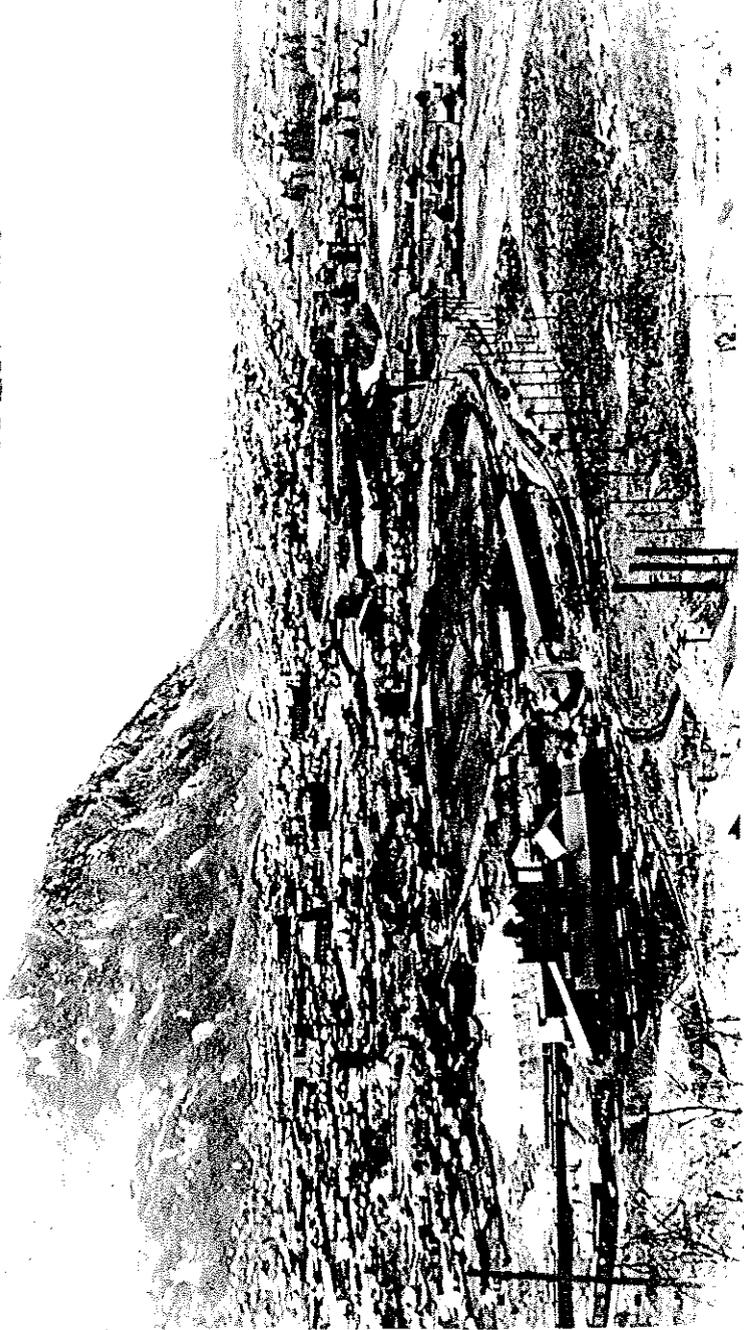
A report from the Colorado Bureau of Mines for 1897 listed the mining production of Pitkin County. Whether Ashcroft mines produced any of the mineral is unknown. In 1897 gold sold at \$20.67 per ounce. Pitkin County produced 7,955 ounces for a total of \$164,429.85. The silver price was \$.5965 per ounce. Pitkin County received \$2,743,867.79 for its production of 4,599,946 ounces. Copper sold at \$.105 per pound. For the 8,360 pounds produced, Pitkin County received \$877.80. Production of lead yielded 4,456,478 pounds. Each 100 pounds sold at \$3.38 for a total of \$150,628.96. Pitkin County's total production was valued at \$3,059,-804.40. The Bureau of Mines report also stated that county records showed 12,680 lode claims, 265 placer claims, 44 mill sites, 113 tunnel sites, 1,089 patented lode claims, 19 patented mill sites and 26 patented placer claims all duly registered and recorded. During 1897 an average of 1,242 men were employed and 196 mines and prospects were actively at work.³²

³⁰Rocky Mountain News (Denver), April 21, 1894, p. 2.

³¹Aspen Times, February 28, 1899, p. 5.

³²Colorado, Report of the State Bureau of Mines for the Year 1897, pp. 95-6.

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William Henry Jackson photo (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

Ashcroft's population varied from 1886 to 1900. From 1800 through 1893 the population was stabilized at fifty residents. In 1894 and 1895 the population rose to 125. One hundred fifty people made Ashcroft their home from 1896 to 1899; this population was, of course, only in residence during the summer months. In 1894 a new business was listed with the Colorado Business Directory. Long, Wheeler and Teuscher established the Ashcroft Trout Ponds and Hatchery. Whether it was a lucrative business is unknown, but it continued to be listed until 1913. After that date Ashcroft was no longer listed in the Directory.

From the time of Ashcroft's inception in 1880 until after the turn of the century, its residents persistently tried to overcome the natural and man-made obstacles which prevented the camp's success. Geologically the region should have contained rich mineral. It did, but only in infrequent, isolated pockets. Continuous veins of rich mineral were never found. The low grade ore that was available could not be profitably mined. The above-timberline location of the mines added to the natural obstacles that were confronted. Although above timberline, the veins were exposed and were almost entirely free of the debris and waste usually found below timberline the altitude and the climate of the region were detrimental to success. Due to the altitude, jack trains packed supplies and equipment in and ore out along steep, winding, narrow trails. The cost was prohibitive for the majority of the miners. As more depth was reached in the mines, water became a problem. An additional burden was the snow conditions of the region; each mining season lasted only four or five months.

Man-made obstacles also proved too difficult to surmount. The capital necessary for development of marginal mines was unobtainable. Inves-

tors were not willing to risk economic loss. Attempts to establish a smelter in Ashcroft failed and a cheap transportation system never materialized. The many proposed branch lines were never built because the railroads also were unwilling to risk economic loss. In 1893, changes in government policy ruined the silver market and all silver mining areas declined.

Although Ashcroft never overcame the natural and man-made obstacles which prevented its success, the camp struggled to remain alive. With the beginning of a new century Ashcroft's history changed. Technological progress increased the value of the zinc-blend ore of the region. New pursuits were also on the horizon. Ashcroft was to enter a new era to keep pace with the new century.

CHAPTER VIII

MEANDERING THROUGH THE VALLEY

The Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines were worked intermittently after 1884. Extracting the ore was not profitable due to the large quantities of zinc blend present in the ore and the mines were closed. At that time the presence of zinc blend meant "death" to many a mine. A heavy penalty was charged by the smelters if zinc was present. Not only was there no known method of separation, there also was no market for zinc. Although no record has been found, it is said that 2,000 tons of ore that were shipped to Pueblo in the early days were dumped into the Arkansas River due to an excess of zinc. The Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma owners were also dependent on pack animals to transport the ore from the mines; pack animals were not able to haul enough of the silver-lead ore at one time to make the operation profitable. By 1906 these problems were overcome. Railways and roads were built and/or improved reducing freight rates and the cost of supplies. More important, new metallurgical methods were discovered including a process of separating zinc from lead ore. Old methods were improved which also helped lower the cost of reduction and an increased demand for zinc created a much needed market.

When the Montezuma mine was reopened in 1906 the first job was to clean out the Montezuma tunnel. One of the men who helped clean the tunnel was Carroll H. Coberly who spent July and half of August on the butt end of a muck stick, shoveling loose material or muck into an ore car, then pushing the car out to the dump and going back for another load.

The tunnel gave good ventilation to the mine since it was bored 1,500 feet through the mountain, but the air currents also enabled solid ice to form almost to the top of the tunnel. The hard, miserable job of removing the ice meant that the men came out of the mine at night wet to their waists. The men slept in a tent set up on the floor of the old bunkhouse which was crushed by snow. Drying clothes around the stove was necessary after the day's work, but as Coberly pointed out, since the weather was warm the tent was kept open.¹

Once the ice was passed in the tunnel, the workers found that the timber was surprisingly in good condition. By mid-August the mine was opened for inspection and samples were taken of any ore that looked promising. High grade lead and silver were found 400 feet above the tunnel level running up to 400 pounds lead and 200 ounces silver per ton. A considerable amount of lead sulphide or galena and much less silver value was found at 300 feet. At 200 feet the ore was lead sulphide and contained a considerable amount of zinc. High grade ore was sacked and trammed to the outside. Poor ore was dumped into the stope, a level below the ore body and below the platform from which high grade was handled. The old stopes in a mine sometimes had ore of considerable value and could be milled to good profit.²

By fall Coberly was a jack whacker; no regular jack trains were in Ashcroft so Paul Caley, foreman of the mine, sent Coberly to Aspen to rent some jacks. Coberly rented fifteen jacks with pack saddles and Al Simcox taught him how to properly pack supplies and ore. Wagons hauled supplies to Ashcroft and ore for testing purposes to Aspen. It was

¹Coberly, "Ashcroft," pp. 81 and 88.

²Ibid., p. 89.

Coberly's job to haul ore from the mine to Ashcroft and supplies to the mine. Later he stated, "I enjoyed the packing experience, and came to think a lot of my jacks." Trying to coerce one jack to help up on the trail failed until Simcox suggested that Coberly load the jack heavy with rock and leave him standing on the trail if necessary. Returning from the mine Coberly found the jack standing as he had left him; the jack turned and followed the others to Ashcroft. How Coberly faired with the jack after this "lesson" is unknown.³

Observing wildlife was one way to pass the time while on the trail. Ground hogs termed by Coberly as "sassy little animals" sat up and barked and then darted in between rocks and disappeared if threatened. If necessary, their meat was eaten although it was quite greasy even if well-cooked. The grease was used to waterproof boots and was "better than any other kind of grease" for the purpose, according to Coberly. One prospector was known as "Ground Hog Joe" since he could afford no other kind of meat. Porcupines or "sliver pigs" were protected by law and could be killed only for food. Saddles and harness were never safe from the porcupines gnawing teeth. A very shy little animal frequently seen for a fleeting instant on Coberly's trip was the cony. Safe in its den in a rock-slide, it soon poked its nose above ground for a peek. Coberly described it as something like a cottontail rabbit with no ears or tail and much smaller. Snowshoe rabbits, some mink and martin, a few bears, occasionally a red fox and many mountain lions were seen in the high mountain valley. Pine grouse made a choice change in the winter diet and squirrels and chipmunks provided entertainment for the snow-bound miners.⁴

³Ibid., pp. 89-90.

⁴Ibid., pp. 84-86.

The scourge of the area was the trade rat, known also as a pack rat or mountain rat. These pesky creatures were an annoyance and a danger to the miner's livelihood. An entire box of candles taken by a rat was replaced with rocks; rocks did not provide a miner with the light necessary for mining so candle stealing was a serious matter. Six candles were necessary to provide light for one day of mining. The continuing battle with rats was partially solved by hanging the food shelves from the ceiling. Bacon, ham, flour and candles were placed on the hanging shelves. The rats were not attracted to food as much as they were attracted to bright objects. If objects were missing the miner knew he had an unwelcome visitor.⁵

The view from the Montezuma mine at an elevation of 13,000 feet was breathtaking. Coberly described the beauty of the fall season.

In the early fall when the snow began to fall, there was a background that made the rock spires assume proportions of grandeur. Their shape, with a color of red to dark brown, stood out against the snow filled valleys, making a silhouette of magnificent proportions. Always, after a storm, five miles away seemed just across the street, and the sky was a rich deep blue, impenetrable and yet transparent. A few fleecy clouds drifting lazily along couldn't be said to be here or beyond.

Castle Peak, Pearl Pass and Taylor Pass could each be seen from the mine. So, too, could the evidences of rock and snow slides be seen, ugly reminders that nature could not be controlled and was a constant danger to be reckoned with. The view was considered by some as one of the wonders of the world.⁶

Plans were started for a mill in 1907. That summer Coberly was the assayer and worked on the mill. The mining superintendent was a mining

⁵Ibid., p. 85.

⁶Ibid., pp. 86-88.

engineer from the copper mines in Michigan. Coberly characterized him as being extremely domineering and either could not or did not wish to recall his name. The mill site was chosen to be at the old "Transfer" point four miles above Ashcroft rather than at the mouth of Pine Creek as the old timers advised. The superintendent, uninitiated in the heavy snowfall of the Rockies, refused to listen to the warning of snow slides. The "Transfer," at the junction of the Pearl Pass and Montezuma roads, had at one time been known as "Jack Town" since 200 to 300 jacks were kept there to haul ore from the mines. Two hundred fifty thousand dollars was raised by the mining company and all the machinery was ordered and hauled to the mill site although not much construction work was done. In October the snowfall scared the superintendent forcing him to close the mine and go to California. By that time the company was broke anyway.⁷

One man took over the property on lease although Coberly again did not name the man. Bert Channing, a mining engineer, was hired as superintendent and according to Coberly he knew what he was doing. Coberly continued to work in the completed assay office where he kept busy assessing the worth of ore samples. At Christmas time the company decided to shut down for the winter; there was five feet of snow on the level necessitating the use of snow sleds and snow shoes. A man and his wife were waiting for Channing when he arrived in Aspen. The man had been hired by the owners to act as the watchman for the winter. Talk did not persuade them to stay in Aspen; they insisted on being taken to the mill. It took two days to reach the mill site on sleds, skis and snow shoes. Coberly did not mention the man and his wife again so it is not known if they

⁷Ibid., pp. 90-91.

stayed at the mill the rest of the winter.⁸

Channing died during the winter and Coberly, since he knew what Channing had planned for the mine, was made superintendent. He held the position for five years. During his first season as superintendent, the mill and tramway were completed. In 1907 when W. Weston inspected the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines, his lengthy report was quite favorable in terms of future ore production. According to Weston 40,000 tons of ore were available including what was on the dump. With strictly economical extraction and scientific and careful mill treatment, Weston estimated that a profit of \$10.00 per ton or \$400,000 profit could be realized. The ore available could keep the mill running at its 100 tons daily capacity for four years paying a profit of \$125,000 per annum. A conservative estimate for the working costs of the mill per ton were \$4.00 for mining including conveying the ore to the mill, \$1.50 for milling, \$4.00 for the wagon haul to the railroad and from \$2.35 to \$3.00 for railroad freight. Weston was pleased with the surface improvements at the mine and praised the fact that the mill and general headquarters for the mine were in a well-timbered basin or park surrounded and sheltered by high peaks. The headquarters at an elevation of 10,500 feet was connected with the mines at an elevation of from 11,800 to 12,300 feet by a two mile long wagon road and the mill was connected to the mines by an overhead bucket or a Bleichart tram. Weston estimated the life of the mines to be at least twenty years, working only by tunnel methods.⁹

Weston evidently visited the mines in the summer and like the first

⁸Ibid., 91-93.

⁹Colorado, Bureau of Mines, Report on the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma Mines, Columbia Mining District, Pitkin County, Colorado, by W. Weston, (no page number available).

superintendent did not consider the altitude to be a deterrent to mining operations. Coberly had to deal with the first superintendent's incorrect decision on the mill site. A snowslide during the winter of 1907-08 took out one of the tram towers which was repaired the next summer. The following winter, slides destroyed the boarding house, blacksmith shop and two more tram towers. Operations were stopped. The mill was in the wrong place; if the old timers' advice had been heeded the mill would have been safe from snow slides at the mouth of Pine Creek. A good safe tram could have been built and a short tunnel driven. By 1916 the mines were abandoned in part due to a failure of human judgment.¹⁰

Coberly lived in the Ashcroft area for eight years. During that time a favorite meeting place for visitors and old timers was Dan McArthur's saloon. McArthur was also the mayor and postmaster. His most important job was running a weather bureau station and he kept meticulous records. The average reading of fresh snow was eighteen feet a year. Temperature readings were taken three times each day, at 6:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, and 6:00 p.m. McArthur faithfully performed this service without pay from February 10, 1901 until August 11, 1923, four days before his death. With visitors and residents alike, McArthur's saloon was popular because of an old cylinder phonograph. Visitors brought records, especially dance and comic records, for the enjoyment of all. Women as well as men were welcome in McArthur's saloon. Groups of picnickers from Aspen always stopped at the saloon and residents were always willing to join in the fun. McArthur ran a well-ordered saloon and never had any trouble. When he thought it was time to close, he did and everyone did as he desired. A visitor knew that if he wished to see a person in the locality, all he had to do was

Blue
Munro
Saloon

¹⁰Coberly, "Ashcroft," pp. 93-94.

wait; the person eventually appeared at McArthur's saloon.¹¹

Coberly also met Jack Leahy, Justice of the Peace, whose friends brought cases from Aspen for him to hear. Leahy gave a humorous speech at a state Democratic convention he attended. His man who had been the minority choice until Leahy's speech was elected. Jim Fitzpatrick and "Gauly" Smith were also residents while Coberly was there. Both of these men worked old mining claims. Fitzpatrick discovered a rich vein of ore and took out ore of considerable value before water forced him to quit. He decided to drive a tunnel low enough to drain the mine since he lacked the money necessary for pumping equipment. Refusing to take partners in with him, he worked alone for twenty years, but was unable to properly timber the tunnel by himself. When the tunnel caved in, he was very discouraged and died a short time after that. "Gauly" Smith owned a claim on Castle Peak which he worked two months every year. He said nothing about his claim and the trail was too long and steep for anyone to visit him.¹²

1906
There were seven buildings on Main Street in Ashcroft in 1906; two buildings on one side of the street and five on the other side. A few cabins scattered around and old foundations gave evidence that Ashcroft was once a prosperous town. Coberly characterized the men in town as good workers who kept their cabins spotlessly clean and orderly. One corner of each cabin was used as the "accumulation corner" for government bulletins, world almanacs, etc. The cabins, although small, made comfortable residences. Built of log with tight sheeting over the rafters and sod roofs and with windows which did not open, the cabins defied the winter blasts.

¹¹Ibid., p. 95.

¹²Ibid., pp. 97-98.

If air was needed, the door was opened for a short time. Wood for the cook stoves was gathered once a year; teams hired in Aspen hauled the cut logs to Ashcroft and the residents sawed and split the wood during the winter. Joe Sawyer, an old timer, related that Jack Leahy had a hole in his door through which a log was inserted. Leahy believed in saving his own energy when possible.¹³

Probably another Ashcroft embellishment

The cost of living in Coberly's estimation was about \$200 a year-- \$100 for food and \$50 for clothes. The most expensive items were the necessities of mining, candles and kerosene. Game was not plentiful, but trout was although the fish did not keep long. For meat there was plenty of ham, bacon and sowbelly. Usually a quarter of beef was also available. "Icicle George" Schafer, a former cook in the Klondike, made light bread, but the rest of the miners used sour dough almost exclusively. Granny Larson, the only woman in town, loved sour dough. Prices for the food purchased were reasonable. A side of beef was eight cents a pound, sugar and flour a dollar and a half for a hundred pounds; and Arbuckle's coffee sold for thirteen cents a pound. The coffee pot, the typical three foot high miner's variety, was not emptied until it was completely full of coffee grounds. Some used Gun Powder Tea in the same manner as others used coffee.¹⁴

Clothing was basic and utilitarian. Long-handled underwear, heavy in winter and light in summer, was never seen except through a rip or tear. Depending on the season, one, two or three pairs of overalls reaching to the waist and supported by bright suspenders, were worn. The pant

¹³Ibid., pp. 97, 102-103; Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975.

¹⁴Coberly, "Ashcroft," p. 103.

legs were stuffed into high top boots which reached the top of the calf of the leg. For traction, hobnails of different kinds were set into the soles of the boots in different patterns. The hobnails--round-headed nails, corrugated nails, sharp-pointed nails or big flat-pointed nails--had to be replaced every thirty days due to the sharp rock in the region. German socks and overshoes made of rubber kept the feet warm and dry in the winter. Blue flannel Army shirts were in great demand for every day wear with black sateen shirts favored for dress. Coats or jumpers of the same material as the overalls were used winter and summer. Canvas coats with sheepskin linings and collars that turned up to the top of the head were a necessity for winter as were cloth hats with ear flaps. In the summer the high altitude sun was warded off by felt hats with wide brims.¹⁵

Pneumonia was a constant danger at the altitude and every precaution possible was taken to avoid catching cold. One method which seemed to work for the miners was to warm themselves completely in front of a big fire after donning all the clothing they were going to wear. They were careful not to get too warm which would cause them to sweat before leaving the cabin. The teamsters insisted that they could go a long way on one heating. Coberly attested to the fact that they seldom caught cold.¹⁶

As superintendent of the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma mines, Coberly believed that it was his duty to watch out for his men, especially on pay day. Working every day of the week, including Sunday, a miner received two and one-half dollars a day and board. The mines kept chewing and smoking tobacco and some other items which could be charged to a miner's account. If he considered the mine to be a good, financially sound concern

¹⁵Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 102-03.



(left to right) Dan McArthur, Pete Larson and George Crawford (Courtesy of State Historical Society of Colorado)

the miner had the mine hold his monthly \$75.00 check until he could use the money. Travel was difficult in the winter and many times a miner waited until spring to draw his checks. Even in the summer he might hold back two or three checks before going on a spree. No wonder Coberly was concerned about his men. For a few of them, Coberly held their checks and paid their bills before releasing the rest of the money for a liquor and gambling spree.¹⁷

During Coberly's first summer in Ashcroft, he helped a man select a timberline meadow on Pearl Pass so that the man could study the habits of the mountain quail, otherwise known as the white tailed ptarmigan. Once the place was selected, the man refused Coberly's help; he was afraid Coberly's presence would prevent a proper study. Mounted mountain quails were later exhibited in the Denver Museum of Natural History as a consequence of this unnamed man's study. In 1906 Coberly also helped the game and fish department deposit ten cans of trout in Green Lake on Pine Creek. Green Lake, now known as Cathedral Lake, is just below timberline surrounded on three sides by majestic, steep mountains. Its fourth side is bounded by timber. Years later when Coberly made a survey from the Tam O'Shanter claim down to the lake, he saw many trout eighteen inches long. Len Corthell, an electrician on the Montezuma, was a real fisherman and tried without success to lure the fish with fly and hook. He did obtain fish, but only after getting so mad that he grabbed a pole and tried to hit the well-fed fish as they swam past him. He missed the fish but the jar of the pole stunned them and he was able to grab them with his hands. This to him was not fishing, but the men enjoyed the feast anyway. Corthell mentioned the big fish in Aspen and before long none were left to

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 98-100.



Aerial view of Cathedral Lake

tempt those who wished to fish.¹⁸

The mineral resource reports of the United States Bureau of Mines for the years 1906 through 1909 gave brief reports of the mining activities of the Tam O'Shanter-Montezuma Mining and Development Company. Plans in 1907 included the building of a water power plant, a concentrating mill and an aerial tramway from the mine to the mill, a distance of one and one-eighth miles. The construction was completed in 1908. The company concentrated on developing the mine in 1909 and made no shipment of ore. In 1916 the Colorado Bureau of Mines reported the content of Montezuma ore as twenty-one ounces silver, thirty per cent lead, fifteen per cent zinc and ten per cent iron for each of the twenty-five tons produced. The cost of surface improvements for the year was \$1,000. A five hundred foot drift built at a cost of \$12.00 per foot and a one hundred foot crosscut at \$12.00 per foot were completed that year.¹⁹

No further reports were made to the Colorado Bureau of Mines until 1906. At that time the owner of the Tam O'Shanter was listed as the Ashcroft Mining Company, Bill Tagert of Aspen, president and manager. The lessee of the property was Byron Rogers and Associates whose address was given as the Midland Savings Building, Denver. Emil Peterson was assistant manager and Blaine Bray was superintendent. The mine was opened by three tunnels; the main operating tunnel, five feet by seven feet and 1,200 feet long, was blocked by two or three cave ins which barred its complete

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 86, 100-01.

¹⁹U. S., Bureau of Mines, Mineral Resources of the United States for the Year 1906 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), p. 230; Mineral Resources, 1907 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 269; Mineral Resources, 1908 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), p. 394; Mineral Resources, 1909 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), p. 324; Colorado Bureau of Mines, "Report to the Bureau of Mines for the Year Ending November 30, 1916," (no page number available).

opening for work. The ore extracted was a sulphide carrying lead, zinc and copper with a small gold and silver content. Equipment in the mill had at one time included a crusher, two sets of rolls, one ball mill in which Norwegian pebbles were used for grinding, cone tanks, trommel screens, jigs and Wilfley tables. Remnants of the hydro-electric plant and one locomotive boiler in fair condition remained at the mill site.²⁰

In 1960 the owner of the Montezuma was given as Montezuma Industries Incorporated of Leadville and Aspen. Part time development and exploration work for silver, lead, zinc and copper was carried by four men. According to the inspector's report the Borealis Mining Company was the last operator of the mine until late 1958, although not on a production scale; the mine last operated on a production scale in 1915. No buildings were present in 1960. The operator's report listed the owners as Randell Sharpe, president and treasurer, Elmer Paustian, vice-president and manager and Tom Bennett, secretary. Production for the year was sixty tons at a value of \$30.00. The report did not specify whether \$30.00 was the total value or the value per ton. Operation of the mine was carried out by three men working 100 days for a total of 800 man-hours. After 1960 the mine was no longer worked.²¹

After 1900 Ashcroft entered a new era in its history. The few residents who struggled to maintain the town were not aware of this new era; they continued to mine always hoping that the elusive rich mineral was there. According to the Colorado Business Directory, Ashcroft's summer

²⁰Colorado Bureau of Mines, "Report to the Bureau of Mines," by R. F. Murray, State Mine Inspector for District 3, (no page numbers available).

²¹Colorado, Bureau of Mines, "Inspection Report to the Bureau of Mines, July 5, 1960," by John Doyle, State Mining Inspector District 3; "Operator's Annual Report for 1960," filed for record on January 4, 1961, (no page numbers available).

population slowly declined from one hundred residents in 1900 through 1906 to sixty residents in 1907 through 1913. In 1916 when Len Shoemaker first worked in Aspen as a forest ranger, nine men lived in Ashcroft. Peter Larson, Calvin Miller, William Lipps, Paddy Sweeney, Dan McArthur and Jack Leahy were the names that he remembered. All of these men were still mining, but with little success.²²

Gone were the days of jubilant celebration when Horace and Baby Doe Tabor visited Ashcroft although those days were still remembered with pleasure. Whenever Baby Doe came to town a 24-hour holiday was declared with all the drinks on Tabor. Tabor reportedly built two houses for Baby Doe to stay in when she visited Ashcroft; she was not happy with the first house, consequently, Tabor built a second one. The first house was built on a hill side and did not provide a suitable view of the Castle Creek Valley. Baby Doe had four servants and a stable of horses which enhanced the second location although she actually spent very little time in Ashcroft. The \$40,000 bungalow with its \$1,800 gold-leaf wall panels from Tiffany's which adorned the dining room was located in a meadow near the mouth of Pine Creek on the west side of Castle Creek. Gone also were the days when Jesse James supposedly visited Ashcroft. It was rumored that Jesse James' cousin, the sister of Bob Ford, married the proprietor of Ashcroft's best hotel. James, known as Mr. Howard or Mr. Sears, reportedly spent one winter in Ashcroft when "outside" was a little warm for him. The old timers who related the story considered James a "polished gentlemen,

²²Shoemaker, Roaring Fork Valley, p. 150.

1916
Residents
Baby Doe
Tabor
in Ashcroft

a nifty dresser, and a good poker hand.²³

By 1900 ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley discovered that the Castle Creek Valley was a good grazing ground. The portion of the valley between Kellogg and Ashcroft was especially suited for grazing since it contained a luxuriant growth of mountain grass or bunch grass. Every year ranchers drove cattle up to Kellogg and let them drift for the summer. The cattle did not drift too far up the hill sides because there was very little grass and it was a long distance to water. The ranchers usually combined their herds and occasionally hired one man to watch the cattle. An unofficial estimate of the number of cattle run in the valley each season was 4,000 head. After 1910, sheep roamed the hill sides and the high country. The arrangement between the cattlemen and sheepmen worked well as the sheepmen kept the sheep in the designated areas and did not disturb the cattle in the valley.²⁴

*Ranching
in
Ashcroft*

*Cattle
+
Sheep*

Due to the excessive number of cattle in the valley each season, overgrazing occurred. The native cover of the valley, bunch grass, survived only in piles of rock. In the late 1940's when Stuart Mace began his residence at Ashcroft 500 head of cattle roamed the valley. Three ranchers made an agreement with the White River National Forest officials to graze cattle only in the draws and upper meadows and not in the valley itself. One herder, known only as "Cowboy Bill," was hired to keep the cattle in the designated areas as stated in the Taylor grazing permit, but he did not. "Cowboy Bill" allowed the cattle to graze anywhere including the valley

²³Aspen Times, July 23, 1936, p. 2; Louisa Ward Arps, "Digging For Ashcroft," Trail and Timberline, July, 1946, p. 107. I have been unable to verify these stories through primary sources. The information given was based on stories related by the old timers and must be considered as hearsay. Ashcroft's best hotel was said to be the Pentland, but this cannot be verified.

²⁴Coberly, "Ashcroft," p. 101; Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975.

floor. The valley was again private property and neither the owner, Theodore S. "Ted" Ryan nor his caretaker, Stuart Mace, wanted the cattle in the valley. "Cowboy Bill" insisted that as long as the valley was not fenced, he was not obligated to keep the cattle out of the valley. The valley was not fenced because Superintendent Leighou of the White River Forest requested that the valley be left open. Leighou felt that fences destroyed the beauty of the valley. The disagreement led to a "face off" between Stuart Mace and "Cowboy Bill." "Cowboy Bill" acquiesced to Mace's wishes and kept the cattle in the draws and upper meadows. Mace continued to exert pressure on the Forest Service to control the cattle especially after "Cowboy Bill" was no longer capable of herding. The ranchers allowed the cattle to roam freely and did not hire another herder. The Forest Service reduced the number of cattle allowed by permit, but did not enforce the agreement to keep the cattle out of the valley. As long as the valley floor was not fenced and the cattle were not herded, restoration of the ground cover was not possible. A legal stock fence was erected in 1969 to protect the land. The same season the three ranchers sold their Taylor Act grazing permit to Edgar Stern. Stern ran cattle in the area for two seasons. Stern did not want to hire a herder and since the easy grazing area was fenced, he relinquished the grazing permit. The permit is no longer issued.²⁵

Although the post office was officially discontinued on November 30, 1912, Ashcroft was not without residents. Two residents who remained in Ashcroft until their deaths were Dan McArthur and Jack Leahy. For many years these men were the sole inhabitants of Ashcroft. After McArthur permanently closed his saloon, his cabin was still a favorite stopping

²⁵Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 29, 1975.

place for transient travelers. He had a second cabin which he rented to travelers, a convenience which many appreciated. His shaggy dog and a morning-glory horn gramophone (c. 1896) helped him pass the time when visitors were not present. In 1921 Len Shoemaker rented McArthur's cabin and heard many stories of the early days. McArthur played about 200 cylindrical records from his collection of 1,000 that evening. The Ashcroft area was a popular place for Colorado Mountain Club outings. In 1917 the Club's goal was to climb Castle Peak. One member, William L. Myatt, who did not reach the top, returned with Edmund Rogers in 1922 and succeeded in signing the Colorado Mountain Club register on the summit of the peak. Myatt arranged with the driver of a Model T to be waiting in Ashcroft at 5:00 p.m. for the return to Aspen. The Model T was not there when Myatt and Rogers reached Ashcroft. They enjoyed strong black tea, courtesy of Dan McArthur, upon their return, but he had no intention of putting them up for the night. Instead McArthur cranked and cranked his wall phone until the operator finally answered. The connection was poor, but after much gesticulating and whistling through his teeth, McArthur arranged for a Tin Lizzie to pick up "the fool mountain climbers whom he hoped never to see again."²⁶

Jack Leahy, one of the first as well as one of the last residents of Ashcroft, was a human paradox. He was a true pioneer of the Old West, a typical old prospector and one of the most highly educated men in the Rockies. Leahy was never bested in an argument. His mind was an archive of knowledge gleaned from reading. He had a tremendous facility of retention and recall. Leahy was the poet laureate of Ashcroft. His poems were

²⁶Shoemaker, Roaring Fork Valley, p. 150; William L. Myatt, "Castle In The Sky," Trail and Timberline, July, 1958, pp. 94-95.

descriptive of the bygone era and of the area in which he lived. Few of his poems survived his passing. Two he wrote which have been retained are "The Panorama Trail" and "How We Built a Church at Ashcroft."²⁷ Jack Leahy urged that the trail which begins at the end of Pine Creek above Ashcroft and continues up the creek to Cathedral Lake and Cathedral Peak up to, and over Electric Pass and on down to Conundrum Hot Springs in Conundrum Gulch be designated by the Forest Service as the Panorama Trail. One of his shorter poems was entitled "The Prospector."

When our grub pile's slim and scanty
 Not a dollar in the shanty,
 and our threadbare garments letting in daylight;
 The pay-streak still eluding,
 and barren dykes intruding,
 and we are chased by harsh collectors day and night;
 When our efforts lose their footing,
 Our pard's insults sure cutting
 and misfortune's cruel jeers and sneers are keen;
 From our Ashcroft habitation
 We behold bleak desolation
 When sear Autumn's gold's transformed to silver sheen.

Leahy helped earn a living by writing letters for the miners. For extra money he wrote the letters in verse.²⁸

In conjunction with Phil Harrington and Thomas Walsh, Leahy staked the Columbia lode in 1880 and led the movement to organize the Columbia Mining District. Leahy established a homestead north of town. Although he referred to his homestead as a ranch he had no animals and he did not work the soil. The land is patented and is now owned by Ted Ryan, a fellow Irishman. Leahy's round log cabin with squared corners is still standing and is to be restored at a future date. It is believed that the cabin was

²⁷These two poems are in the appendix.

²⁸Aspen Times, April 27, 1939, p. 2; Poem courtesy of the Aspen Historical Society.

built after 1883 for two reasons. The logs show evidence of burn and the roof is double boarded. In 1883 Joe Sawyer and his brother established a saw mill. Prior to 1883 the miners' cabins had sod roofs; when a cabin roof was converted to boards the rafters of the original sod roof remained. These rafters are not present in Leahy's cabin. Wood was needed in 1883 to shore up the mining shafts, but the United States government did not allow miners to cut timber for that purpose. A shister lawyer hired by the miners discovered that it was legal to cut burned timber to use in the mines. Consequently a group of miners set fire to one of the small draws on Ashcroft Mountain intending to burn only enough timber for their purposes. The fire got away from the miners and burned clear over the back side of Ashcroft Mountain to the great bowl, then up over Taylor Peak and down to the rock of Star Peak. Pitch timber is still in evidence from the burn due to the high elevation of the area.²⁹

*Ashcroft
Cabin*

Leahy's cabin was well built, but probably not by him. Leahy was a poet, not a carpenter. There are no windows on the cabin front which faces south due to the valley drafts. An overlay of battens was placed on the logs to protect the chinking and insure warmth. Inside, the walls were "papered" with linen, actually a sized cotton, and then calcimined. Calcimine is a white or tinted liquid containing zinc oxide, water, glue and coloring matter. To have calcimined linen adorning the walls of a cabin or business establishment was considered the ultimate of high society.³⁰

After the town's demise, Leahy lived in Ashcroft during the summer months. He did not wish to give up his cabin since he considered the Castle Creek Valley his valley and his view, but he no longer made a liv-

²⁹Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975.

³⁰Ibid.



Ashcroft, 1942. Jack Leahy's cabin in the foreground. (Courtesy of Ted Ryan and the Ashcroft Detachment)

ing in the valley. Since the people of Aspen knew that Leahy was starving, they played a game. Picnickers from Aspen always included at least three extra helpings for Leahy. As the wagons loaded with picnickers came up the old ore road, Leahy heard them. When the picnickers reached Ashcroft, they found Leahy walking along the road with a blown up paper bag in his hand, ostensibly on his way to have a picnic. Leahy always said he was just going to have a picnic by himself, but that it was more fun to picnic with others. Leahy was extremely proud and refused charity, but many Aspenites played the game as their form of aid to him. The Sullivan family of Aspen did more than play the game. One of the Sullivan brothers became a doctor and lived in Santa Cruz, California. One summer four years before Leahy's death, the doctor found Leahy suffering from malnutrition and old age. Dr. Sullivan assumed responsibility for Leahy and took him to Santa Cruz where a nurse was hired to care for him.³¹ 1935

Leahy was always vitally interested in community affairs. For many years he was Justice of the Peace in Ashcroft and considered himself the mayor of Ashcroft after the town's demise. He did not succeed in his candidacy for county judge or for state representative; each time he lost by a few votes. Leahy's keen sense of retention and recall was highly respected. Lawyers sought information from him to clear up legal matters pertaining to the titles of mining claims. Leahy firmly believed in the mining and recreational possibilities of the Ashcroft country. Three years before Leahy's death, plans for an alpine ski resort came into being, but Leahy died before the full recreational potential of Ashcroft was realized. The 81 year old pioneer who never lost faith in Ashcroft's potential wealth

³¹ Ibid.

died in Glenwood Springs on April 21, 1939.³²

Ryan & Fiske

Ashcroft's wealth lay not in its mineral, but rather in its snow, scenery and atmosphere. Theodore S. "Ted" Ryan was introduced to skiing in the 1920's. At that time cross-country touring on the Maple Leaf Trail in the Canadian Laurentians held his interest. In 1935 Ryan skied in Europe where he met William M. L. "Billy" Fiske, III, a student at Cambridge University. Fiske was captain of the victorious U. S. bobsled team in the Winter Olympics of 1932. Fiske, Ryan and a dozen others attended the 1936 Winter Olympics at Garmisch, Germany and wondered why ski slopes comparable to Europe's could not be found in the United States. If comparable ski slopes were found, they all vowed to pitch in and create an American St. Moritz. Fiske returned to Pasadena, California where he was introduced to T. J. Flynn, a die-hard promoter of the Aspen-Ashcroft area. Fiske was not interested in the silver mine that Flynn was trying to sell, but was interested in pictures of the area where the mine was located. The mountain area pictured seemed to be just what Fiske, Ryan and the others were looking for. Fiske decided to give the country a closer look.³³

Fiske and three companions, Paddy Green, Jack Heaton and Robert A. Rowan, hedge-hopped in a single-engine plane to Glenwood Springs landing at the golf course. Exploring in the Aspen and Ashcroft area for three days, they saw the open meadows of Little Annie Basin on Richmond Hill and the top of Mt. Hayden as well as Aspen Mountain. The Glenwood golf course took down the telephone lines and allowed the men to take off for California. Fiske called Ryan in New York and the first ski corporation in Colo-

³²Aspen Times, April 27, 1939, p. 2.

³³Lois Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," Colorful Colorado, January/February, 1973, pp. 23R and 26R; Ted Ryan, private interview held in Aspen, July 23, 1975.

rado was formed. The corporation, known as the Highland-Bavarian Corporation, acquired options on two properties flanking Aspen Mountain, the Tager Lake Ranch off the Independence Pass road near Difficult Creek and the Highland Ranch at the junction of Castle and Conundrum Creeks.³⁴

In October, 1936, twenty men were employed to build the Highland lodge, a building forty feet by seventy feet, which contained accommodations for sixteen people in the form of eight double-decker beds in two rooms and a large kitchen. The accommodations were available for serious skiers whom the corporation could enlist in developing a ski area. The architect was George Kauffman and the artist for the cheerful Bavarian figures under the eaves of the main building was Disney studio artist Jimmie Brodrero. A picture window looked up-valley to Ashcroft Mountain. Behind the lodge, a barn sheltered four horses and a sleigh and provided accommodations for the resident manager T. J. Flynn and the mountain experts imported from Europe.³⁵

Andre Roch, a noted mountaineer, ski enthusiast and engineer helped test the climatic and snow conditions of the area. Roch worked for the Swiss government in the Avalanche Detection and Control Bureau and had the experience to properly evaluate the proposed ski venture. Roch and his assistant, Gunther Langes, spent six months studying snow depths, snow quality, vertical drops, accessibility, and other pertinent characteristics. The corporation paid Roch \$125 per month for his expert advice. The men scouted the entire Aspen-Ashcroft area including the areas now known as Snowmass, Hunter's Creek and Ajax Mountain. Roch reported that

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵ Aspen Times, November 26, 1936, p. 1; Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," p. 28R; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.



(left to right) Andre Roch and Billy Fiske (Courtesy of Ted Ryan)

ski runs on Aspen Mountain could be superior to any in the United States, but if the corporation wanted a ski area that was superior to any area in Switzerland the mountains surrounding the town site of Ashcroft would provide such an area. The complex envisioned included Mount Hayden, the Cathedral Basin, the Pearl Pass area, Cooper Mountain, and the region past Taylor Peak to Italian Hill or Green Mountain. The conditions were perfect for a ski complex since the snow was dry and in places a gross vertical drop of 5,100 feet was possible. The proposed drop dwarfed any present-day ski area. Roch also recommended that a Zermatt-type hotel be built on a ridge below Mount Hayden and then a Swiss-type tram be built between Ashcroft and Mount Hayden.³⁶

The corporation preferred the Ashcroft valley to Aspen. Aspen was in a depressed condition, but in Ashcroft the corporation could plan a complete Alpine village if the land was acquired from its many absentee owners. The construction of a complete Alpine village was not possible in Aspen; it required the temporary, if not permanent, displacement of the Aspen residents and the too costly acquisition of land. The corporation knew that displacing the residents of Aspen would also cause resentment. Besides the corporation did not want to build an adequate ski area; they wanted to build a superior one.³⁷

It took time for the corporation to acquire the Ashcroft valley. During the interim the corporation centered their activity around the Highland-Bavarian Lodge and the Little Annie Basin on Richmond Hill. W. C. "Bill" Tagert, one of the early day mail carriers in Ashcroft, ran the

³⁶Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," p. 28R; Commentary with Ted Ryan, interview for radio station KSNO, March 19, 1975; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.

³⁷Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," p. 28R; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.

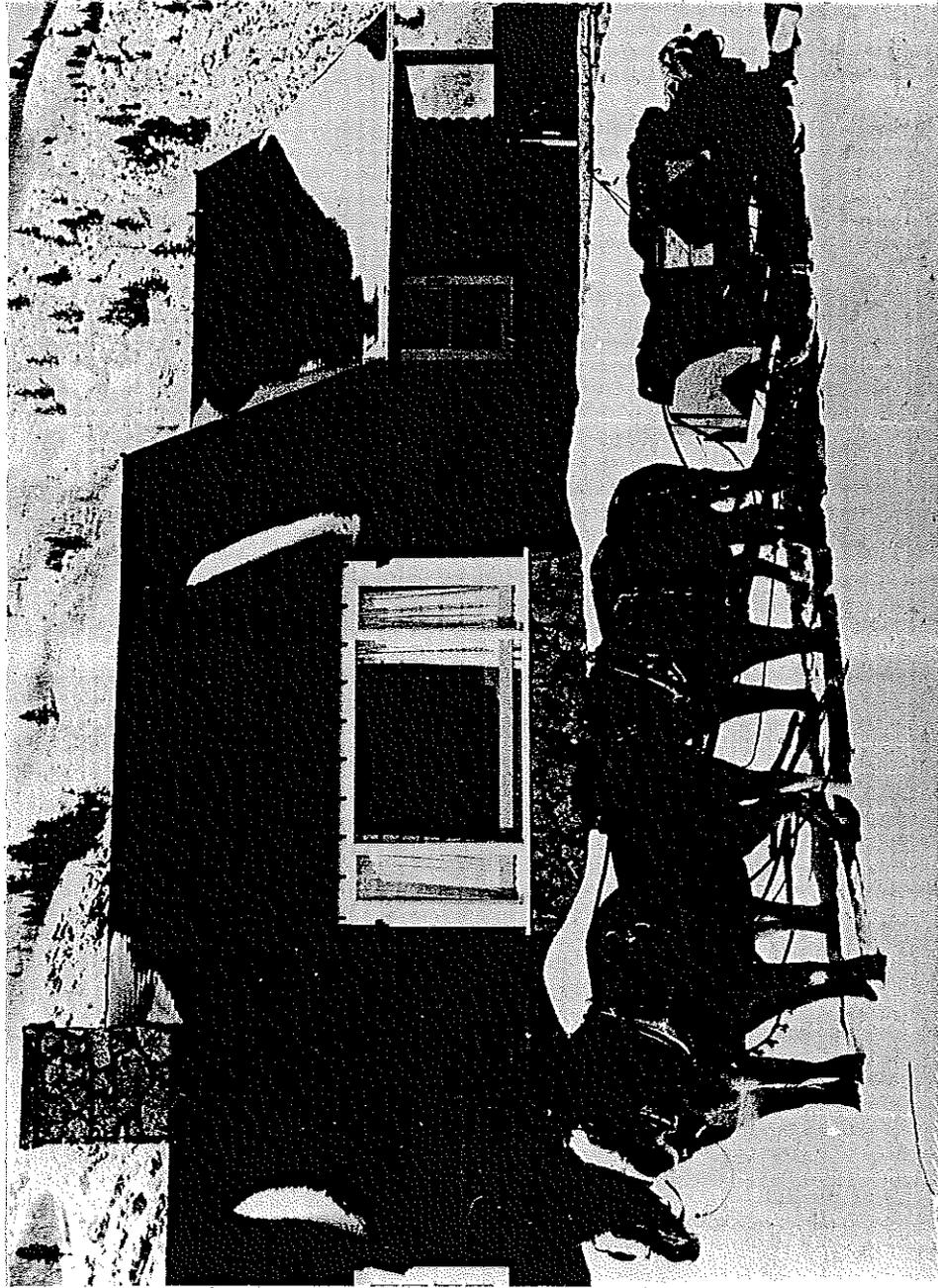
first ski lift, a sleigh pulled by four horses, up to the Little Annie Mine; each skier paid fifty cents, possibly the most inexpensive lift any skier has enjoyed before or since. Upon reaching the mine, the skier had two options. He could climb the slopes of Little Annie Basin and ski back to Highland or he could attach climbing skins made from seal skins to his skis, climb to the top of Richmond Hill and wind his way through Tourtelotte Park down to Aspen over hairpin wagon trails.³⁸

In December, 1936, the Highland-Bavarian Winter Sports Club was officially dedicated. Sixteen guests were accommodated at the \$10,000 lodge at a reasonable rate of \$7.00 a day. Andre Roch and Gunther Langes offered skiing lessons at \$3.00 for a private lesson and fifty cents for a group lesson if there were six or more in the class. Roch also taught a local shoe maker to make ski boots. On February 27, 1937, the first annual Winter Sports Carnival was held at the lodge under the direction of the Roaring Fork Winter Sports Club. Conditions were ideal with five to eight inches of new snow. Two hundred men, women and children enjoyed the afternoon. The adults used caution and controlled their speed, but the children "just let 'er fly" and did better than the adults. A carnival dance was held in the evening to award prizes to the participants. Andre Roch made the presentations and Gunther Langes entertained the 125 couples in attendance with his melodious accordion.³⁹

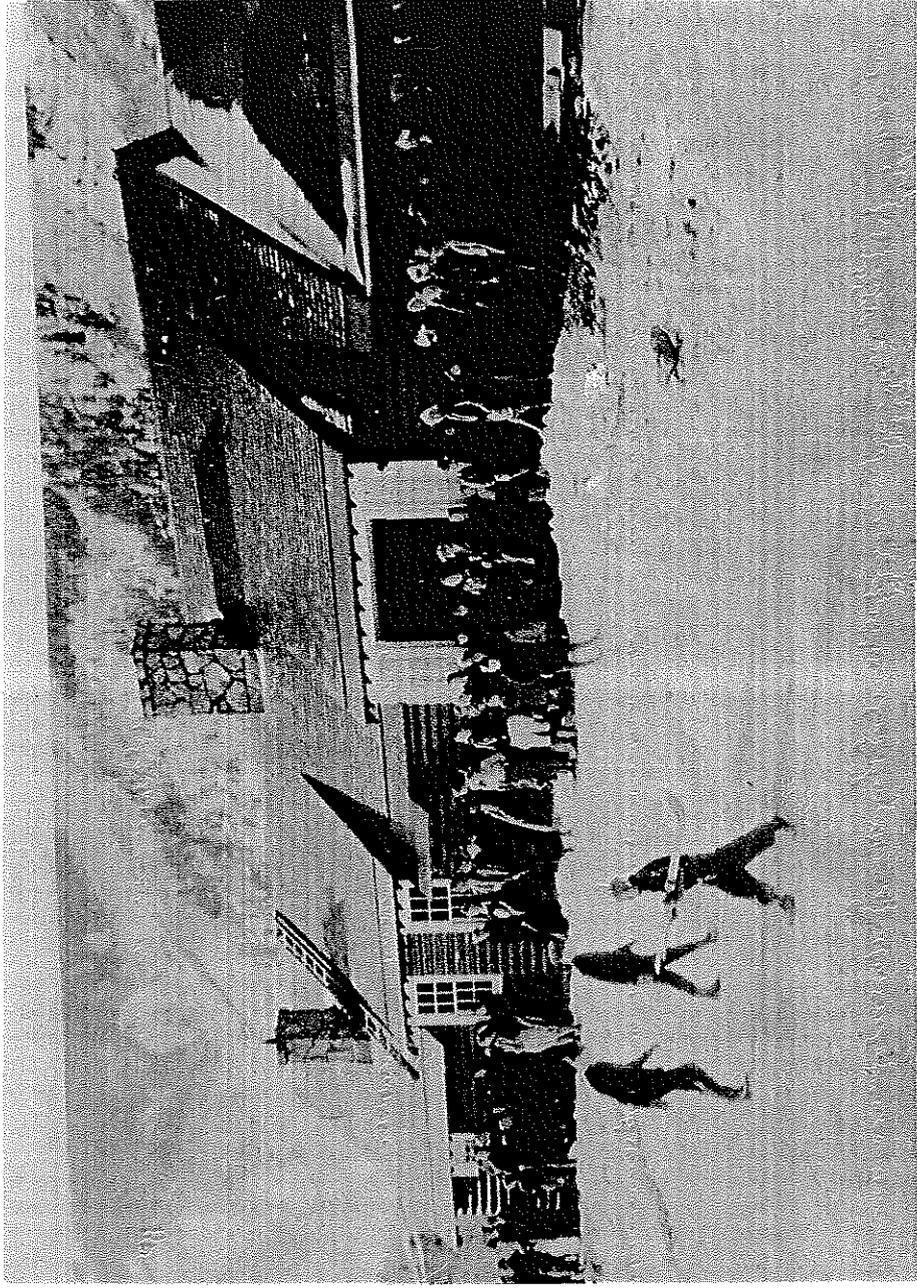
Members of the corporation such as Fiske, Ryan and Rowan, traveled the country trying to interest wealthy individuals and businesses in investing in the Highland-Bavarian development. Ryan ran the eastern head-

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Aspen Times, December 17, 1936, p. 1 and March 4, 1937, p. 1; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), December 12, 1936, p. 8; Glenwood Post, December 24, 1936, p. 1.



First ski lift in front of Highland-Bavarian Lodge (Courtesy of Ted Ryan)



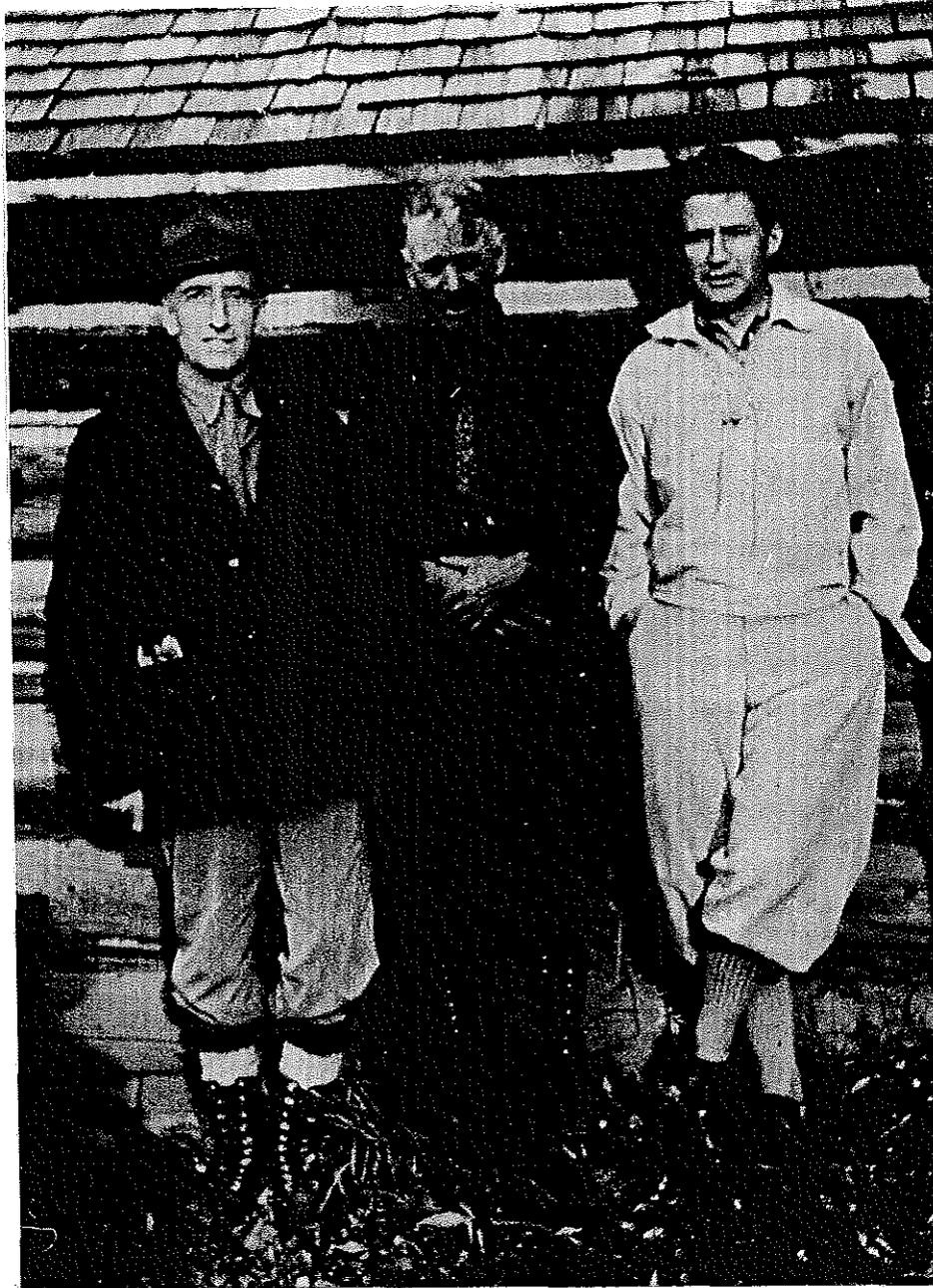
Winter Sports Carnival, February 27, 1937 (Courtesy of Ted Ryan)

quarters of the corporation in New York while Rowan ran the western headquarters in California where all the records for the corporation were kept. Potential investors included railroad men who might be enticed to improve the railroad into Aspen and to build hotels for ski enthusiasts. Not only were wealthy investors pursued, but also acknowledged skiers were pursued who could test the skiing. The Dartmouth ski team and a German ski team that was touring the United States were a few of the many who tested the skiing. In April, 1938, the Pitkin County Commissioners cancelled all the delinquent taxes on the town site of Ashcroft so that Charles F. Garlington, a representative of the Highland-Bavarian Corporation could receive a free and clear title to the land. The townsite became the property of the county in 1891 when the placer claim failed. In May, 1938, the State Treasurer Homer F. Bedford approved the action of the county commissioners. On February 26, 1940 Ashcroft was officially declared to be abandoned by a special session of district court and the townsite was turned over to the Highland-Bavarian Corporation.⁴⁰

*Ashcroft
declared
abandoned*

In 1939 Billy Fiske was called to Great Britain. He joined the Royal Air Force Defense of London Squadron 601 while still a student at Cambridge and was needed to help defend the island against Hitler. During the Battle of Britain, Fiske was mortally wounded over the English Channel but managed to land his Spitfire at an airfield south of London before he died. Fiske, the first American killed in action with the RAF in World War II, was honored with a plaque to his memory placed in St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Fiske's death placed a damper on the plans of the Highland-

⁴⁰Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975; Rocky Mountain News (Denver), May 8, 1938, p. 5; Denver Daily Record Stockman, May 11, 1938, p. 3; Colorado Springs Gazette and Telegraph, May 8, 1938, p. 2; Aspen Times, February 29, 1940, p. 2; Carbonate Weekly Chronicle, March 11, 1940, p. 2.



(left to right) T. J. Flynn, Bill Tagert and the coach of the Dartmouth ski team (Courtesy of Ted Ryan)

Bavarian Corporation which he headed, but the plans were not stopped completely.⁴¹

In April, 1940, T. J. Flynn, manager of the Highland-Bavarian lodge, publicized the benefits of the area and disclosed the corporation's plans. He reported that the scenery and recreational possibilities of the Elk Mountains were unsurpassed by even the European Alps. The slopes of Mount Hayden were gentle, the summit was round, and the sides were unobstructed by rocks or timber. The area was definitely ski or mountain climbing country for the expert or the amateur. The terrain of the old ghost town of Ashcroft, the center of the ski complex, was especially adaptable for motels, inns and villages to take care of the constantly growing volume of tourists; water and water power were also in abundance. The old town site was to be preserved. To reach the area, people were advised to take the new improved mountain road from Aspen to Ashcroft. Once the area was fully developed, a passenger tramway from Ashcroft to the summit of Hayden would provide the last link to the seventeen proposed ski runs. The altitude distance of the tramway was to be 4,000 feet, its linear distance, three and one-half miles. The purpose of the plan was to capitalize on an asset which had remained idle for half a century and to provide the means of economic rehabilitation for the people still living in Ashcroft. The method of development was to be unique. Only those who wished to settle and live in Ashcroft year round were welcomed. In order to give the area solidity and permanence, the corporation wanted people who would contribute to the region, not draw wealth away from it. Individual families would receive help to build homes and each would receive a plot to grow

⁴¹Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," p. 39R; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.

vegetables, raise a few chickens and keep a cow. For those who only visited the area, a variety of hotels and inns would be provided for every kind of pocketbook.⁴²

Roch's recommendation for a tram between Ashcroft and Mount Hayden was approved prior to the beginning of the war. American Steel and Wire estimated the cost for the tram at a million and a half dollars and the Colorado State Legislature created the Mount Hayden Tramway Commission to oversee its development. The Commission, made up of friends of the corporation, looked on the project with enthusiasm. The steel was made available to the corporation but although the United States was not yet at war the corporation decided that the recreational railroad was not to be built. To use precious steel to build the railroad did not help the war effort. Architectural planning for the Alpine village continued. In the summer of 1941, Ted Ryan and the architect, Elder Husted, debated which type of architectural style to use in the village. The lodge was done in the Bavarian style but that style was not as popular as it once was due to the war. Husted and Ryan's wife favored the old type log architecture of the Ashcroft area. The style not only preserved the past, but the log building effect was to be unique, a rarity in itself. The architectural decision had yet to be finalized when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese and all plans for the skiing complex were put aside.⁴³

Ryan immediately tried to join the service, but due to a crushed leg suffered in a skiing accident he was classified as 4-F. Eventually he joined the Office of ^{OSS} Strategic Services, a forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, and served on the Gold Coast, North Africa and Italy.

⁴²Aspen Times, April 25, 1940, p. 1.

⁴³Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.

Ryan in
OSS

Ryan also offered the U.S. Army use of the corporation's land for a dollar for the duration. He knew that Minot "Minnie" Dole was organizing the ski troops and felt that the Ashcroft valley provided a good place for the training. If elite ski troops from all over the United States used the valley and found it satisfactory, the Aspen-Ashcroft area would be well publicized after the war.⁴⁴

The Ashcroft Test Detachment from the First Battalion Reinforced, 87th Infantry, Mountain Regiment arrived in Ashcroft in August, 1942, from their Battalion headquarters at Fort Lewis, Washington. They used the Mount Ranier area for training before Ryan offered the Ashcroft valley. Officers of the Ashcroft Detachment were: First Lieutenant Robert Mc Mahon, administrative; First Lieutenant Ralph Lafferty, field operations; Second Lieutenant John Conarn, animals. The enlisted personnel of the all-volunteer unit consisted of twenty-five skier-mountaineers, twenty-five mule skimmers and ten service personnel. The men spent their training time hiking the valley, climbing the mountains, rappelling off the mountains and building bridges. Three of the bridges they built were a tepee bridge over Castle Creek at the beaver ponds, a bridge over Maroon Creek for jeeps and a foot bridge near Aspen. The Detachment also took time for public relations; they held an open house and demonstration for the residents of Aspen.⁴⁵

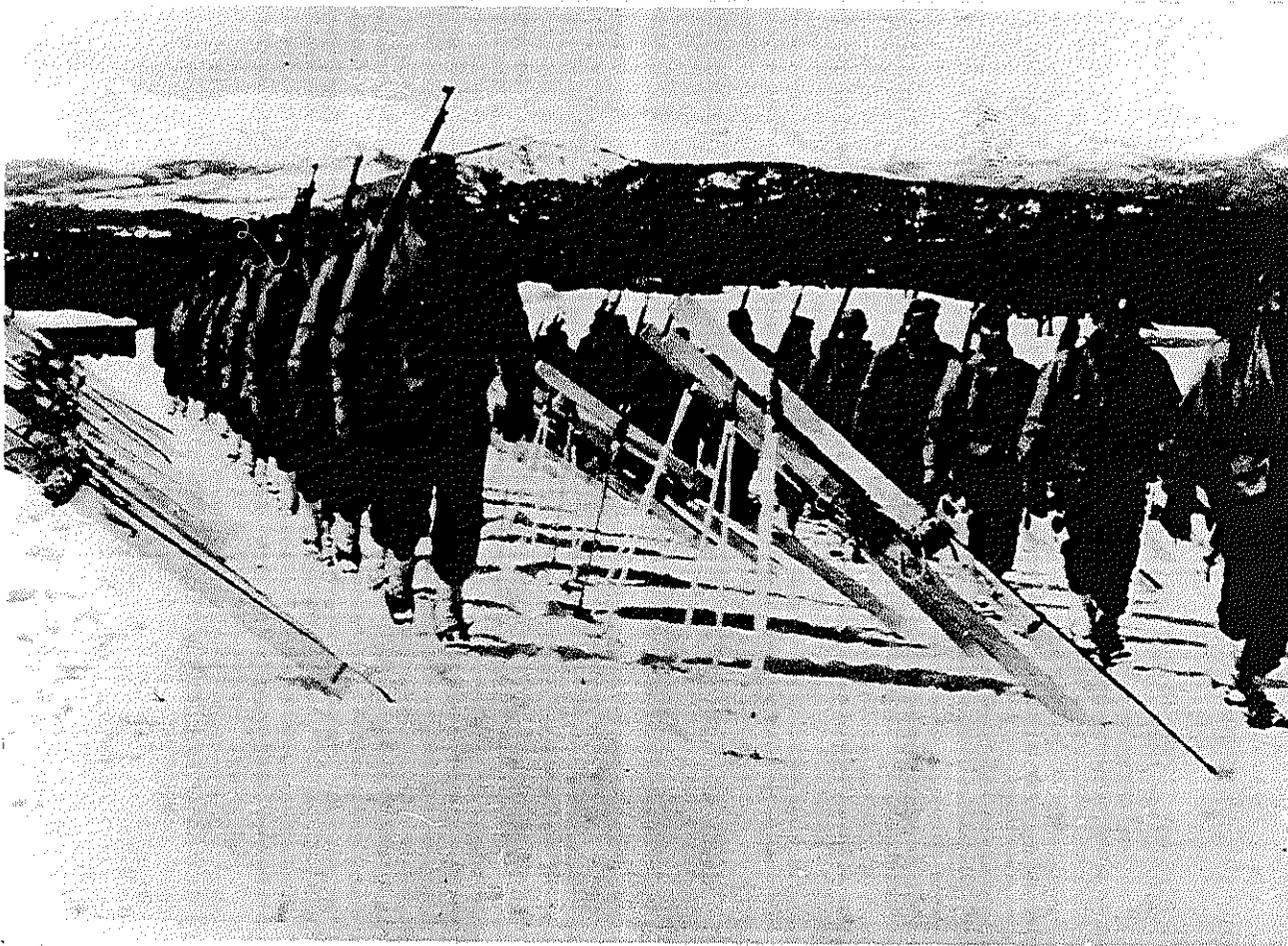
In November, 1942, the ski troops left the Ashcroft valley and became the first field troops, the cadre of the Tenth Mountain Division, at Camp Hale. The division trained at Camp Hale for the duration of the war.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ralph R. Lafferty, personal letter to Ted Ryan, June 13, 1972.



Camp of the Ashcroft Test Detachment (Courtesy of Ted Ryan and the Ashcroft Detachment)



Ski troops in formation, Camp Hale (Courtesy Ted Ryan and the Ashcroft Detachment)

The training camp at Ashcroft was unsatisfactory for two very vital reasons. The railroad into Aspen was in a state of disrepair and was very unreliable; needed supplies were almost always late in arriving. A communications problem might have been overcome if it had been the only problem, but the transportation problem was too great to overcome in a short period of time. The training that the troops received at Ashcroft held them in good stead both at Camp Hale and later in Italy. While Ted Ryan and other members of the OSS worked twenty-four hours a day to force the capitulation of the German armies in Italy, the Tenth Mountain Division, the division Ryan was unable to join because of his 4-F classification, was scaling the Italian hills putting to use the training they received at Ashcroft and Camp Hale. Ryan's offer of the Ashcroft valley was not in vain. Ryan thought of the division as his and was pleased that "his" division was successful.⁴⁶

Although the Ashcroft Detachment was only in the valley for three months, many of the ski troopers liked what they had seen and returned to Aspen for rest and relaxation while they were stationed at Camp Hale.

The Hotel Jerome was their base of operations as they skied the Roch run on Ajax Mountain. Three of the ski troopers, Friedl Pfeifer, Johnny Litchfield and Percy Rideout, did not forget Aspen after the war. Again Ryan's offer of the Ashcroft valley was not in vain.

⁴⁶ Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER IX

A NEW BEGINNING

Ashcroft's potential as a major ski area that rivaled and surpassed the ski areas of the Swiss Alps was not immediately developed after the war. Ryan returned to Sharon, Connecticut at the end of World War II and took time to adjust to family life again. Although Ryan did not hurry back to Aspen, others did. Walter Paepcke, a wealthy Chicago industrialist who loved all things Victorian, purchased an old Victorian house at low cost for his wife in 1946. He knew what Fiske had planned for the Ashcroft area since his wife skied at the Highland-Bavarian lodge in 1938 and since her brother had worked with Fiske in the same New York office. Friedl Pfeifer, Johnny Litchfield and Percy Rideout, former ski troopers who skied the Roch run on Ajax Mountain during the war, also returned to Aspen hoping to establish a major ski area on Aspen Mountain. The four men joined together and formed the Aspen Company and Aspen Ski Corporation. Paepcke wished to restore Victorian Aspen, if that were possible. The development of the ski area on Aspen Mountain was the responsibility of Pfeifer, Litchfield and Rideout.¹

In 1947, when Ryan returned to Aspen, the establishment of a major ski area on Aspen Mountain was well advanced. Ryan, his wife and three children spent the entire winter of 1947 "dug in" at the Highland-Bavarian lodge. During that winter Ryan decided that there was not room for two

¹Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.

giant ski developments in the Aspen-Ashcroft area. Educational opportunities for his three children were better in the East than in Aspen so Ryan and his wife decided to return to Connecticut and shelved the plans for the skiing development in Ashcroft until a later date. Paepcke persuaded Ryan to become a member of the Aspen Ski Corporation. Ryan joined the corporation as a small stockholder and handled public relations for the corporation throughout the New England area.²

Ryan knew that the Ashcroft valley and the Highland-Bavarian lodge had to be protected from unwanted intruders. He turned down many people who wanted to build garish commercial establishments in Ashcroft and looked for someone who was willing to live in the valley, but not destroy its beauty. Through mutual friends, Ryan found the type of man he was looking for, an ecology-minded botany professor from the University of Colorado. The association between Ryan and Stuart Mace, begun during the winter of 1947-48, continues to this day. Mace and his family lived in the guide's quarters at the Highland-Bavarian lodge for one year. In the spring of 1948 Mace asked for an acre of land at Ashcroft where he could build a house and train his Huskies. Ryan gave him a long-term lease with the understanding that he pay a nominal rent. The rent has not been collected because Ryan values Mace as a friend and as an ecology-minded individual who has protected the valley.³

Mace first came to the Ashcroft valley in July, 1937, when he and two others climbed Cathedral Peak. They used one of the remaining buildings in Ashcroft as a way station and knew there were a few old men in the town, but had no contact with them. Forty-five buildings were still in existence

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

including the old post office. The mail slots were still filled with mail. Old furniture and other objects were in some of the other buildings. When Mace returned in 1947 all of the movable objects were gone as were many of the buildings. As the buildings decayed and collapsed the logs were hauled away for firewood by the people of Aspen. Three men of Ashcroft's mining era, Joe Sawyer, "Whispering Swede," and Henry Firzpatrick continued to live in Ashcroft during the summer months.⁴

In 1947 Mace and his wife arrived in Aspen in an old Army surplus jeep looking for an area where they could live and raise and train sled dogs. Mace still had fourteen sled dogs left from his rescue work during the war and knew that the backyard of his Boulder home was not a suitable place for them. Aspen did not appeal to Mace for his purpose, but he knew as soon as he saw the Castle Creek Valley that it was perfect. It was near a ski resort, but not in one and it was rich in beauty and in history. Mace expected to draw his living from Aspen's visitors which had been non-existent for eight years. With an ever-growing family, Mace had to do a little of everything just to survive. The first winter he took his dogs to Aspen daily hoping to find visitors who wanted a dog sled ride around the periphery of Aspen. On the days he had no business, he explored the Castle Creek Valley.⁵

The acre of land Mace received from Ryan was the site of Pete Larson's exclusive mule skimmers' hotel and mule barn. The two-story cabin was still intact, but unsafe. In June, 1948, Mace began his house using a wheel barrow, a pick and shovel and a kerosene driven one-quarter yard cement mixer.

⁴Stuart Mace, private interview held at Ashcroft, Colorado, June 29, 1975.

⁵Ibid.



Stuart Mace and Husky, Main Street of Ashcroft, 1940's
(Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

He obtained unwashed sand from the sand pits west of Aspen, hauling it to his building site in a old power wagon. Lacking money to buy new building supplies, Mace looked for used materials which he recycled. He obtained six by six logs of lodge pole pine from a miner who was bankrupt. The old Washington school in Aspen was razed during the depression by a Mr. Waterman who salvaged and sold the brick from the top two stories. The giant pieces of redstone weighing 300 to 600 pounds from the bottom story were still piled in Waterman's backyard. Mace split, recut and refaced the stone by hand. He also salvaged fifty tons of scrap marble from the Crystal River which he cut by hand. The basic structure of his house also had the first radiant floor in the mountains of Colorado as well as the first thermopane windows and was built to match the two angles of Leahy's Peak, also known as Copper Mountain. He observed the way the old cabins were set. For instance, Leahy's cabin faced south because of the valley draft in the summer and the drifting conditions in the winter. Mace made sure that his house was set to the land and faced south to the sun. For sixteen years a diesel light plant provided electricity. By September, 1948, Mace and three helpers had reached the first floor level. It was up to Mace and his wife to close in the structure before winter.⁶

*Mace
builds
his
home*

When the double plated sealed glass thermopaness specially made by Libby Owen Glass for high altitude arrived in Aspen by train, Mace had a problem. The panes, each weighing seven hundred pounds, had to be kept in a vertical position at all times. Trucking them from Aspen presented no problem, but to roll them off the truck and hold them in a vertical position to the window sites was impossible without help. Mace's three physically strong helpers were gone so Mace asked Bill Tagert for advice.

⁶Ibid.

Tagert advised Mace to go to Louie's Liquor store in Aspen and buy two small bottles of good whiskey. If he then went to the post office and sat on the bench on the sunny side of the building, Tagert was certain that Mace could obtain the help he needed. Aspen's labor pool consisted of eight old-timers who would not accept pay, but would accept the luxury of good whiskey. Mace obtained their help by furnishing liquid refreshment.⁷

Mace's help included "Judge" Royal who told Mace he had been a judge in Ashcroft. Royal was never an official judge, but he had arbitrated disputes. Royal was feeble and Mace regarded him as one-half a helper. Russ Holmes, a tough old miner, was big and burly and was regarded as a full helper. Joe Sawyer, who had only one eye, was unable to tell when the pane was vertical. Another elderly man who wore puttees, carried a compass at all times and considered himself the surveyor of Ashcroft, also helped. Another helper was a man known to Mace only as Alex. He was hurt in a mining accident and limped so was only one-half a helper. Bill Tagert was unable to help physically because of an injured hip which necessitated that he use a crutch, but he was able to hop around and tap three of the deaf old men on the shoulders to communicate instructions. Mace tapped the other four. The scene was comic with Mace and Tagert yelling at the deaf old men and tapping them on the shoulders when necessary, but the task was accomplished. Mace wedged and levered the panes into place by himself. Mace's wife, Isabell, was in no condition to help with the thermopanes since Mace's second son, Allen, was born in August, but in October she helped shingle the roof after Mace swept eight inches of snow off of it.⁸

The three men in summer residence when Mace was building his home

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

Whiskey traded for labor

inwardly resented Mace's intrusion in the valley although they never articulated the resentment. As they watched Mace and realized that he did not intend to destroy the valley, they gradually accepted him. Joe Sawyer, one of two brothers who owned a saw mill during Ashcroft's early days and lost an eye due to flying chips of wood, but wore no patch, ambled over to the building site one fall day when Mace was working alone. He invited Mace to a poached venison dinner that evening. Mace explained that he had no way to contact his wife who was at the Highland-Bavarian lodge six miles below Ashcroft and who was expecting him home for dinner. Sawyer remarked, "Ah, she won't leave you for one missed meal." Mace accepted the dinner invitation realizing that this was Sawyer's way of accepting him as a new member of the community. He explained that he might be late since he was putting in the main beams of the living room by himself and they were each twenty-three feet long.⁹

Joe Sawyer

Mace arrived at Sawyer's spotlessly clean, but small cabin absolutely ravenous since he had not eaten lunch. Sawyer insisted that Mace drink a Mule Skinner's Delight,¹⁰ the specialty of Ashcroft's early day saloons. A non-drinker, Mace accepted the potent alcoholic drink. Although Mace slowly sipped the drink, within a very short time the main beam in Sawyer's cabin no longer appeared stationary and Mace requested that Sawyer serve the stew. The stew contained potatoes the size of a quarter from Sawyer's own two-row garden patch on the sunny side of his cabin. He always planted them at the right time and used the sun which reflected off the cabin to protect them from freezing. Sawyer also harvested wild onions which were in the stew. After the delicious meal, Sawyer asked Mace to pour coffee

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The recipe for the Mule Skinner's Delight is in the appendix.

from his camp pot, three feet in height. Mace saw him pour a few grounds and a little water in the pot before the meal so Mace was not prepared for the pot's extreme weight. Sawyer had used the pot since June and, as was typical in the early days, never emptied the pot until it was completely full of grounds. Mace drank the end result of a whole summer's coffee makings although he is not and never was a coffee drinker. The brew was so thick it could have been used to tar a roof or pave a road, according to Mace's recollection. After the first sip, the main beam was definitely stationary. After the second sip, the hair on the back of Mace's neck began to crawl and creep. After the third sip, his scalp tingled. Mace survived the dinner, the Mule Skinner's Delight and the coffee. Sawyer became a "sidewalk supervisor" at the building site.¹¹

When Sawyer was not supervising Mace or telling him stories of Ashcroft's early days, he and his old horse walked up the Jack Ass Trail behind Mace's house to his "little diggings." He kept busy physically and his mind remained lucid as a consequence. When he was no longer able to go to his claim, he sat in the sun and "messengered" his muscles while he continued to relate stories of the early days. One story concerned Granny Larson who was badly crippled by arthritis, but refused help. After the mule skimmers left their wagons and mules at Larson's, they went over to their favorite saloons for a Mule Skinner's Delight. Granny shuffled over very slowly using her cane as a walker; the men would have carried her, but she was too independent to desire the help. Once she arrived at the saloon where the majority of the mule skimmers were congregated, the game began. The mule skimmers who knew she was in the saloon ignored her until she inched over, braced herself, swatted one of them on the back of the legs,

¹¹Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 29, 1975.

and asked them to buy her a drink. The bartender then served her a Mule Skinner's Delight which was prepared for her before she arrived. Each of the thirteen saloons had a special padded stretcher for Granny if she imbibed too many Delights. The mule skimmers always carried her home when they returned to the hotel to eat.¹²

Each June "Whispering Swede" drove from Aspen to Ashcroft in an old Model A to spend the summer at his cabin on the west side of the road south of Stuart Mace's house. Mace never knew the Swede's given name, but described him as so small in stature that he was almost a dwarf. Not only was the Swede small in stature and half blind, he also suffered from throat cancer which prevented him from speaking above a whisper. Mace never saw smoke rising from the cabin's chimney. The Swede subsisted on muscatel wine since it was rich in sugar and was also a pain killer. No one helped the Swede; he brought very few supplies with him from Aspen and did not return to Aspen until fall. He returned to Aspen as he had arrived in Ashcroft--weaving all over the road in his old Model A.¹³

"Whispering Swede" also came to accept Mace's intrusion in the valley. The Swede had a bonafide claim behind Ashcroft Mountain almost to Gold Hill. He was feeble and critically ill, yet he walked to his claim although he was unable to do the necessary assessment work required by law. The Pitkin County Courthouse officials overlooked the fact and allowed him to keep the claim. In July, 1948, Mace was working on the roof beams of his house. From his vantage point he could see a part of the Taylor Pass road and saw "Whispering Swede" coming down from his claim more hunched over than he normally was. The Swede seemed to have both hands together as if he were

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

hurt. Mace was unable to stop his work although he was certain that the Swede needed help. When Mace looked up again, he saw "Whispering Swede" coming across the meadow directly to him. Mace immediately got off the roof and ran to meet the Swede, again thinking he was hurt. The Swede was not hurt at all, but instead had an acceptance gift for Mace. In the Swede's hands was a cluster of dwarf Alpine Forget-Me-Nots, dark, sky blue in color. He found the cluster on his claim, tucked it into moist, cold moss and carried it in his cupped hands five and one-half miles. Mace, a botanist, was pleased that a man who had very little had presented him with "one of the most fragrant flowers in the world."¹⁴

"Whispering Swede" was not totally balanced, but was tolerated by the Aspen society. He had an old house in Aspen where he spent the winter months. A sign in the window advertised clocks repaired. Those who had an old clock that they no longer wanted took it to the Swede. He had a phobia to take things apart, but did not know how to put the items back together. The people of Aspen knew the Swede was critically ill and was not balanced, but they tolerated his reclusive nature. Even in Ashcroft the Swede did not socialize with the two other old-timers. They each, in fact, went out of their ways to seldom cross paths and to live their own lives so as not to cause friction and problems.¹⁵

Henry Fitzpatrick's cabin was on the east side of Castle Creek on a non-patented claim. There was silver on his claim, but he never found the paying lode required for a patent. Fitzpatrick's wife, a cook at the Aspen hospital, was younger than he was and had a great temper. When Fitzpatrick became an excessive drinker, everyone thought it was because of his wife;

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

drinking appeared to be his way of coping with her temper. He was known as Aspen's town drunk. It was not until Fitzpatrick tried to live by himself in Ashcroft one winter that his wife realized he was seriously ill. Cancer ravaged his body and he drank to ease the pain. He spoke with a thick Irish brogue and the story he told of Ashcroft's early days was filled with humor and wit. Mace did not relate Fitzpatrick's reminiscences; he did not believe he could do justice to Fitzpatrick's Irish brogue or to his wit and humor.¹⁶

In 1947 when Mace entered the Ashcroft valley, the two-story poker hall on Main Street was still standing. Stu Baker, the owner and proprietor of the poker hall in Ashcroft's early days, was a man of many talents. According to the old-timers, Baker was a claim jumper, a "clever" card player and an accomplished musician. Baker established an illegal claim above the Montezuma mine and built a cabin, carrying one board at a time to the high elevation, to validate the claim. The cabin is still standing and because of the elevation and the ice conditions, appears to be recently sanded and therefore relatively new. Mining laws stated that a claim jurisdiction continued to the center of the earth. Baker believed that the Montezuma vein crossed his claim, but was unable to prove his contention. Although Baker's claim jumping scheme failed, his poker hall was a successful business. With poker rooms along the front of the building and upstairs, Baker "mined the miners," but he also provided other entertainment for them. In the back of the building was a dance hall. Baker played a concertina or "squeeze box" for those who wished to dance. When the building collapsed, Mace recycled the wood and built his dog tack building which he used for twenty-seven years. In

¹⁶ Ibid.

the fall of 1975, the building was razed. The wood, cut in 1883, was too rotten to be used again.¹⁷

In 1952, Ted Ryan discovered that T. J. Flynn had promised the Forest Service a small parcel of Highland-Bavarian Corporation land for a public camp site in return for the improvement of the old ore road to Ashcroft. Flynn made the agreement in 1939 on behalf of the corporation to provide access to the corporation's proposed ski complex. The Forest Service fulfilled its part of the agreement that same year. Ryan knew nothing of the agreement until he was informed of the corporation's nonfulfillment of the agreement in 1952. He immediately made amends. He asked Superintendent Leighou of the White River National Forest if the Forest Service would consider the Ashcroft townsite east of the road as a fair exchange of land. It was Ryan's intention that the Forest Service receive a deed for the main business core of Ashcroft, a total of fifteen acres.¹⁸

Bill Tagert, Stuart Mace and Superintendent Leighou walked the proposed boundaries from the present road east to Castle Creek and from just south of the Hotel View north almost to Devaney Creek where the parking lot is now located. These men then went to Leighou's office in Glenwood Springs and sketched on paper the proposed boundaries they had walked. The legal written description of the boundaries was left to the Forest Service lawyers in Washington, D. C. and the Highland-Bavarian lawyers in Los Angeles. The lawyers, working at opposite ends of the country, did no research. As a consequence, the legal description of the boundaries did not coincide with the promised gift. In preparing the deed the lawyers used the original survey, Castle Forks Placer No. 2016. The legal de-

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.



New Forest Service road through Ashcroft, 1940 (Courtesy of Len Shoemaker)

*Forest Service
Deed is wrong*

scription included all of the land east of the improved road which was part of the Castle Forks Placer survey, a total of fifty-one acres. Ryan signed the deed, not realizing that the deed was in error. The error was not discovered until 1963 when Ryan acquired all of the stock of the Highland-Bavarian Corporation and had the land surveyed. When the error was discovered, Forest Service officials stated that the Forest Service did not want or need the additional thirty-six acres which were included in the deed by mistake. Since 1963 Ryan and the Forest Service have tried to effect another land exchange, but as of yet have not come to a suitable agreement.¹⁹

In 1959, a new mining development began on Taylor Peak, three miles south of Ashcroft. Mining officials estimated that the mine, located at the elevation of 11,000 feet, had a vein of galena twenty feet to thirty feet thick which permeated the entire mountain. The Pitkin Iron Corporation planned to develop the vast iron deposits using the open pit bench method, but first a road had to be constructed to the mine. Because of the elevation and terrain, building the road from just south of the confluence of Castle and Pine Creeks, to the mine required two seasons. During the 1960 season an estimated 27,700 tons of ore were drilled and blasted from the mountain side. In 1961 dump trucks loaded with ore began negotiating the seventeen per cent grade to reach the crushers near the confluence of Castle and Pine Creeks. The crushed ore was loaded into double truck units, weighed, and then trucked approximately twenty miles down-valley to Woody Creek and transferred to rail cars. The ore was also stockpiled at Woody Creek for winter shipment. During the more productive mining seasons loaded ore trucks disturb the tranquility of the

¹⁹Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975; Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 29, 1975.



Aerial view of Pitkin Iron Corporation headquarters above the confluence of Pine Creek and Castle Creek

Castle Creek Valley every seven minutes. Each truck carries thirty five tons of ore.²⁰

In 1887 the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation purchased the iron mine, but did not develop it. The costs of production were too high since no railroad was available in Ashcroft. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company sold the mine in 1928 because corporation officials believed that the sulphur content of the ore was too high. Ironically, during the first eight years of production, Colorado Fuel and Iron purchased all of the ore taken from the mine. The corporation is still a major customer. Ore is extracted only during the summer months due to the elevation of the mine, but is stockpiled at Woody Creek so that it can be shipped throughout the year. Tonnage extracted, number of days operated and number of men employed vary each year because of weather conditions and the price of ore. Since 1960, an average of 170,000 tons of ore has been shipped each season. The highest ore production occurred in 1967 when 300,000 tons were extracted; the total man-hours that season were 102,248. The average number of man-hours each season has been 60,000 for the seventy men which, on an average, have been employed 100 days each year. Mining officials state the production will continue as long as the "mountain of iron" lasts and as long as there is a demand for the ore making its extraction profitable. It is possible that iron will be extracted at least until the year 2000.²¹

In December, 1971 another aspect of Ashcroft's hidden wealth was developed. Ashcroft Ski Tours Unlimited, a division of the Highland-Ba-

²⁰Aspen Times, May 11, 1967, p. 8-B; Colorado, Bureau of Mines, "Information Report on Pitkin Iron Corporation," filed August 20, 1973, p. 2; and "Inspector's Reports for the Years 1961 and 1962," p. 1.

²¹Aspen Times, May 11, 1967, p. 8-B; Colorado, Bureau of Mines, "Inspectors' Reports for the Years 1961 through 1973," p. 1.



Ashcroft Ski Tours

varian Corporation now owned exclusively by Ted Ryan and his wife, Ruthie, opened on what Ryan calls "the thirty-fifth anniversary of the dawn of Alpine skiing in Aspen." The touring complex is an outgrowth of the corporation's original plan for a skiing complex on Mount Hayden. Ryan's reasons for developing the touring complex were to share the beauty of the valley with others and to bring to fruition the plans of the original corporation, although in a somewhat different form than was first envisioned. A green Bavarian-style hat with two saucy red feathers on a white background, the logo of the Ski Tours, is the same logo as the original although a modern motto--"Ashcroft over Aspen"--has been added. Headquarters for the center is located in an old Ashcroft cabin known as the King cabin. No information pertaining to the original owners has been found. Stuart Mace used the cabin to house Eskimos who worked for him and helped him train his Huskies the first years he was in the valley. Mace insulated the cabin with twelve layers of dog food sacks; the unconventional insulation was not replaced when Ryan renovated the cabin and built an addition. Skiers can rent equipment and sign up for lessons at the cabin.²²

King Cabin

Ashcroft Ski Tours Unlimited offers good maintained trails in a protected valley. It also offers spectacular mountain scenery, rental equipment, lessons, hot lunches, and rest stops at any one of a number of huts provided for the purpose. Boots, poles and cross-country skis waxed for current snow conditions are available for five dollars a day. Group lessons are six dollars which includes the trail fee for an hour and a half session. Everyone must pay a trail fee--two dollars for adults, one dollar

²²Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," pp. 19R-20R; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975; Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975.





Theodore S. "Ted" Ryan (Courtesy of Aspen Historical Society)

for children under twelve. There is only one rule--stay on the maintained trails and ski single file. Until 1974 there was one other courtesy--not to criss-cross the dog sled trails as it confused the lead dogs. The dogs are no longer in the valley so this courtesy is no longer necessary. Both the novice and the expert can enjoy skiing one or more of the more than twenty trails available; each trail varies in length and difficulty. Enough variety is available to keep a skier busy all day without repeating a trail. The six original trails, a total distance of twelve miles, criss-crossing the 500 acre touring layout, were designed by Sven Wiik a former Olympic cross-country coach.

✓ Included in the 500 acres is the townsite of Ashcroft, as well as the former Ashcroft Boys Camp, now known as the Pine Creek Cookhouse at the confluence of Pine and Castle Creeks where most of the trails eventually converge. An A-frame building complete with hot water and a pot-bellied stove awaits the skier; he can warm up and use the package of instant tea, coffee or hot chocolate given to him at King Cabin before his trek began. Hot lunches--"a good home-cooked meal in an alpine setting"--limited to twelve at one time to give the skier elbowroom are available by reservation at the Pine Creek Cookhouse. The Cookhouse is also open in the summer months for visitors in the valley. Several mountain huts built and maintained by the U. S. Ski Association are available for skiers who wish to take trips to the high country and stay overnight. These huts include Markley Hut off Taylor Pass, the Tagert Hut on the way to Pearl Pass and the Lindley Hut below Star Peak. The Toklat Alpine Chalet, a three-hour climb above the cookhouse, can be reserved; Toklat will furnish tasty meals--lunch the first day, a hot evening meal and breakfast and lunch the following day. An evening supper excursion can also be enjoyed--ski



Aerial view of the Pine Creek Cookhouse and the beaver ponds on Castle Creek

rentals, a guide, miner's lights if the moon is not shining and a cozy dinner are all part of the package.²³

The well maintained trails, packed to a width of six to eight feet by employees wearing snowshoes, simplify poling and "braking" in the steeper spots. Every effort is made to leave nature undisturbed. Ryan wishes to preserve, not abuse the area. Ski grooves are set at a width of six to seven inches by a homemade track-setting device pulled by a snowmobile which is tolerated only as a utility device. The purpose of the track-setter is to break up hardened snow where necessary, push it aside and smooth it down; comparatively effortless gliding over every kind of terrain is the result. The operation is a "learning as we go" situation according to Ryan. Eventually a small, simple alpine-type lodge may be built "to accommodate those who enjoy this kind of winter experience." Ryan admits that Ashcroft Ski Tours Unlimited is the only ski touring operation which charges a trail fee. "But we are also the only ones who maintain protected trails in one of the most beautiful valleys anywhere."²⁴

A ski complex such as the Mount Hayden complex first envisioned by Fiske, Ryan, Flynn and Roch may be required by public demand at some future date. Combining both down-hill and cross-country skiing in one well maintained area would provide the ultimate in skiing. The plans, drawn up in 1936 by Roch and Langes, are still available if public demand for such materializes. Until then, those skiers who wish to participate in both down-hill and cross-country skiing must travel fourteen miles between two beautiful areas to do so. Joe Ryan, Ted's cousin who established the

²³Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," pp. 20R and 23R.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 22R-23R.

Mont Tremblant Ski Area in the Laurentians, made a prediction when he looked over the Aspen area. "They'll never find you out here." The prediction, needless to say, did not come true. Ryan who began ski touring in the Laurentians in the 1920's has gone the full circle. He says, "I'm now back to ski touring--and enjoying it!" For the man who should be considered the "Father of Skiing in Colorado" sharing the beauty of the Ashcroft valley has been realized.²⁵

A unique feature of the Ashcroft valley for twenty-seven years were the Toklat Huskies used for both rescue work and pleasure. The dogs were ready and willing to take adventurers into the magnificent high mountains surrounding Ashcroft. Adventurers had a choice of four trips. The Sergeant Preston short trip, approximately one mile in length, was available for those who wished to take a one-half hour ride. A scenic jaunt on the valley floor, approximately five miles in length, provided an hour and a half ride. A full day's sledding to the base of Castle Peak to the Toklat alpine chalet included a delicious lunch for the hungry adventurer. The ultimate sledding experience was the two day high country trip. Included in the trip were an overnight stay at the alpine chalet and four hearty meals. In 1974 Stuart Mace began his planned retirement from the dog sledding business. The dogs are now in the Divide Creek area in the beautiful Old Snowmass Valley one mile west of Snowmass Village. Dan MacEachen, a former apprentice of Mace, is the owner and tour host of the Krabloonik Kennels. Mace still cares for the "grandfathers," the dogs that due to age and/or illness can no longer work. Sledding dogs are susceptible to arthritis especially in their hind quarters. Mace says, "They worked all

²⁵Barr, "Ashcroft Reborn," p. 31R; Commentary with Ted Ryan, KSNO, March 19, 1975; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975.



Stuart Mace and Akeela, "Big Hunter," a Malamute Husky
fourteen years old, June, 1977

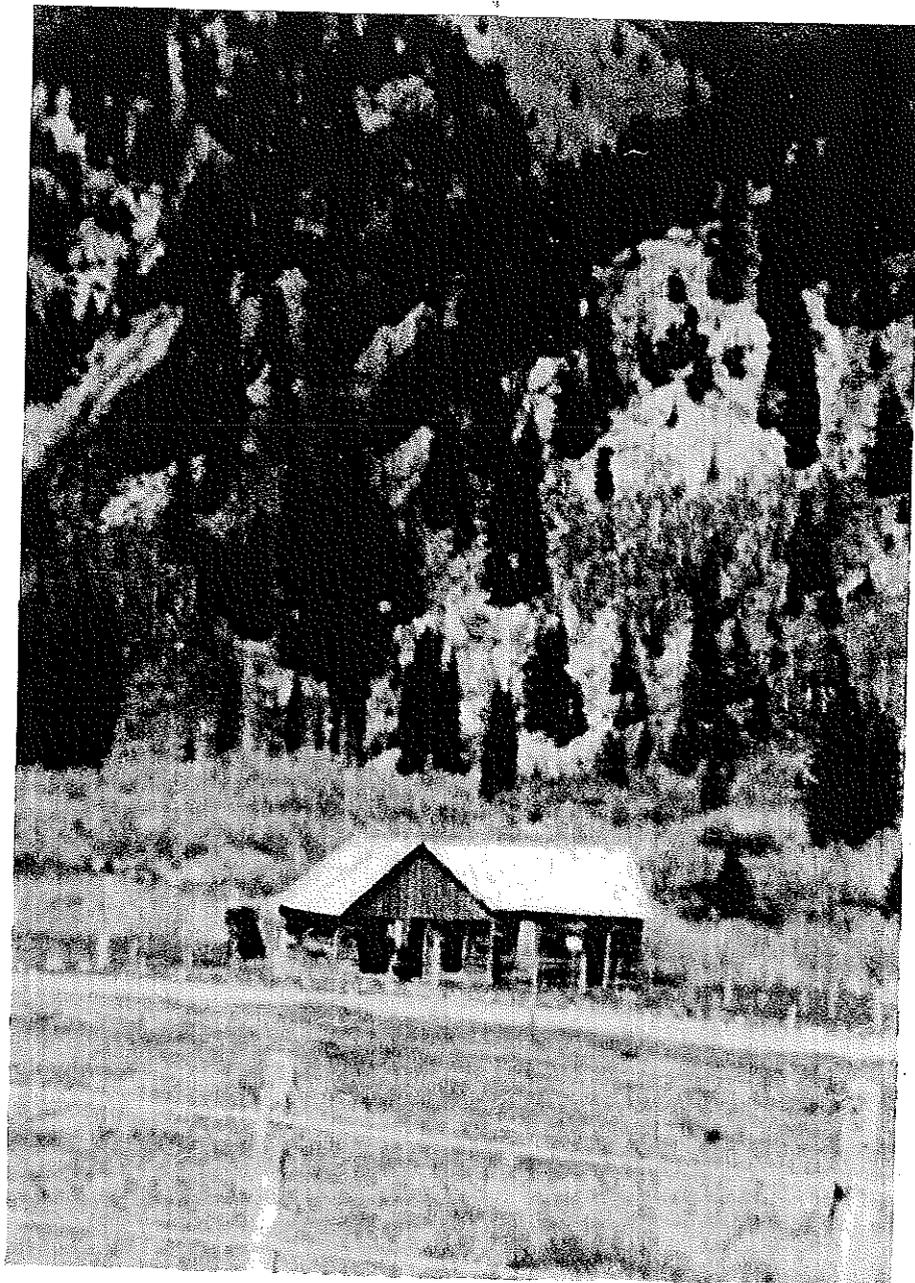
their lives for me. The least I can do is provide a home for them in their later years."²⁶

A visit to Toklat, an Eskimo word meaning valley of the mountain snows, during the summer months meant a guided tour of the Husky kennels, dining on an open air patio with a glorious view of the whole valley or shopping in the sunlit gift and gourmet shop in the parking area. Meals are now served at the Pine Creek Cookhouse managed by Greg Mace, Stuart's oldest son, and his wife with only an occasional evening cookout given at Toklat. In retirement Mace devotes more time to an original love, working with rare American wood to create exquisite works of art. These works of art may be seen and purchased at his Toklat gallery opened each day at 1:00 p.m. Wild flower seeds, wild flower perfumes, Navajo rugs and sand paintings, and gourmet goodies such as wild mushroom soup, baked grains, dried wild mushrooms, domestic and rare wild jams and jellies and Toklat tea blends are a few of the many other items also available at the gallery.²⁷

During the 1950's the television series, "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon," was filmed in Ashcroft. Mace, his crews and his Huskies filmed breathtaking footage of magnificent runs which were used to "beef up" the action in the series. The stars of the series were unwilling to take the risks necessary to provide believable action. The Actors' Union rules were circumvented enabling Mace to film the footage. He just "happened to find" the proper Mountie uniforms and decided to put them to use. The footage, known only as mountie footage, was used as long as the series continued. As a consequence of the series, Ashcroft was reconstructed.

²⁶Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975.

²⁷Ibid.



Mountie Headquarters for "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon"

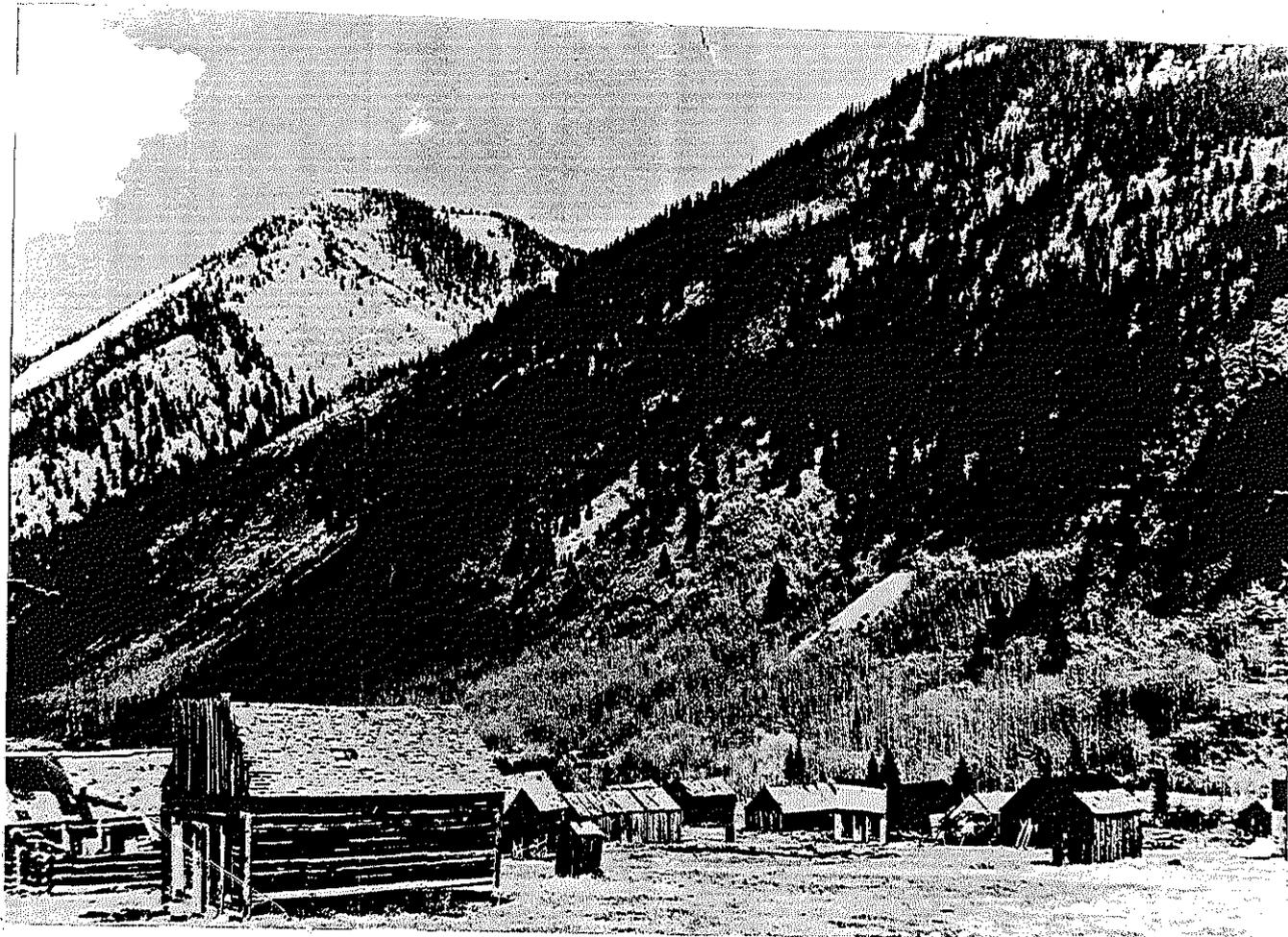
Enthusiastic network publicists announced, "When filming is completed, the reconstructed Ashcroft is to become an official historic site and tourist mecca." The announcement was premature. Forest Service officials believed that a reconstructed Ashcroft was not in the best interests of the fragile valley and asked the television producers to dismantle the improvements when filming was completed.²⁸

Since 1948 Stuart Mace has protected the Ashcroft valley as best he could. He has also protected the townsite of Ashcroft from vandalism, desecration and oblivion. As part of the 1952 agreement, the Forest Service promised to preserve Ashcroft as a historic site, but other Forest Service commitments took precedence over Ashcroft. Mace watched in anger and frustration as the town continued to decay. Buildings that might have been restored in the 1950's, such as the livery stable and the two-story poker hall, are now gone. Joe Sawyer's sturdy cabin was dismantled by Forest Service order after Sawyer's death. Although the Forest Service allowed Sawyer to live in the cabin which was situated on Forest Service land after 1952, officials were determined that no one else would be allowed to use the cabin after Sawyer's death. Any time Mace or any member of his family saw visitors carting off weathered wood or anything else which might be used in an eventual restoration effort, they asked, and if necessary demanded, that the object be left where it was found. The ever watchful diligence of the Mace family finally was rewarded in 1974.²⁹

In late January, 1974, George Morris, the supervisor of the White River National Forest, met Ramona Markalunas, Aspen Historical Society

²⁸Stuart Mace, private interview held at Ashcroft, Colorado, June 19, 1977; Denver Post, September 29, 1955, p. 68.

²⁹Private interview with Stuart Mace, June 29, 1975.

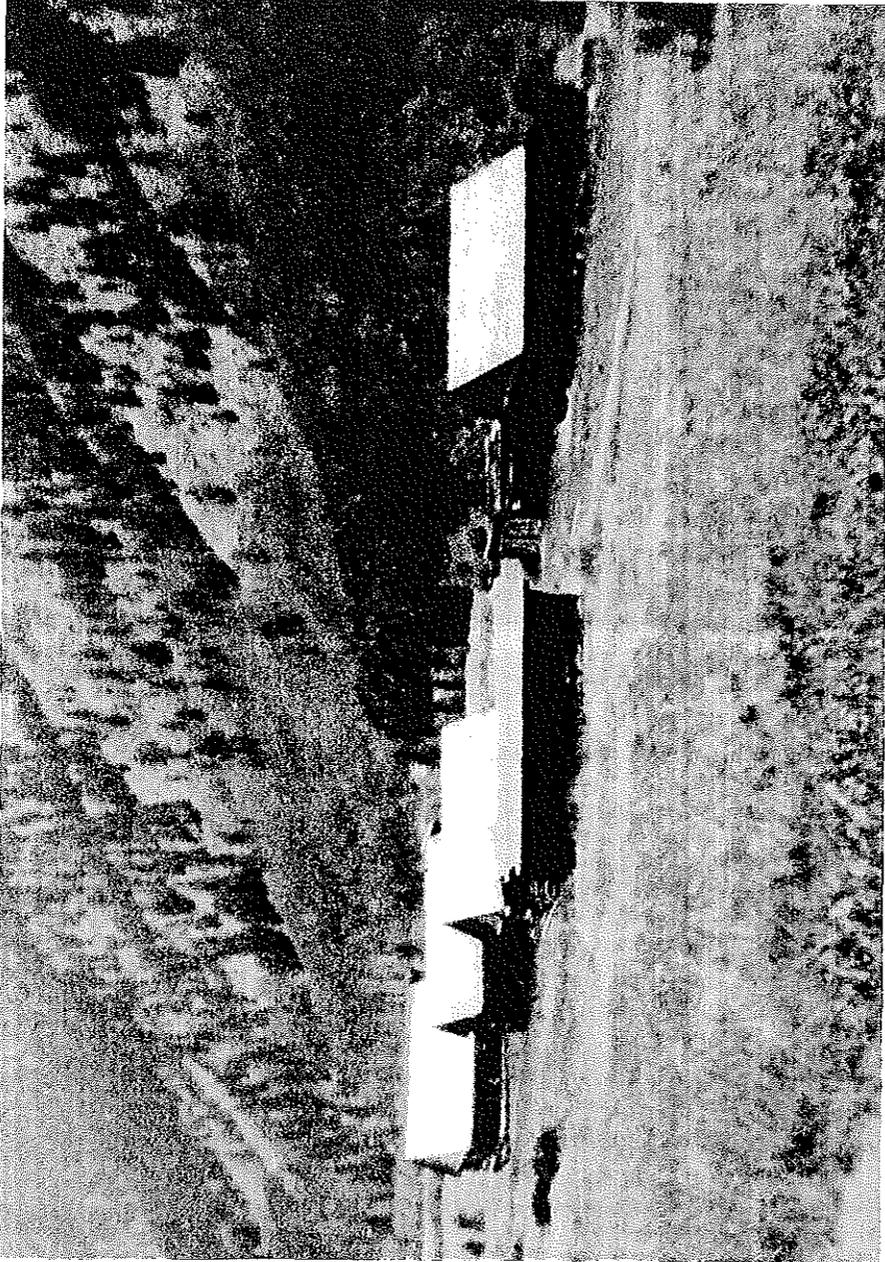


Ashcroft, 1950 (Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Department)

director and former Aspen city councilwoman. "What are you going to do about Ashcroft?" she demanded. "Let it fall to the ground, and then burn the wood to clear the space?" Morris countered with a question of his own: "What do you have in mind?" In the spring Morris found out what Mace, Markalunas and other interested persons had in mind. Of the more than fifty inhabitable buildings once standing in Ashcroft, only nine were left which were worth saving. The Forest Service gave the historical society a special permit for five years for the restoration effort. Officials believe that Ashcroft is the first ghost town to be restored on Forest Service land. Perhaps it will not be the last to be restored on Forest Service land.³⁰

The restoration effort is a cooperative venture of Pitkin County, the Aspen Historical Society, the Colorado Centennial-Bicentennial Commission and the Forest Service. The theme is "Ashcroft is memories worth saving." Ashcroft will not be a garish tourist trap. The buildings are being braced and re-roofed, but no businesses will take up residence in the buildings. Preservation so that Ashcroft's history is not totally erased is the aim. As cabins are located which are similar to those built during Ashcroft's heydays, the committee will buy them if necessary and move them to the Ashcroft site. Eight cabins were located in 1975 at Woods Lake and are being moved in as funds permit. Various methods are used to raise funds. The Colorado Centennial-Bicentennial Commission authorized a \$10,500 grant in 1976. Ted Ryan reprinted the first issue of the Ashcroft Journal which he obtained from a relative of an early day miner for an undisclosed price. The issue is sold for one dollar to help defray the ex-

³⁰Private interviews with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975 and June 29, 1975; Denver Post, August 18, 1976, p. 17BB.



Restored buildings with new roofs, Ashcroft, 1977

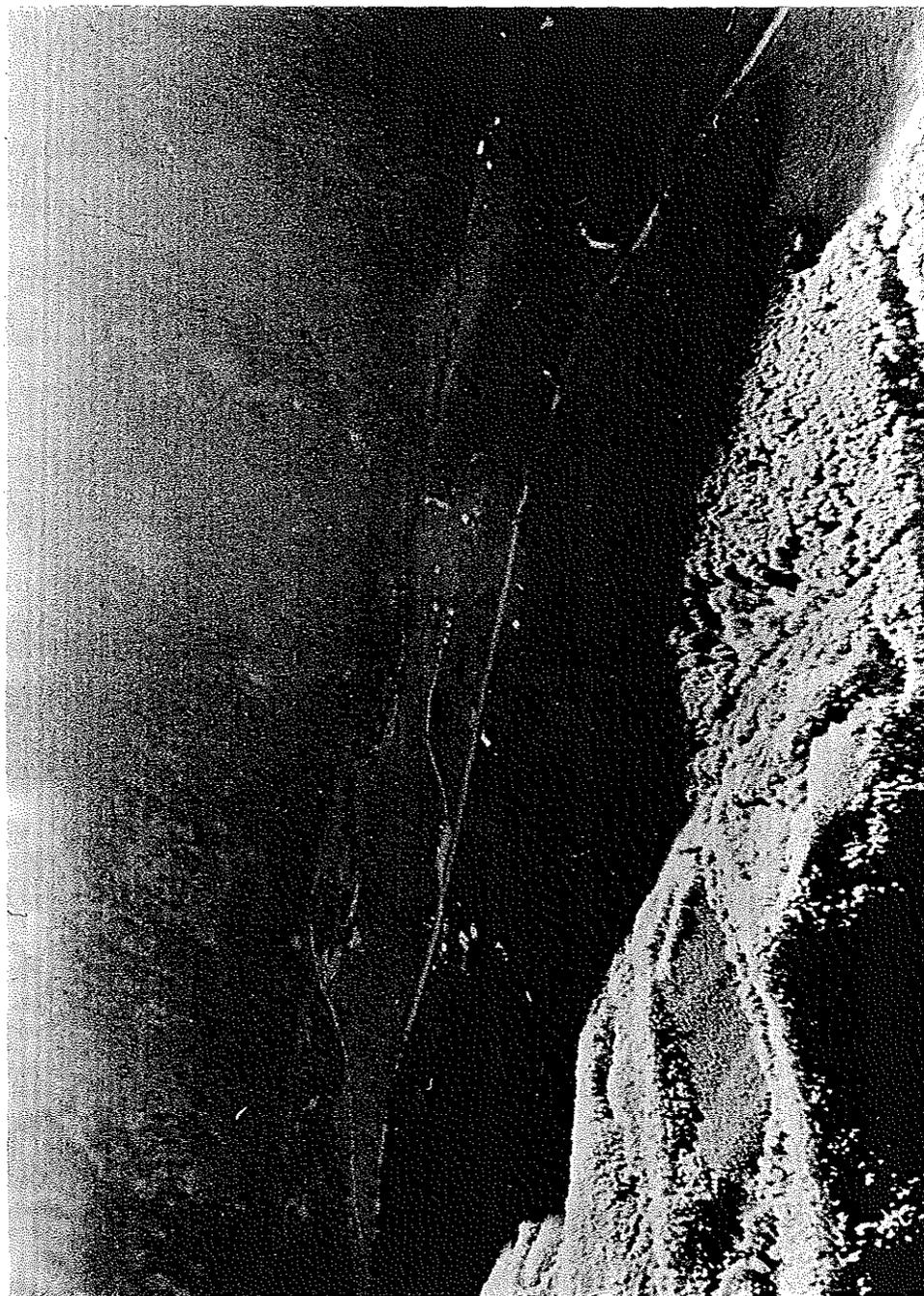
pense of restoration. Private donations are also solicited by the Aspen Historical Society.³¹

On July 24, 1976 and again on July 30, 1977, the Aspen Historical Society sponsored an 1890's style "A Night in Old Ashcroft." Each year lively early Colorado-style gambling was featured with Craps and Twenty-One in the old Hotel View public rooms. Bingo games and a raucous dance hall review featuring the Ashcroft dance hall girls was staged by Kate Rivers and Mary Ellen Powers. A mining days dinner of barbequed buffalo, Kielbasa sausage, cole slaw, sourdough bread, watermelon and gingerbread was prepared and served by Stuart Mace. The saloons sold beer, white wine and, of course, Mule Skinner's Delights. Francis Whitaker, Aspen's renowned blacksmith, plied his skill on the forge at the old blacksmith shop and Paul Pattee made horse shoes. Handmade quilts, leather garments and wooden trunks were displayed. Photographs were taken of visitors wearing a variety of 1890's costumes. Music, children's games, and burro rides added to the fun. In 1976 over \$2,500 was raised; the same was true in 1977.³²

The effort continues despite financial problems. By August, 1976, \$21,000 had been spent for the restoration effort with the job little more than half finished. By the end of the summer in 1975, a board walk was partially completed; its purpose is to protect the fragile terrain of the high mountain setting. Eventually the board walk is to be a circle, starting at and returning to the parking area. Even though the board walk is

³¹Private interviews with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975 and June 29, 1975; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1976; Denver Post, August 18, 1976, p. 17BB.

³²Denver Post, August 18, 1976, p. 17BB; Inside Aspen, July 22-August 12, 1977, p. 12; Aspen Times, August 4, 1977, p. 7A.



Aerial view of Ashcroft, summer, 1976

only partially completed, visitors have been cooperative and the land is slowly recovering from the abuse of previous years. A tilted panoramic sign will greet visitors in future years. The sign which will identify the surrounding mountains, show Ashcroft's Main Street in July, 1882, and give a synopsis of the town's history is being prepared. A metal etching process is being used to make the sign more permanent and lasting. Restoration would not have been possible without the cooperation and enthusiasm of volunteers. A roofing party during the summer of 1975 drew fifty people, many of whom had never handled a hammer. The work on the board walk was accomplished with the help of thirty five young people from Iowa. Three other people also deserve recognition: George Morris because he shared the vision, carpenter Don Lyons who has a "feeling for the old buildings" and his father who came out of retirement to help rebuild the Hotel View which collapsed in the heavy snows of 1973.³³

Each summer since 1975 a "resident ghost" has lived in Ashcroft who answers questions and looks after the property. The "ghost" is a Colorado State University student whose major is recreation management. Each summer a different student has accepted the assignment. Repairing the ravages of the decades has not been easy, but it has been rewarding. A visitor can identify at least 150 cabin sites if he is aware of identifying marks. Flat outs can be identified by the cellar pits which were dug under the cabins. Cabin sites can also be identified by regrowth and by the clumps of rhubarb, gooseberries and raspberries the miners planted next to their cabins. Due to the efforts of many people Ashcroft will not fade into oblivion. On June 7, 1975 Ashcroft was designated as a National

³³Private interviews with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975; June 29, 1975; and June 19, 1977; Private interview with Ted Ryan, July 23, 1975; Denver Post, August 18, 1976, p. 17BB.

*Ashcroft
in 1975*

*1975 Declared a
National Historic Site*

Historic Site. The designation would not have occurred if it had not been for the dedication of two men who wished to protect the valley and preserve that which was there--Theodore S. Ryan and Stuart Mace. The preservation of Ashcroft is a tribute to early day miners who respected the land and who did not have the destructive capacity man has in the twentieth century.^{*} Ashcroft is memories worth saving.³⁴

** This is highly disputable due to the almost denuding of the forest for wood, and the amount of trash that littered the site. Europeans were not nearly as ecologically astute as were the Native Americans who occupied the area for centuries before.*

³⁴Private interviews with Stuart Mace, June 8, 1975; June 29, 1975; and June 19, 1977.

EPILOGUE

In the spring of 1880, twenty-one years after Colorado's great mining rush started, a new mining camp was established in virgin territory on the north side of the rugged, isolated Elk Mountain range. Known initially as Castle Forks City, the camp's name was changed to Ashcroft before its first season ended. The following season the camp's name was Chloride, a name which lasted five months. In January, 1882, the camp permanently assumed the name of Ashcroft. Ashcroft's success was almost as fleeting as its names. Within three years, Ashcroft's boom ended and it ceased to be a viable mining camp although the town continued to exist until after the turn of the century.

First school in Pitkin County

Ashcroft attained one important aspect of permanence and maturity during its brief boom. The first school in Pitkin County was established within its environs, but lasted only two years. A church, another characteristic of permanence and maturity, was planned, but was never built. Brick buildings were never a characteristic of the camp. The buildings were either log or of sawed lumber; many had fake (false) fronts. The town partially overcame problems of transportation and communication. Three major roads came into the camp--Taylor Pass, Pearl Pass and the Aspen-Ashcroft toll road from Independence Pass. Two newspapers--the Ashcroft Herald, a subsidiary of the Rocky Mountain Sun, which was printed in Aspen, and the Ashcroft Journal, the only newspaper actually printed in the camp--provided communication. Telegraph lines were installed, but maintenance of the lines was a constant problem.

A Miner's Protective Association handled government and law enforcement for the community until the town was incorporated in 1882. A mayor and a board of trustees became the legally constituted government after incorporation. Law enforcement was the responsibility of two men, the town constable and an assistant, elected by the board of trustees. They spent the majority of their time calming Ashcroft's more rowdy residents rather than solving major crimes. Fire protection consisted of a volunteer bucket brigade. Ashcroft never experienced a major conflagration during its existence although two hotels were destroyed when an arsonist plied his "art." The town existed long enough to have specialized stores such as a bakery, hardware store, drug store and barber shop. It also had typical businesses such as a livery, general store, assay office, hotels and saloons.

High grade mineral production in the Ashcroft area was sporadic. The area seemed to be similar in geologic formation to Leadville, Colorado's great silver area. It was similar, but only in isolated pockets. The best production was in mines located above timberline, such as the Montezuma and Tam O'Shanter mines. These two mines were, in fact, the only consistent producers of high grade ore. Only isolated pockets of high grade silver were found in other mines. Much of the ore in the area was a zinc-blend silver. Smelters had no known method to reduce this type of ore; therefore, it was practically worthless. A method to reduce zinc-blend silver was not discovered until the early 1900's, long after Ashcroft's mining heyday.

Miners in the Ashcroft area were plagued with problems that they could not overcome. Producing mines were above 12,000 feet which meant that mining efforts were hindered by weather at least six months each

year. Precipitation was heavy, blocking roads and trails and making supplies difficult to obtain. Snow slides were a constant danger especially in the spring. Many of the miners lacked capital for the necessary development of their mines. Speculation had been rampant in Colorado's mining ventures during the 1860's and 1870's, but too many investors were cheated. In the 1880's and 1890's when miners in the Ashcroft area needed financial help, investors were unwilling to give aid. As more depth was reached, many mine owners had to cope with water problems. To rid the mines of water required machinery which many could not afford. A fourth problem was transportation. Ore was stockpiled until enough was accumulated so that it could be profitably transported to smelters in Aspen, Leadville or Crested Butte by jack train or ore wagons.

Both the Colorado Midland and the Denver and Rio Grande railroads promised to build branch lines to Ashcroft from Aspen. Neither railroad made good on its promise after main line tracks reached Aspen in 1887. It is possible that both lines feared financial loss, although the Denver and Rio Grande surveyed a route into Ashcroft. Whatever the reason, Ashcroft never had a railroad. It was believed by mine owners in the area that more mines could have been made profitable if a railroad had been available to provide cheap transportation.

Ashcroft surpassed Aspen in growth and mineral production during its first three seasons of existence. After 1883, though, Ashcroft began a steady decline while Aspen continued a steady growth. The mines on Aspen Mountain consistently produced high grade silver. Ashcroft was dependent on the Montezuma and Tam O'Shanter mines as its consistent producers and since these mines were involved in litigation proceedings from 1882 until 1888, production was hampered. In 1887 the railroad arrived in Aspen which

gave a tremendous boost to that camp, but also sealed Ashcroft's fate.

Aspen also had working smelters which Ashcroft did not have. Two smelters were built in Ashcroft, but due to financial difficulties, these smelters did not run except for testing purposes. The lure of successful Aspen was too great for the majority of Ashcroft's residents. They moved to Aspen taking their cabins and, if possible, their business buildings with them.

When H. A. W. Tabor invested in the Montezuma-Tam O'Shanter mines, the residents of Ashcroft believed that their camp was assured permanence and success, but Tabor's investment did not lure other major capitalists to likewise invest in the area. Neither could the man with the "silver touch" glean riches from an area where there were no riches. Tabor's investment proved too costly even for him. He never received an equal return on his investment which included the \$100,000 purchase price for the mines and the supposed \$40,000 investment on one of two homes he reportedly built in the area. He did make enough to pay for the actual operation of the mines. Residents could not say that Tabor was unwilling to help Ashcroft. In 1889, Tabor helped incorporate three railroads which were to construct lines into Ashcroft. These railroads, unfortunately, proved to be paper railroads.

United States government policy controlled the silver market. In July, 1890, the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was passed by Congress. This pact provided for limited coinage of silver and authorized the government to buy up to 4,500,000 ounces of silver each month. In the fall of 1893, the Sherman Silver Purchase Act was repealed in order to strengthen United States currency. By repealing the act, Congress decreed that U. S. currency was exclusively backed by gold which was not fluctuating in price. Repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act checked the flow of silver into

the treasury, but failed to stop the drain on gold. The government continued to redeem silver certificates and treasury notes in gold. Not only was the gold reserve not stabilized, but repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act destroyed the silver market since the government was the only major purchaser of silver. As a consequence of the repeal, all silver mining areas declined.

Near the former boundary of the Ute Reservation and the natural boundary of the Elk Mountains, the Ashcroft region is isolated and rugged. Castle Creek and its many tributaries provided water for the camp located on its western bank at the base of Taylor Pass. Taylor Pass, the first major wagon road into the area, was a natural gate into the Castle Creek Valley for those residing in the Gunnison country or for those in the Leadville area traveling to Aspen by wagon in 1880. Wagon travel continued over the road until 1915. In 1882, Pearl Pass, the second major route over the Elk Mountains, was completed linking Ashcroft with Crested Butte and the railroad. As a mining area Ashcroft failed, but its environs held other riches to be exploited. After 1900, the Castle Creek Valley became a grazing ground with its lush bunch grass. The first European-style skiing complex in the United States would have been within its environs if World War II had not intervened. Because of World War II, Ashcroft became the first training site in Colorado for ski troops. More recently, the area was the home and training area of dog sledding teams and is now the location of Ashcroft Ski Tours Unlimited.

Ashcroft would have faded into complete oblivion if it had not been for two men who wished to preserve the townsite and the valley. Ted Ryan, one of the original incorporators and now the sole owner of the Highland-Bavarian Corporation, and Stuart Mace, the caretaker of corporation holdings

in the valley, have prevented the establishment of commercial operations which could destroy the area. Mace protested the overgrazing of the valley floor and prevailed in his wish to have the corporation holdings fenced to prevent unwanted intrusion. The valley floor is now reviving ecologically. Ramona Markalunas, director of the Aspen Historical Society, helped Ryan and Mace in their efforts to persuade the Forest Service to allow the society to restore Ashcroft's remaining buildings. In 1975 the main business core of Ashcroft, fifteen acres of the townsite east of the road, was declared a national historic site to be preserved for future generations. When restoration is completed, the townsite will contain examples of early day architecture and building techniques. Self guided tours and Aspen Historical Society tours will continue and picnic areas beside Castle Creek will be available.

The future possibilities of the Castle Creek Valley are as a limited recreational use area and as an iron mining area. The outdoor enthusiast can now enjoy hiking, picnicking, cross country skiing, and jeeping in the area. Taylor Pass and Pearl Pass, the two major routes into the area in the 1880's, are now four wheel drive roads, but summer use of the roads depends upon snow conditions. If snowfall is heavy during the winter months, the roads are not open in the summer, but another aspect of recreation is available. Those who wish to hike to the south bowl of Mount Hayden can ski its beautiful snow. It is possible that at some future date public demand may necessitate the development of the Mount Hayden ski complex planned by the Highland-Bavarian Corporation in 1936. The area would provide both down hill and cross country skiing, a combination which is gaining in popularity.

Mining ventures failed in the 1880's and 1890's due to five major

factors--climate and elevation, lack of economical transportation, lack of capital for development, lack of consistent high grade ore producers, and changes in government policy. Since that time technology has been developed so that mineral in the area can be profitably extracted. If the present market for iron ore continues and/or increases, mining in the valley will also continue. It is also possible that some unknown mineral resource has yet to be discovered.

Ashcroft was a great promise which ended in broken dreams, but Ashcroft is memories worth saving. It has contributed and will continue to contribute its unique "something" to the history of Colorado. Ashcroft is now a great promise of new and different dreams.

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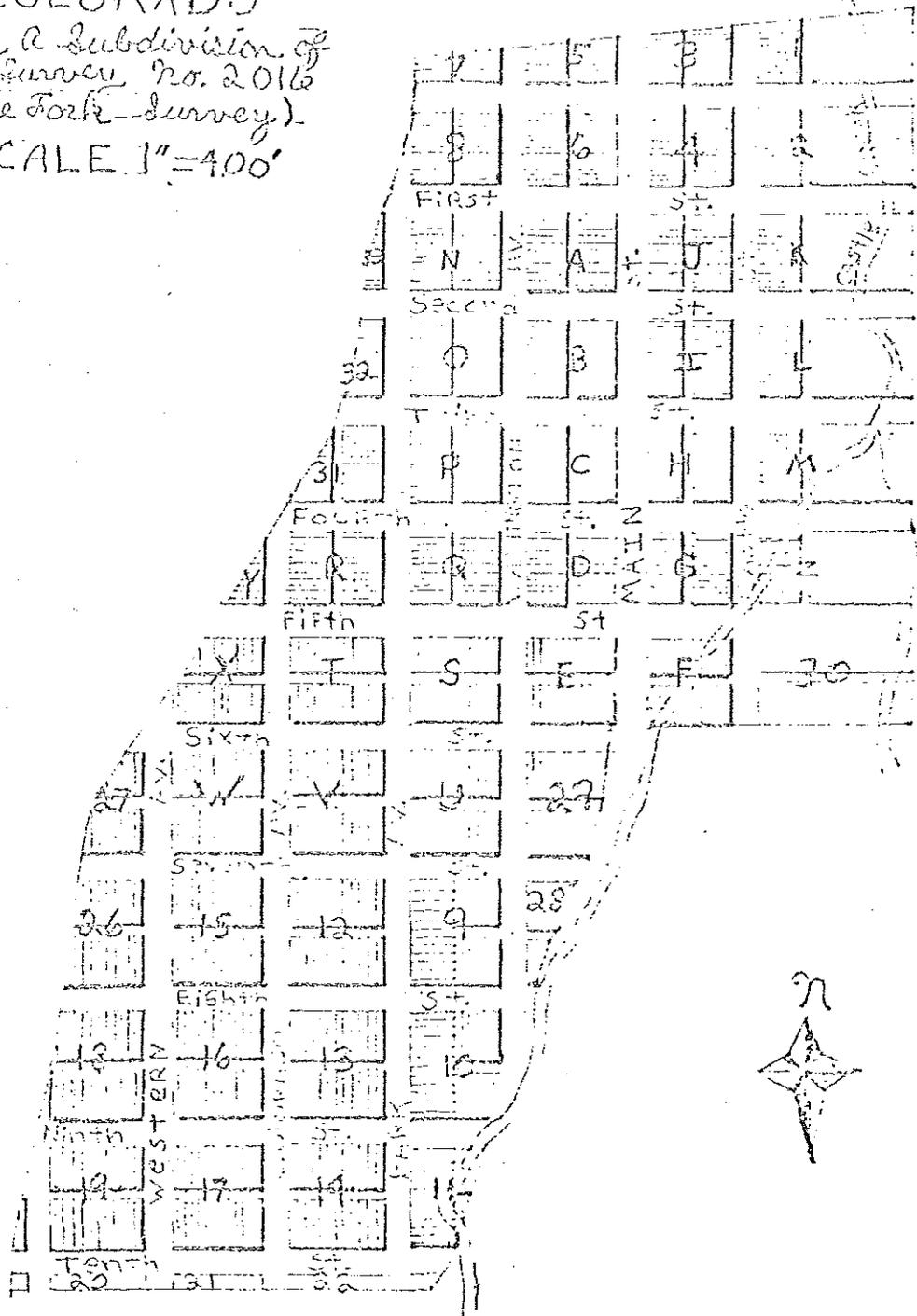
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APPENDIX A

PLAT
OF THE
TOWN OF ASHCROFT
PITKIN COUNTY
COLORADO

Being a Subdivision of
U.S. Survey No. 2016
(Castle Fork Survey).

SCALE 1"=400'



John Bosco - R.E.

APPENDIX B

Claim near 1500' x 300'

MINES

The following information was taken from the Colorado Mining Directory published in 1883. All mines listed were located in the Columbia Mining District unless stated otherwise. Not all mines in the Ashcroft area were visited due to insufficient information.

ALYCON

Owners - D.S. SOWLE and TINGLEY S. WOOD - Leadville;
J.D. MC CARTHY - Ashcroft

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1881 and was situated on Pearl Mountain, Elk Mountain District, six miles southwest of Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure from three feet to twelve feet in width with a pay streak from six inches to twenty-two inches in width which contained brittle and ruby silver and assayed from 300 to 10,000 ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. In 1883, the claim was developed by a drift on the vein fifty feet in length.

BEECHER GROUP

Owners - J.P. WATKINS, C.R. JOHNSON, A.W. JOHNSON, B.H. LUMLEY-
Ashcroft

The group was comprised of the BEECHER, INDEX # 1, INDEX # 2, JAY BIRD, OLD DOMINION, SAM BOSS, LAST CHANCE, and LITTLE ANNIE lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. The mines were located in 1882 and were situated on the west slope of Vermont Hill, twelve miles from Ashcroft.

All veins were fissures from two and one-half to four feet in width

containing quartz, galena, gray copper and brittle silver which assayed from twenty ounces to seventy ounces silver per ton. Developments in 1883 consisted of assessment work.

BELLE OF LA CROSSE GROUP

Owners - JOHN B. BROOKS, WILLIAM C. DAVIS, JOSEPH EHRINGER and
W.H. COVERT - Ashcroft

The group was comprised of BELLE OF LA CROSSE, WABASHAW CHIEF, and MANATOKA lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. These mines were located in 1881 and were situated on Pearl Pass, near Pearl Mountain, six miles from Ashcroft.

All veins were fissures four feet in width with pay streaks eight inches in width containing quartz, with brittle silver and silver glance which assayed 120 ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of three shafts, each twenty-five feet in depth.

BRANDON

Owner - JASON E. FREEMAN - Aspen

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1881 and situated in Conundrum Gulch, eleven miles from Aspen.

The vein was a fissure four feet in width with a pay streak six inches in width containing galena and copper which assayed fifteen ounces silver per ton in a lime-rock gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of a tunnel thirty feet in length.

BROOKS' SMELTER

Owners - JOHN B. BROOKS and GEORGE BETHUNE - Ashcroft;
LEWIS WEINEL - Hannibal, Missouri

The smelter, located at Ashcroft, consisted of a frame building, forty-five feet by fifty feet, which contained a water-jacket furnace, Blake crusher, Cornish rolls, roaster and pulverizer. Motive

power was supplied by a twenty-horse-power engine in connection with which was a sampling works. Capacity was sixty tons per twenty-four hour day.

CAPTAIN MATTHEWS

Owners - P.B. MATTHEWS, and GEORGE FIELDS - Chicago, Illinois;
CHARLES H. FIELDS - Aspen

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1881 and situated in Conundrum Gulch on West Castle Creek, fourteen miles from Aspen.

The vein was a contact three feet in width which contained carbonates of copper in a lime-rock gangue and milled, when sorted, eight percent copper and forty ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of a fifteen foot shaft and a drift on the vein twenty-two feet long.

CASTLE PEAK GROUP

Owners - Information not available

The group was comprised of thirteen claims, the names of which were not given, and were located on Slate Mountain near the TAM O'SHANTER and YELLOW BOY properties. Location date was not given.

All veins were fissures from one foot to six feet in width with pay streaks from five inches to twenty inches in width which contained lead and copper carbonates and galena in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of a tunnel on each claim from twenty-five feet to 125 feet in length.

CHANCE.

Owners - J.C. EAMES, PETER RILEY, W.B. MAYHAM - Aspen

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1880 and was situated near the TAM O'SHANTER mines, four and one-half miles from

Ashcroft.

CHICAGO

Owners - A.D. HINKLE and GEORGE FREELAND - Buena Vista;
C.J. COLBURN - Aspen

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1880 and was situated on Hogan's Peak, three quarters of a mile from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure four feet in width and contained quartz with galena which assayed eighteen percent lead and twelve ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of two shafts twelve feet and twenty-two feet in depth.

COLUMBIA and TIPPERARY BOY

Owners - J.M. LEAHY, PHIL HARRINGTON and J.B. WALSH - Ashcroft

The claims, each 1500 feet by 300 feet, were located in 1880 and were situated on Brilliant Hill, one-quarter mile from Ashcroft.

Both veins were fissures four feet in width which contained quartz and assayed fifty-eight ounces silver and two and one-half ounces gold per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of two tunnels 100 feet and 150 feet in length and a shaft eighty-five feet in depth.

COLUMBUS GROUP

Owners - D.J. HOPKINS and W.L. HOPKINS - Aspen; E.A. BUCK - New York, New York

The group was comprised of the COLUMBUS, MONITOR, NORTH STAR and FLOAT lodes, each 1500 by 300 feet. The mines were located in 1880 and were situated in Cooper's Camp.

The veins were fissures fifteen feet in width with pay streaks four inches to twenty-two inches in width which contained iron and spar carrying galena and assayed twelve ounces to thirty ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of three tunnels, forty

feet and twenty feet in length.

CONCHO

Owners - JULIUS REINER, F.F. REINER and THEODORE KRAETSCH - Ashcroft

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1881 and was situated on Pearl Mountain, six miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure three feet in width with a pay streak fourteen inches in width which contained galena, with some silver glance in a lime-rock gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of a tunnel twenty feet in length.

COXHEAD and COLLINGWOOD

Owners - R.R. TELLER - Aspen and JAMES FEELEY - Ashcroft

The Coxhead, 1500 feet by 150 feet, and the Collingwood, 1500 feet by 300 feet, were located in 1881 and were situated on Unexpected Mountain, twelve miles from Aspen.

The veins were fissures from two and one-half to six feet in width which contained spar with galena and gray copper and assayed forty-eight ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of a shaft twenty feet deep.

CUMMINS

Owners - JACOB SANDERS - Leadville and others

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was situated on the Conundrum Gulch slope of Eureka Mountain, West Castle District, thirteen miles from Aspen. No location date was given.

The vein was a fissure three feet in width with a pay streak from ten inches to thirty inches which contained quartz with galena with some ruby silver and milled, when sorted, from 100 ounces to 200 ounces silver per ton.

Development in 1883 consisted of a tunnel sixty-five feet in length, and a shaft forty feet in depth and an open cut of fifteen feet. Output was fifty tons.

FANNIE E. VANCE

Owners - JOHN W. O'CONNELL - Ashcroft; LOU C. LEONARD - Leadville

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1880 and was situated on the west slope of Taylor Range at Ashcroft.

The vein was a contact from four feet to eight feet in width which contained carbonates and galena and assayed eighteen percent lead and from thirty ounces to seventy ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of a shaft twenty-two feet in depth and a tunnel seventy-five feet in length.

FORSAKEN GROUP

Owners - EDWARD CAIN - Leadville; W.H. BUSH, J.L. ROUTH, FRANK OBISTON, W.S. CHEESMAN and J.S. DUFF - Denver

The group was comprised of the FORSAKEN, SPAR, SPAR #2, and SHAMUS O'BRIEN lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. The mines were located in 1880 and were situated on Castle Peak, four and one-half miles from Ashcroft.

All veins were fissures from three feet to eight feet in width with pay streaks from three inches to twelve inches in width which contained galena and gray copper and assayed from 40 to 100 ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of five shafts ranging from ten feet to twenty feet in depth and forty feet of drifts and open cuts.

GARIBALDI GROUP

Owners - J.D. DAVIS, WILLIAM E. BOLTON and THOMAS WILKINSON-Ashcroft

The group was comprised of the GARIBALDI, GARIBALDI EXTENSION, BIRTHDAY and BIRTHDAY EXTENSION lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. These mines were located in 1882 and were situated in Conundrum Gulch on West Castle Creek.

All veins were fissures from three feet to five feet in width which contained gray copper and copper glance and assayed seventeen percent copper and forty-nine ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of a tunnel ninety feet in length.

GRACIE GROUP

Owners - MARTIN SULLIVAN, CHARLES A. WYMAN and CHARLES DAVIS - Leadville

The group was comprised of the GRACIE, 1200 feet by 300 feet, and the OCCIDENT, TERRY and RENO lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. These mines were located in 1880 and were situated in Conundrum Gulch, sixteen miles from Aspen.

All veins were fissures from two feet to two and one-half feet in width with pay streaks from two inches to ten inches in width which contained galena and sulphurets and assayed from fifty ounces to 300 ounces silver per ton in a lime-rock gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of four shafts from eighteen feet to thirty-three feet in depth and a tunnel thirty-five feet in length. Output was 10 tons.

GRAND UNION GROUP

Owners - MARTIN SULLIVAN, JAMES P. O'BRIEN, P.J. CUNNINGHAM and JESSIE HONLEY - Leadville

The group was comprised of the GRAND UNION, LITTLE JESSIE and COLORADO lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. The mines were located in 1880 and were situated in Conundrum Gulch on West Castle Creek, twelve miles from Aspen.

All veins were fissures from three feet to fourteen feet in width with pay streaks from six inches to twelve inches in width which contained galena, gray copper and sulphurets and assayed from fifty to 150 ounces silver per ton in a lime-rock gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of two open cuts, each twelve feet in length and a tunnel fifty feet in length.

GRAY EAGLE GROUP

Owners - SAMUEL KELLY and CHARLES BOVARD - Ashcroft; WILLIAM LINN - Leadville

The group was comprised of the GRAY EAGLE, LEE and TAMA BOY lodes, each 1500 feet by 300 feet. The mines were located in 1880 and were situated on the west slope of Slate Mountain, four miles from Ashcroft.

All veins were fissures from three feet to four feet in width with pay streaks one inch to eight inches in width which contained galena and assayed thirty-five percent lead and forty ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of one shaft twenty feet in depth and two tunnels thirty feet and fifty feet in length.

GUNNISON PRINCE

Owners - THOMAS COMBS, B.L. SOWLE, W.F. COXHEAD and H. SNYDER - Ashcroft

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1880 and situated on Slate Mountain, two and one-half miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure three feet in width with a pay streak from six inches to fifteen inches in width which contained galena and assayed fifty ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of one tunnel thirty-five feet in length.

HIGHLAND CHIEF

Owner - C.H. SMITH - Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1880 and was situated on the south slope of Slate Mountain, four miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure three feet in width with a pay streak twelve inches to twenty-two inches in width which contained quartz, galena, gray copper and assayed 278 ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of a shaft twenty-five feet in depth and a tunnel forty feet in length.

I.X.L. and CAPTAIN BROOKS

Owners - JOHN B. BROOKS, WILLIAM COPE and ALEXANDER COLLYER - Aspen

The claims, each 1500 feet by 300 feet, were located in 1880 and were situated on the south side of Conundrum Gulch, four miles from Ashcroft.

Both veins were fissures four feet and ten feet in width respectively, with pay streaks of two and one-half inches and eighteen inches in width which contained quartz and silver glance and assayed fifty-two ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of two shafts twenty feet and twenty-two feet in depth.

J.P. Jr.

Owners - PETER LONERGAN, J.P. FLYNN, JAMES SULLIVAN, JAMES GOODWIN and CHARLES HUGHES - Ashcroft

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1882 and was situated on the northeast slope of Slate Mountain, four and one-half miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a contact five feet in width with a pay streak of eleven inches in width which contained carbonates, in a quartz

gangue. Development in 1883 consisted of one open cut twelve feet in length.

JIM FISK

Owners - D.B. SANTRY - Ashcroft; FRANK DODGE, HENRY DODGE, T.C. DODGE, T.A. SANTRY and R.W. MC DONALD - Leadville

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1882 and was situated at the head of Traveler's Gulch, five miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure six feet in width which contained quartz carrying silver and assayed twenty-seven ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of a shaft ten feet in depth.

JIM FISK and JOHN BULL

Owner - M.D. HANNAKER - Ashcroft

The claims, each 1500 feet by 300 feet, were located in 1881 and were situated on West Castle Creek, ten miles from Ashcroft.

The veins were fissures three feet in width with pay streaks nine inches in width which contained galena with brittle silver and wire silver and assayed 100 ounces to 235 ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of a shaft twelve feet in depth and a tunnel thirty feet in length.

JOSEPHINE

Owners - J.P. WATKINS, JOHN OVERMAN and JOHN BOLTON - Ashcroft

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1880 and was situated on the south slope of Slate Mountain, three and one-half miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure three feet in width with a pay streak of fourteen inches in width which contained galena and assayed seventy-six ounces silver per ton in a quartz gangue. Development in 1883

consisted of a shaft fifteen feet in depth.

LAST CHANCE and AMAZON

Owners - Prospect Mining Company, D.B. SANTRY - Ashcroft; T.C. DODGE, FRANK DODGE, HENRY DODGE and C.H. LYKE -Leadville

The claims, each 1500 feet by 300 feet, were located in 1881 and 1882 and were situated on Difficult Creek, five miles from Ashcroft.

Both were fissures three feet and five feet in width with pay streaks four inches and eighteen inches in width which contained quartz carrying gold and silver and assayed an average of fifteen percent copper, two ounces gold and eleven ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of one shaft twenty-five feet in depth in the Last Chance and one shaft fifty-six feet in depth in the Amazon.

LAST DIME

Owners - LOU C. LEONARD - Leadville; JOHN W. O'CONNELL; THOMAS SMITHAM and WILLIAM WARNER - Ashcroft

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was located in 1881 and was situated on Conundrum Peak, three miles from Ashcroft.

The vein was a fissure eight feet in width which contained quartz with galena, iron and copper pyrites and assayed thirteen percent copper and twenty ounces silver per ton. Development in 1883 consisted of a tunnel fifty feet in length.

LAURIE

Owners - F.I. SMITH, A.E. JONES and GEORGE STARK - Fairplay

The claim, 1500 feet by 300 feet, was situated on Copper Mountain, one and one-half miles from Ashcroft. No location date was given.

The vein was a fissure three feet in width with a pay streak from four inches to ten inches in width which contained galena and

BUSINESS LISTINGS

The following business listings were taken from the Colorado Business Directory, the Rocky Mountain Sun, Aspen, the Ashcroft Journal and the Ashcroft Herald. The listings are not necessarily complete for each year. Population count is given if available.

1881

Ashcroft Feed Stable - Teuscher Brothers, props.
Bliley and Tyler - hardware
Borom, W.W. - miners' supplies
Brooks and Dunbar - real estate and mining brokers
Carbary and Perry - stationary
City Restaurant - Bennett and Jordan, props.
Covert House - W. H. Covert, prop.
Galligan, W.J. - attorney at law
Kinney and Company - general merchandise
(later sold to McCarthy and Flynn)
Livery - Sowle and Combs, props.
McCarthy and Flynn - general merchandise
Riverside Hotel - Bolton Brothers, props.
Smith, C.H. - general merchandise
Tilford and Middleton - attorneys at law

1882

population - 500

Abbey and Hallett - groceries
Col. Adams and Company - bankers
Bath house and barber shop - McConnell and Winkler, props.
✓ Billiard hall and saloon - Mr. Wist, prop.
Boarding house - Mrs. Fonda, prop.
Boesch and Company - meat market
Bruckman, J. - notary public and dealer in mines
Carbary, Phil - stationary
Castle Peak Smelter
City Restaurant - Jordan and Bennett, props.
Clark's Hotel
Combs House
✓ Craig and French - saloon
Dance hall - L. W. Worthington
De Mattos, J. P. - attorney at law
Drug store - Hugo Eyssel, prop.
Florer Brothers - groceries

1882 (continued)

- ✓Hughes and Cudihee - saloon
- Illsley and Lloyd - civil engineers
- ✓Kearney, Peter - saloon
- Kilborn, G. D. - assayer
- Kruse, Conrad - lime kiln
- Kunz, Henry - Justice of the Peace
- Leahy and Company - meat market
- ✓Little Church on the Corner Saloon - Jim Slater, prop.
- Lodging tent - Mrs. H. C. Bird, prop.
- McCarthy, Rev. - M. M., O. S. B.
- McCarthy and Flynn - general merchandise
- Mannville and Company (formerly McCarthy and Flynn)
- Maxwell and Company - real estate
- Meirr, J. E. - M. D.
- × Monaghan Brothers - liquors and cigars
- Nathan, Ed - clothings and gents furnishings
- Nobles, C. F. - attorney at law
- O'Connell and Overman - contractors and builders
- O'Hara, Peter - notary public
- Pendleton and O'Hara - two-story building
- Pentland Hotel - Fred Kincaid, prop.
- Perry, Miss Emma - teacher
- Perry, Richard - boots and shoes
- Perry, Richard - Justice of the Peace
- Riverside Hotel - J. Bolton, prop.
- Smith, O. D. - hardware
- Sowle, B. L. - assay office
- Sowle Brothers - billiard hall and bowling alley
- Sowle Brothers - livery, sale and feed stable
- Teuscher L. - postmaster
- Teuscher Brothers - livery sale and feed stable
- Thistle Dew Saloon - Mr. Hunziker prop.
- Wall and Witter Stage Line
- Walters, S. R. - constable
- Watkins, I. P. - general blacksmithing

HUNLEY'S ADDITION or NEW TOWN - 1882

- Bevier, Charles - groceries
- Donegan, James A. and Daniel - general store
- Mrs. Farrell - hotel
- Sharp and Gelder - hardware and telegraph

1883

population - summer, 1000
 winter, uncertain

- Abbey and Hallett - general merchandise
- Alleman and French - saloon
- Ashcroft Herald - Mackey and Mason
- Baldwin and Ripperton - general merchandise

1883 (continued)

Boesch and King - meat market
 Brooks, John B. - U. S. Deputy Mineral Surveyor
 Borom and White - livery
 Brooks, Bethune and Company - smelter
 Carbary, Phil - stage line
 Combs House - Thomas Combs, prop.
 Davis, J. T. - builder
 Dayton, Mrs. C. S. - dry goods
 Elma Hotel - M. C. Sharpless, prop.
 Eyssel, Hugo - drugs
 Flynn, J. P. - city treasurer
 Gaffron, P. E. - assayer
 Goodwin, James - saloon
 Illsley and Lloyd - civil engineers
 Kilborn, G. D. - assayer
 Kruse, Conrad - lime kiln
 Kruse, G. - blacksmith
 Kunz, Henry - Justice of the Peace
 Lonergan, P. - mayor
 Miller, M. G. - attorney at law
 Mollin, F. L. - physician
 Monaghan, T. - saloon
 Monson, B. - saloon
 O'Hara, P. - notary public
 Overman, J. W. - marshal
 Perry, Richard - Justice of the Peace
 Rathgen and Company - general merchandise
 Reynolds, D. T. - builder
 Riverside Hotel - Boulton Brothers
 Schmidt, Mrs. L. - restaurant
 Slater, James - saloon
 Smith, O. D. - hardware
 Sowle, B. L. - assayer
 Sowle Brothers - livery and feed
 Sulton, Mrs. F. - cigars
 Tam O'Shanter Mining Company - E. Smith, manager
 Teuscher and Carbary - books and stationary
 Teuscher, L. T. - assayer and postmaster
 Watkins, I. P. - blacksmith
 Wist J. W. - saloon
 Wilkinson, Mrs. T. A. - general merchandise
 Worthington, M. V. - blacksmith

1884

population - summer, 1,000

Ashcroft Herald - Mackey and Mason
 Boesch and King - general merchandise and meat market
 Borom and White - livery
 Brooks, John B. - U. S. Deputy Mineral Surveyor

1884 (continued)

Brooks, Bethune and Company - smelter
 Carson Stage Line
 Combs House - Thomas Combs, prop.
 Eyszel, Hugo - drugs
 Goodwin, James - saloon
 Hallett, S. I. - mine owner
 Illsley and Lloyd - civil engineers
 Kilborn, G. D. - assayer
 Kindt, Amos - miner
 Kinney, J. A. - miner
 Kruse and McCormick - blacksmiths
 Kunz, Henry - Justice of the Peace
 Miller, M. G. - attorney at law
 Monaghan, T. - saloon
 Monson, B. - saloon
 Nobles, C. F. - mine owner
 Perry, Richard - Justice of the Peace
 Schmidt, Mrs. L. - restaurant
 Smith, O. D. - hardware
 Sowle, B. L. - assayer and mine owner
 Tam O'Shanter Mining Company - J. F. Tabor, manager
 Teuscher, A. S. and L. T. - mines and real estate
 Teuscher and Carbary - books and stationary
 Teuscher, L. T. - assayer and postmaster
 Traynor and Company - general merchandise
 Turley and Bowles - general merchandise
 Watkins, I. P. - blacksmith
 Wist, J. W. - saloon
 Worthington, M. V. - blacksmith

1885
 population - 100

Goodwin, James - saloon
 Hallett, S. I. - mine owner
 Kilborn, G. D. - assayer
 Kindt, Amos - miner
 Monson, B. - saloon
 Perry, Richard - Justice of the Peace
 Schmidt, Mrs. L. - restaurant
 Sowle, B. L. - assayer and miner
 Tam O'Shanter Mining Company - J. F. Tabor, manager
 Teuscher, L. T. - books and stationary
 Teuscher, L. T. - assayer and postmaster
 Traynor and Company - general merchandise
 Wist, J. W. - saloon

1886
population - 100

Fogg and Jones - hotel and saloon
Gavin, John - saloon
Johnson, Morris - hotel
Kinchin, George - saloon
Monson, B. - general merchandise
Traynor and Company - general merchandise
Warner, Mrs. Wm. - hotel

1887
population - 100

Bennett and Monaghan - saloon
Durrow, J. W. - saloon
Traynor and Company - general merchandise

1888
population - 50

Kinney, F. L. - grocer
Warren, W. R. - restaurant

1889
population - 50

Kinney, F. L. - grocer
Warren, W. R. - restaurant

1890
population - 50

Kinney, F. L. - grocer
Warren, W. R. - restaurant

1891
population - 50

Kinney, F. L. - grocer
Warren, W. R. - restaurant

1892
population - 50
Kinney, F. L. - general merchandise and postmaster

1893
population - 50

Kinney, F. L. - general merchandise and postmaster

1894
population - 125

Crowther, J. - manager, Express mines
Long, Robert, prop. - passenger and freight line
Long, Wheeler, and Teuscher, props. - Ashcroft
Trout Ponds and Hatchery
Reiner, F. F. - postmaster
Robson and Reiner - general merchandise

1895
population - 125

Adams, D. R. - stage
Castle Park Mining and Smelting Company - F. F.
Reiner, manager
Crowther, J. - manager, Express mines
Dawson, Milo, manager - Treasure Vault Tunnel Company
Leahy, J. M., manager - Monte Christo mine
Long, Robert, prop. - passenger and freight line
Long, Wheeler and Teuscher, props. - Ashcroft
Trout Ponds and Hatchery
McArthur, Dan - saloon
Oleson, B., manager - Difficult Creek Gold Mining
Company
Oleson, C. W., manager - Antimony mine
Pecos Mining and Milling Company - F. F. Reiner, manager
Reiner, F. F. - postmaster and Justice of the Peace
Robson and Reiner - general merchandise
Russell, H. J., manager - Big Four Mining Company

1896
population - 100

Adams, D. R. - tri-weekly stage to Aspen
Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Larson, prop.
Ashcroft Smelter - H. Webber, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Pond and Hatchery
McArthur, Dan - Postmaster and saloon
Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace
Robson and Reiner - general merchandise

1897
population - 150

Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Larson, prop.
 Ashcroft Smelter - H. Webber, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Wm. J. Wheeler, prop.
 Foxall, C. W. - mail and stage line tri-weekly to
 Aspen
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace
 Robson and Reiner - general merchandise

1898
population - 150

Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Larson, prop.
 Ashcroft Smelter - H. Webber, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Wm. J. Wheeler, prop.
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace
 Taylor, Uriah - mail and stage line tri-weekly to
 Aspen

1899
population - 150

Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Larson, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Wm. J. Wheeler, prop.
 Hannon, J. E. - tri-weekly stage line to Aspen
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace

1900
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
 Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Johnstone, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Wm. J. Wheeler, prop.
 Hannon, J. E. - tri-weekly stage line to Aspen
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace

1901
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Johnstone, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Wm. J. Wheeler, prop.
Dawson, Milo - mine superintendent
Hannon, J. E. - tri-weekly stage line to Aspen
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
Miller, Fred - superintendent, Tam O'Shanter mine
Olsen, Charles - mine superintendent
Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace

1902
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Johnstone, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Dawson, Milo - mine superintendent
Hannon, J. E. - tri-weekly stage line to Aspen
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
Miller, Fred - superintendent, Tam O'Shanter mine
Olsen, Charles - mine superintendent
Reiner, F. F. - Justice of the Peace

1903
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Johnstone, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Dawson, Milo - mine superintendent
Green, William P. - mine superintendent
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
Miller, Fred - manager of Tam O'Shanter mine
Taylor, Uriah - tri-weekly stage line to Aspen

1904
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Larson, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon

1905
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - Mrs. J. Larson, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon

1906
population - 100

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
Miller, Calvin - mine superintendent

1907
population - 60

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
Miller, Calvin - mine superintendent
Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

1908
population - 60

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
Miller, Calvin - mine superintendent
Schafer, George H. - hotel prop.
Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

1909
population - 60

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon

1909 (continued)

Miller, Calvin - mine superintendent
 Schafer, George H. - hotel prop.
 Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

1910
population - 60

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
 Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Miller, Calvin - mine superintendent
 Schafer, George H. - hotel prop.
 Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

1911
population - 60

Armstrong, Charles - mining engineer
 Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Miller, Calvin - mine superintendent
 Schafer, George H. - hotel prop.
 Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

1912
population - 60

Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

1913
population - 60

Ashcroft Hotel - M. B. Sweeney, prop.
 Ashcroft Trout Hatchery - Robert Long, prop.
 Leahy, J. M. - Justice of the Peace
 McArthur, Dan - postmaster and saloon
 Sweeney, M. B. - general merchandise

After 1913 Ashcroft was no longer listed in the Colorado Business Directory.

APPENDIX D

THE PANORAMA TRAIL

Slate Mountain's sombruous zephyrs say
Oh, why do you stay away
From scenes that oft entranced you,
The craggy nooks you love?
Oh, come and take your outing
O'er cliff and cragg go scouting;
There's a gloom throughout the gulches
That your presence can remove.
Cathedral falls are lashing
The flow to spray that's dashing
Down the precipice thru the canyon's
Mossy verdure to the vale.
Will its soft cadence impel you
To your outing when it tells you
That your Columbines now bloom along
The Panorama Trail?

Yes! Your Columbines are blooming fair,
As when first you wandered here,
From boulders, classic circle
For an outing in the hills.
Naught to them could compare
When festooned in your raven hair
Your silken glossy tresses
That ranged to your wrists in frills.
Fair nature aptly did select
The one most fitted to reflect
Her rarest charms of flower and maid
On beauty's grandest scale.
When peeping from your jetty hair
And nestling on your bosom fair,
Were Columbines that grew along
The Panorama Trail.

The wild flowers in profusion grow
 Between the plots of July snow,
 That dot the circle of the lake
 And linger near the shore.
 Where sprakling waves are sweeping
 And festive trout are leaping.
 The mountain sheep are posing
 For your camera's click once more.
 The pets you loved the best of all
 Come to the cabin when you'd call.
 Your Camp Birds and Cronies
 and pretty mountain Quail
 Are yearning for your love caress,
 Your soothing voice and tenderness,
 And your Columbines now bloom along
 The Panorama Trail.

Ah, well I know you will not come
 Again where nature's pendulum
 Vibrates mid rugged scenery
 At Spirey timberline.
 That's why I'm so lonely
 And thinking of you only;
 Like sunbeams thru the mountain mist
 Your soul melts into mine.
 I have plucked the rarest garlands
 And will take them to you, darling,
 You will know them by the essence,
 Of the fragrance they exhale.
 With affection's tears bedew them
 As o'er your grave I strew them--
 Your Columbines that grew along
 The Panorama Trail

-- By Jack Leahy

This poem was published in the Aspen Times a number of years ago. The Panorama Trail was so designated by the Forest Service at the urging of the late Jack Leahy. It commences at the end of Pine Creek above Ashcroft and continues up the creek to Cathedral Lake and Cathedral Peak. From there it continues on up to, and over Electric Pass and on down to Conundrum Springs and Conundrum Gulch. This is up Castle Creek south to Aspen, Colorado.

HOW WE BUILT A CHURCH AT ASHCROFT

1880

Jack Leahy
Poet of Elk Mountain

1

Come all ye Irish gentlemen, a story I would tell
Of St. Tim's church at Ashcroft and all that there befell.
Since snows did fall and streams run down from lofty Castle Peak,
More witching spot could ne'er be found, of poet man to speak;
Or lovely vales, bestrewn with flowers, or columbine more rare;
Or sparkling waters foaming down, or asure skies more fair.

2

The faithful met at Paddy's with chairman Deacon Perch,
Six trustees were elected and empowered to build a church.
The reason why - the camp was shocked one evening's stage to meet,
A portly dame, one Madam Nobbs, with six from Holliday Street.
We were all high protectionists, or, as the case may be,
The vote stood ninety-nine to one 'gainst reciprocity.

3

The trustees were moral men with here and there a flaw;
Brilliant Lawyer Callahan, with perpetual motion jaw;
And Jim McCool of Provo, of whom gossip doth aver
That he was one of the elect at the Meadow Mountain Massacre;
And Roaring Mike, sleek Broker Shark and bibulous Deacon Perch,
With Billy Shale the expert, were the trustees of the church.

4

A site was soon selected on the knoll on Silver Hill
That overlooked the valley and the Rocky Mountain Mill.
The hearts of all beholders, filled with solemn, holy love,
A flame devine reminding them of their prospects far above,
Forgot their prospects in the hills and all their earthly woes,
With experts, side and apex rights, and gun plays with their foes.

5

They dispensed with all formalities, they were business to the brim,
 With but one thought, to dedicate to the Irish saint, St. Tim.
 The announcement brought forth hearty praise from many fervent hearts,
 Who knew the Saint first introduced our silver in the arts,
 And spread its use as money, and in every way had he
 Fostered and protected it, a benignant tutelary.

6

And Irish hearts were light that day, they rambled through the town
 And drank and cussed and fought and prayed and danced to Garry Owen.
 In all their past adversity, since they were forced to roam,
 To leave the Isle to memory dear and wander far from home,
 This was the first occasion when in all the interim,
 Such honor had been done to him, their patron saint, St. Tim.

7

The Reverend Father Placid next day arrived in camp
 From o'er the range at Canyon, a most sintillant lamp,
 That ne'er beneath the bushel hid, but in refulgent rays
 Caused admantine hearts to break, reluctant tongues to praise
 The glory of our heavenly king, and her we hold as queen,
 And acknowledge with contrition the lowly Nazarene.

8

The trustees met the Father, led by honorable Callahan,
 Who knew small law or equity and practiced catch as can.
 They were ushered to the presence of this calm and holy man,
 And without an introduction this lawyer thus began:
 "With apostolic benediction your assistance we implore,
 And Jehovah will reward you when you reach the golden shore.

9

"We bespeak your riper wisdom and pray you us advise
 In this spiritual proceeding, this heavenly enterprise,
 In which we lay our treasures, in haec, ad hoc, quoddam,
 At his feet and beg his favor for our sacrificial lamb;
 To wit, the lofty spire we very soon shall raise
 On Silver Hill above the vale, where Ashcroft lies in tranquil ways."

10

A silence spread for yet awhile, then up rose Broker Shark:
 "Most Reverend Sir, we hold that this shall ever be a mark
 Of holy veneration, such grace doth heaven lend
 To fulfillment of the law 'Be thou faithful to the end.'
 Five thousand plunks are promised us and now are fully due,
 With two thousand for a parsonage of Hold Up Avenue."

11

Father Placid rose in rapture and shook each trustee's hand.
 "Behold in me a servant who obeys divine command.
 To do the will of Him on high, before you I appear,
 To glorify His Holy name out on this wild frontier,
 Where I find three bustling hamlets, or cities so to speak,
 Nestling in this quiet valley neath the shade of Castle Peak.

12

"With Hunley's in the center and Kellog lying south,
 And Ashcroft joining on the north, I find that Pine Creek's mouth
 Is centrally located, between the sister towns.
 Then build the church on one of those majestic rising mounds
 And throw the life line out" - "Cut her short," yelled Roaring Mike,
 "You're prospectin' a blind lead in a big slumgullion dike."

13

"I tell you, boys, I've tried to be a sober Christian man,
 Since I let the light o'day shine through Apache Dan.
 Deak Perch knows well that Hunley duck on me did get the draw,
 And but for good old Calico Sal this day I'd never saw.
 If the church is built at Hunley's I stand right here to tell
 That fifty churches in a row wouldn't keep 'em out of Hell."

14

Quoth Jim McCool: "This latest pill has a most bitter taste;
 But, brethren, in such matters we should never act in haste.
 As for my sins, I will admit the bunch I ran last year
 Were bred betwix a branding' iron and a festive Texas steer.
 'Tis said I am not married, but Parson - well, of course
 I cannot marry her by law till she gets her divorce.

15

"To save my mortal soul from Hell, with all my will and power
 I've entered in the vineyard at this eleventh hour,
 To be a Christian soldier, by my colors standing true,
 To do that unto others just what I wish to do.
 If the church is built at Hunley's I have but one desire;
 To visit it in broad daylight and set the shack on fire."

16

Then Deacon Perch rose saying: "We must this day decide,
 As Broker Shark has options, down to Devanny's slide.
 To me it feels like pulling teeth to be giving up the knoll,
 But I'll do even more than that to save immortal soul.
 Where'er it's built, you'll find me with God's praises upon my tongue.
 Thank God I'm glad to take my drink from the spigot or the bung."

17

Then forth stood Billy Shale who'd been silent until now,
 With perspiration steaming from his scientific brow.
 "Your conclusions, worthy father, the very Gods do mock.
 Our Savior bade St. Peter build his church upon a rock.
 By blow-pipe test we find the knoll hard, massive diorite;
 On the west eruptive granite, on the east flint dolomite."

18

Earthquake and volcano-proof forever t'will remain;
 It hits the northwest corner of the Rock of Ages vein,
 Theology and geology go ever hand in hand.
 If the church is built at Pine Creek you build it on the sand.
 The mound's a mere deposit of a glacial moraine,
 And if you put it at that spot your building is in vain."

19

Father Placid then got ruffled and lost his peaceful smile;
 "You may build your church at Hunley's, at Kellogg, or a mile
 This side of nowhere, as you please. I'm well content that when
 You get your just reward on earth, I'll see you at the pen;
 My duties there I will resume and greet you when you come;
 Your hearts are hard as Silver Hill; to the voice of God you're dumb."

Next morn the Father left, with dissension in the flock.
 Some shouted, "Put her on the sand," some, "Stick her on the rock.
 To pristine resolution, though, the trustees all were game,
 On Silver Hill they blasted and erected high the frame;
 But funds that were forthcoming are yet forthcoming still,
 And nothing more was ever done at St. Tim's on the hill.

L'Envoi

Her Nobbs, the Madame, no less bold than she of scarlet fame,
 Between two suns went up the hill and stole away the frame,
 And builded her a house upon the sands of Castle Creek,
 As if to mock the teachings of our Savior, mild and meek.
 "God is not mocked." Ye sinners, hear and heed the fearful fate
 Of Nobbs' gay crowd, and mend your ways before it is too late.

Cathedral Dome tossed off a slide where never slide was known,
 That with increasing fury ran from e'en its topmost comb;
 And gathering boulders as it ran, down through the Pine Creek slope,
 With vengeance from on high leaped down and buried without hope
 Of rescue, all that mocking crowd of light and erring folk,
 Who thought on failure of our church to perpetrate a joke.*

*Rocky Mountain Life, Vol. 2, No. 7, September, 1947, p. 30.

APPENDIX E

MULE SKINNER'S DELIGHT

A potent, alcoholic drink which was a favorite of early day Ashcroft residents:

Container: preferably a stoneware mug, a porcelain tin cup may be used

warm the mug on the edge of the stove

then add

Ingredients:

- A. small spoonful of brown sugar
- B. a generous jigger (or slug as it was known in the early days) each of
 - (1) blackberry brandy
 - (2) sour mash whiskey
- C. fill the mug with boiling water