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Press**

"The whirligig of fortune has stopped at Creede. Nothing yesterday, it is a town today, and will be a city tomorrow. Many a man will date his rise in the world from the hour he stepped foot in Willow Gulch!"

— *Wonderful Mines of Creede, 1891*

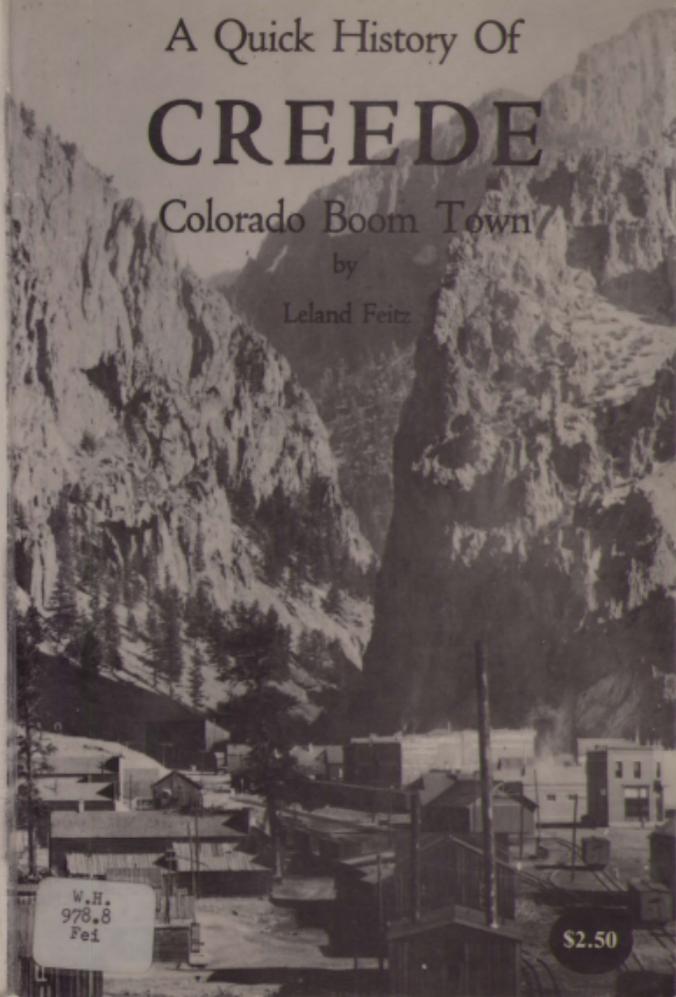
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# A Quick History Of **CREEDE**

Colorado Boom Town

by

Leland Feitz



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Leland Feitz

Cover Photograph: Creede in 1890. More of the town and all the silver mines were up the canyon beyond the gateway cliffs. (Denver Public Library Western Collection, photo by O. T. Davis)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LELAND FEITZ grew up in Colorado's San Luis Valley at La Jara and even as a child was fascinated by Creede and her silver mines. Moving to Colorado Springs in 1942, his interest shifted to Cripple Creek where he now lives part-time and about which he has written four books. Creede, however, continued to be a favorite weekend haunt and this quick history grew out of his keen interest in the area and the encouragement of other Western history buffs.



LELAND FEITZ

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## CREEDE

by

Cy Warman

Here's a land where all are equal,  
Of high or lowly birth —  
A land where men make millions  
Dug from the dreary earth.  
Here meek and mild-eyed burros  
On mineral mountains feed;  
It's day all day in the daytime,  
And there is no night in Creede.

The cliffs are solid silver,  
With wondrous wealth untold;  
The beds of its running rivers  
Are lined with purest gold.  
While the world is filled with sorrow,  
And hearts must break and bleed  
It's day all day in the daytime,  
And there is no night in Creede.



**NICHOLAS C. CREEDE**

Founder of Creede

Creede's strike on Willow Creek in 1889 started the last of the big silver booms. First called Willow, the camp was renamed for Creede in 1890 and officially incorporated into a city on March 19, 1892.



On this spot, the first Creede was built. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



This was the first camp. It was called Willow. Then, in 1890, it was renamed Creede. Later, the larger camp at the mouth of the canyon was named Creede and the first settlement became Upper Creede. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## EARLY CREEDE

Silver was discovered in the Creede area in 1889. The boom got underway the following year and the population soon skyrocketed to some 10,000 people. The slab and tent town was strung out along Willow Creek Canyon for over two miles. Restaurants, saloons, and gambling halls were open around the clock.

By 1892, \$1,000,000 worth of ore was being shipped out of Creede every month. The wealth of her mines was talked about in financial centers all over the world. They called her "Colorado's Silver Ribbed Treasure Trove."

Then, in 1893, Congress passed the Silver Act which lowered the price of silver from \$1.29 to fifty cents an ounce and Creede's heyday was over. But, during those three hectic years, Creede earned herself a lasting reputation as one of the Old West's richest and wildest mining camps.

About half the population of early Creede was made up of bunco artists, mining sharks, saloon keepers, pickpockets, dance hall girls, professional gamblers, and other riff-raff. Efforts toward bringing any kind of order into the lawless gulch were almost useless against the bad lot which populated the place.

Located near the headwaters of the Rio Grande River in southwestern Colorado's high San Juan mountains, Creede was actually in a kind of lawless no man's land owing to some uncertainties over county boundaries. About the only order was that imposed by the self-proclaimed camp "bosses." Shootings on Creede's streets and in her dozens of saloons were just part of the way of life there. Shotgun Hill graveyard filled up fast!

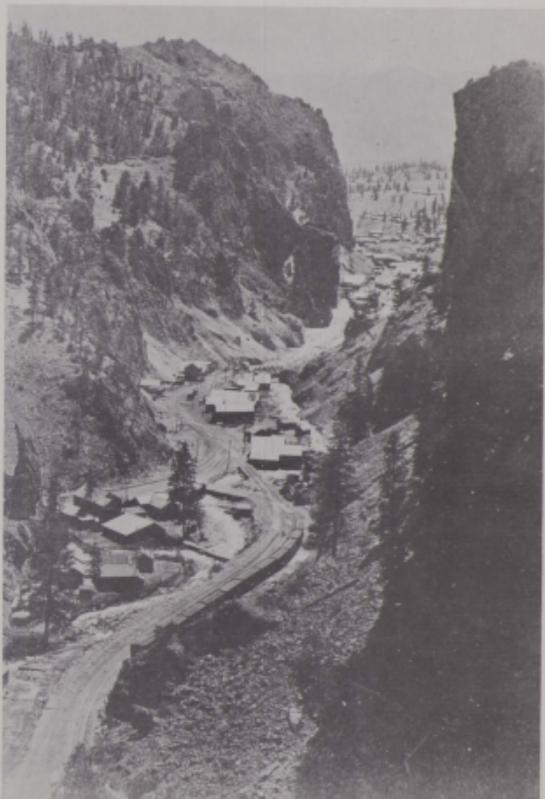
Before her sudden demise and after a disastrous fire in 1892, Creede did take on some semblance of a real city. Pine shacks were replaced with good brick buildings. Schools and churches were built. Clubs and lodges were organized and the town boasted of two opera houses. There were good daily newspapers and well-managed banks. Fine homes were built. There was good daily rail service via the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Then in 1893, Mineral County was established and Creede became a seat of government.



Upper Creede in 1892. The silver camp's first "main street" was three-fourths of a mile long, and straight as a corkscrew. The town soon burst its bounds and spread out over the meadow at the mouth of the canyon. (Denver Public Library Western Collection, photo by Clark's Studio)



Creede in 1890 was a slab and canvas town. This was the lower part of the camp known then as Jim Town. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



This dramatic view down Willow Creek Canyon shows Upper Creede, String Town, and then, at the mouth of the canyon, Creede itself. The camp was strung out for over two miles, and in some places it was only about 100 feet wide. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede street scene before the fire. A meal cost fifty cents at The Cafe. Bob Ford's Saloon was next door. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



A few Creede "dandies" in front of the Windsor Baths and the Herendeen Confectionery. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



In spite of the sign, the Vaughn Hotel went up in smoke with most of Creede's other buildings in the 1892 fire. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



Creede's early hotels were not very fancy. The Tortoni, with a European manager, operated with a little more flair than most of the others. The dining room there seated 200. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



One of Creede's most important buildings, Zang's beer depot. Through it passed most of the beer that was drunk in Creede and that was quite a lot of beer. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Over 500 shacks shot up in Creede during one ninety-day period. There was little call for house painters. Creede's taste ran toward plain boards with nail head dottings. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede Avenue during the summer of 1890 when the population was growing at the rate of 300 people a day. The press called it a "red hot" town. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede, by the spring of 1892, had exploded into a city of over 10,000 persons. This was the Creede that was soon to be leveled by fire. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## FIRE!

About six o'clock on the morning of June 5, 1892, a fire broke out in a building in downtown Creede. To warn the citizens of the "red monster," guns were shot into the morning sky, all the bells in town were rung, and the train whistles were sounded. The big blaze, fanned by a canyon breeze, danced from one pine shack to another, jumped the narrow streets, and by eight o'clock, it was all over. Creede's business district was a field of smoldering ashes. Hundreds were homeless, and the camp was never quite the same again.

Of Creede's first fire, the **Denver Republican** wrote:

"Following the fire, a wild debauch was entered into by all the sots and fast women of the camp. Free liquor was had for the stealing, and many cases of wine, bottles of whiskey, cigars, and such goods were seized and hundreds were drunk before the flames half burned down."

Three years later, fire swept through the town again. Then, in 1902, two hotels and twenty houses in upper Creede were burned down. Disaster struck again in 1936. That fire got about a third of the business district. Ten years later, the old frame courthouse went up in flames.



A flood almost washed away Creede's business district just a few weeks before the big fire did demolish it. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



Creede after the fire of June 5, 1892. The crowd is standing at the corner of Wall Street and Creede Avenue at what had been one of the city's busy intersections only two hours before. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede's big fire even burned out the dozen bridges which crossed Willow Creek. (State Historical Society of Colorado)

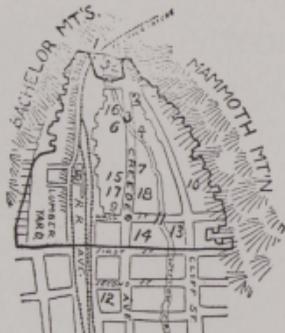


After the big fire early in June, 1892, Creede's enterprising merchants were back in business almost before the ashes cooled. This picture of the Weiss-Chapman Drug Company was taken on June 9, just four days after the fire. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



A fire in 1936 wiped out about one-third of Creede's business section leaving a big rapping hole in the downtown area which was never rebuilt. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## 1892 MAP OF CREEDE



1. Water Tank
2. Kirmeavy's Saloon  
(where the fire started)
3. The Big Bridge
4. Orleans Club
5. Brainard & Bebee Hotel
6. Courthouse
7. Western Union
8. Depot
9. First National Bank
10. Post Office
11. Wall Street Bridge
12. Light Plant
13. Bank of Creede
14. Hoover's Livery Stables
15. Unknown
16. Bob Ford's House
17. Sponsilier's Theatre
18. Denver Exchange Saloon

The heavy line shows the district destroyed by the fire of 1892.



With lots selling at outrageous prices, some settlers outsmarted the scalpers by building shacks on planks laid across Willow Creek.

A  
**CREEDE  
 GALLERY**



Bob Ford



W. B. "Bat" Masterson



Jefferson Randolph Smith  
 "Soapy"



Ed O'Kelly



Poker Alice Tubbs



Calamity Jane Bourke

All Photos from the Denver Public Library Western Collection

**THE WILD BUNCH**

BOB FORD, killer of Jessie James, was shot in the back and killed in his own Creede saloon, the Exchange, by ED O'KELLY, one time Bachelor City town marshal. Jessie's brother, FRANK JAMES, lived there for a short time. Tough, but honorable, BAT MASTERSON ran the big Watrous Saloon and attempted to keep some law and order during the camp's early days. SOAPY SMITH, the all-time great bunco artist "managed" Creede during 1892 from his Orleans Club. He brought famed gunman JOHN LIGHT up from Texas to become Creede's Chief of Police. Con man LOU "the Fixer" BLONGER, spent time in Creede and WHISKEY JOHNNY packed kegs of cheap watered-down booze up to the high, remote mines on the backs of burros and sold it at scandalous prices. POKER ALICE, cigar-smoking card player, drifted into Creede from the Black Hills of South Dakota with her crony, CALAMITY JANE. CREEDE LILLY was already established there as the camp's leading lady gambler. When she died penniless in her tent on the banks of Willow Creek, Creede's underworld took up a collection and buried her. KILARNEY KATE was another familiar character in the town's gambling halls. MATTIE CREEK ran one of the big "houses" on Creede's Second Street. LILLIS LOVELL ran another. SLANTING ANNIE, who walked with a slight stoop, was one of the camp's most popular "soiled doves." Two other women who were there during most of the boom were THE MORMON QUEEN and tall ROSE "Timberline" VASTINE. MARIE CANTASSOT called herself "The Queen of the French Row." LULU SLAIN, a woman of Upper Creede, died in her shack there from an overdose of morphine and was buried with other ladies of the night in Creede's little Sunnyside Cemetery. JOE SIMMONS, friend and partner of Soapy Smith, was buried there, too, and in a most unorthodox way. The body was hauled up the hill in the dead of winter in a blinding blizzard. After Smith said a few words about his good friend, a dozen bottles of champagne were uncorked and toasts were drunk to the departed Joe until the liquor was all gone. It was the kind of service Simmons would have liked. For, on his death bed he told Soapy, "Don't have no preachin' at the buryin'."

Of Creede's motley population, the **Creede Candle** once wrote: "Creede is unfortunate in getting more of the flotsam of the state than usually falls to the lot of mining camps. Some of her citizens would take grubstake prize at a hog show."



Street scene in Creede on June 8, 1892. Five minutes before this picture was taken, Bob Ford, killer of Jessie James, had been shot in the back in his own Exchange Saloon by Ed O'Kelly. The saloon was just to the right of The Cafe. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Bob Ford was buried in Creede's "Bent Hill" but later the body was moved to Missouri and another killer was deposited in Bob's place. Popular with the Creede sporting crowd, Ford's funeral was a big one. Wine, beer, whiskey, and champagne flowed like water. A Denver minister was imported to conduct the services. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## THE PETRIFIED MAN

One of the old silver camp's most inventive swindles concerned the famous "petrified man." Until the hoax was exposed, it was also one of the town's most profitable attractions.

Bob Fitzsimmons, Creede gambler and bunco artist, bought, in Denver, a man made of cement and other materials. He had the thing shipped to Creede on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. Then he had it hauled out to the edge of town and buried it in the mud along Farmer's Creek. Some days later, J. J. Dore, an associate of Fitzsimmons, "discovered" the petrified man and saw to it that the state's newspapers heard about his find. They gave the discovery front page attention and advanced the theory that the man must have been a member of the Fremont Party which had explored the area in 1842.

The "man" (the Creede Candle called him McGinty) was hauled back into Creede and put on display at the Vaughn Hotel under a couple of flickering kerosene lamps. Crowds lined up to see the sight at twenty-five cents per person. And, until the concrete started to fleck away and the hoax became known, the boys did quite well with their side-show kind of attraction. In the meantime, as might be expected, Soapy Smith moved in for a piece of the action.



The famous "petrified man" of Creede. Until it began to disintegrate and the swindle became apparent, "McGinty" was one of the sights of the silver camp. (Denver Public Library Western Collection, photo by J. T. Thurlow)



The silver camp's leading bank, the First National. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



Creede once boasted over 100 hotels. Zang's was one of the best. Even so, an early visitor wrote: "I couldn't sleep with all the noise . . . hollering, yelling, horses galloping, wagons chuckling, hammering, pounding, sawing, shooting." (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## THE OTHER HALF

While Creede was one of the wildest of all mining camps, it did have a gentle side. After all, only about half of the population was made up of the rowdy element.

Even during the very early days of the rush, God's ambassadors were there attempting to bring a little peace to the otherwise disorderly place. The saloons and gambling halls themselves served as the camp's first places of worship. It wasn't unusual at all for 200 or 300 men and women to stand up in the back of a gambling hall to listen to what some traveling preacher had to say, while up front, the games and drinking went right on.

Parson Tom Uzzell, who preached in most of Colorado's mining camps at one time or another, made an appearance in Creede in April of 1892. Following his sermon, which he delivered from the top of a pool table, a \$75 collection was taken up. That night, as the clergyman was sleeping at the Tortoni Hotel, a couple of the town's roughnecks broke in and took the money and his pants. "Boss" Soapy Smith, when he heard about this the next morning, ran down the guilty ones and the parson got back his money, his pants, and a little bonus. Soapy's support of the clergy made him look a little better and helped him fool the people, he thought.

Another time, a Methodist minister arrived in the camp and announced his intentions to establish a church there. Browney Lee, noted local gambler, invited the man into the big Watrous Saloon and introduced him to the "boys." After the sermon, a \$90 collection was taken up. "Hell!" cried gambler Lee, "That won't build no church." So, he took the total collection to a faro table, ran it into some \$700 and gave it to the dumbfounded man of God.

One of the camp's first permanent places of worship was an old circus tent sent down from Denver by the Congregationalists there. On one Easter Sunday morning, the camp's God-fearing population pretty well filled it to hear some preaching. That evening, it was absolutely jammed with the sporting crowd who came to see a boxing match.

A March, 1892, issue of the *Creede Candle* had this to say about the community's religious life:

"Last Sunday was a big day in the camp. Preaching two places and a funeral on the hill."

Fine church buildings were eventually built in Creede and later the little town supported them fairly well. Schools came to Creede, too. The first one was established there in April of 1892. By then, Creede was connected by telephone to the outside world and her streets were electrically lighted. And, that's another story. The idea of establishing an electric plant in Creede was conceived at noon on February 1, 1892. Five days later the lights flickered on all over town!

The First National Bank of Creede, opened in April of 1892 and handled \$85,000 the first day. A post office was established there in March of 1892. Until then, the mail was dumped in the corner of a rough board shack and people dug through it for anything addressed to them. The Collins Opera House and the Theatre Comique played the same road shows that entertained audiences in other Colorado cities.

Beginning in 1891, Creede had a daily newspaper. The first one was the **Amethyst**. Cy Warman, Creede's famous poet, started another, the **Chronicle**, in 1892. Five thousand copies of the first issue were circulated. Another daily, the **Creede Miner**, appeared on the scene in 1893. The **Creede Candle**, a weekly, was published from 1892 until 1930.

In 1893, Mineral County was established, carved out of parts of Hinsdale, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties. Wasson, three miles south of Creede, was designated county seat. A. H. Wasson, founder of the rival town, built the courthouse himself. But, the good people of Creede were not about to go along with that plan. They did not like "that town in the cow pasture," as they called it. They felt the county seat should be in Creede and on a dark night a number of Creede's people went to Wasson and hauled the county records to their city. Later the frame courthouse itself was chopped into several pieces and moved to Creede.



This rare view of downtown Creede shows the original Mineral County courthouse (X) and the rear of Zang's Hotel. Note the livestock in the backyard of the home. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede in 1902 as it looked from one of the cliffs that towered over the town. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



The plucky burro deserves a lot of the credit. Faithful to the prospectors during the discovery days, they then became pack animals hauling the ore out of the mines and down the steep mountain trails where it could be loaded into wagons and ultimately into railroad ore cars. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



The Last Chance Mine on Bachelor Hill. It was one of the camp's richest mines, producing over \$1,600,000 worth of silver for its discoverers during the first year of operation. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## THE MINES

The first pay dirt was discovered in the Creede area during the summer of 1889. The strike was made by Nicholas C. Creede and George L. Smith, two Salida prospectors. Creede was experienced and when his pick tapped a rich vein of silver, he knew he had come upon something good.

"Holy Moses!" he yelled to his sidelick, "I've found it." The two men immediately staked out a claim and called their mine the HOLY MOSES. That winter, in Denver, they sold the mine for \$75,000 to David Moffat, president of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. When the word leaked out about this astute businessman's Creede investment, the rush was on.

Creede, himself, returned. First, he located the ETHEL and then the fabled AMETHYST mine from which over \$2,000,000 worth of ore was taken during the first year. Some of the rich ore from the Amethyst yielded as much as \$5,000 a ton.

J. W. White's CHAMPION mine was discovered about the same time. It hung on a cliff about a half mile higher than Creede itself. Ore from the Champion was packed out on burros over a steep four-mile trail of switchbacks. Burros played an important part in the discovery of another Creede mine, the LAST CHANCE. One Theodore Rennica acquired a \$25 grubstake and a few burros from a San Luis Valley businessman. On an 1891 prospecting expedition, the burros wandered off. Rennica trailed them and found them grazing on the slopes of Bachelor Hill. There, too, he found a rich outcropping of silver and there he staked his claim. Within twelve months, the Last Chance produced silver worth over \$1,600,000.

Other mines included the RIO GRANDE, WANDERING JEW, TEXAS GIRL, HAPPY THOUGHT, SYBIL R., YANKEE GIRL, BACHELOR, KENTUCKY BELL, PHOENIX, RIDGE, NEW YORK, and SOLOMON. The most important mines were on Campbell Mountain and Bachelor Hill, although a number of claims were staked on Mammoth Mountain and a trace of gold was found there.

Of Creede's early-day mining activity, an 1892 reporter wrote:

"Now and then a big ten-ton load of ore comes thundering down a steep road with the driver pounding his horses and shouting at the top of his voice. Behind him comes two or three more. The wagon swings around with a tremendous swing reaching the depot to unload the ore into the cars. Down a trail from another direction comes a train of fifty burros each carrying fifty pounds of sacked ore on his back."

At the same time, rich ore from the larger mines was being carried down the steep cliffs and across the deep canyons to the railroad on giant overhead tram cars. The Holy Moses' tram dropped its ore over 1,000 feet to the canyon floor.

Creede did, indeed, open a treasure chest with his discovery. Men were making big fortunes overnight. "Don't jostle that fellow. He may be a millionaire tomorrow," went a Creede warning.



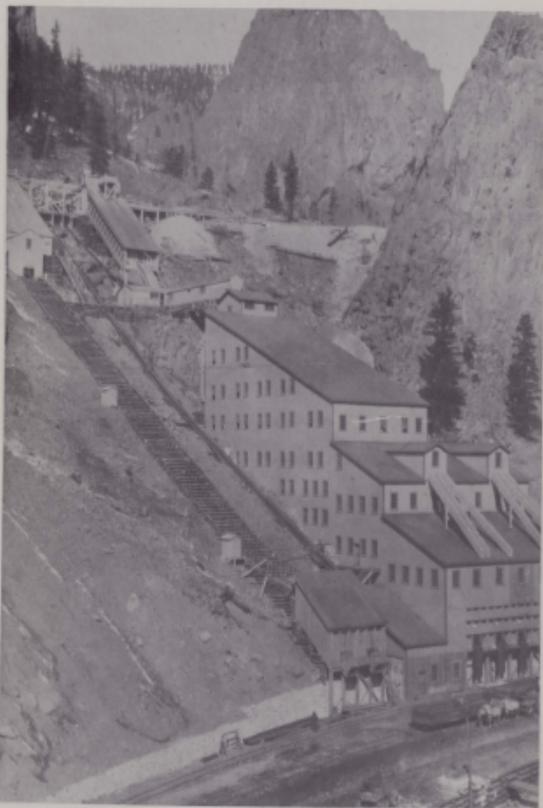
The ore from the fabulous Amethyst mine was brought down West Willow Creek gorge over this high tram system. (State Historical Society of Colorado.)



The Commodore, one of the greatest silver mines on earth. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



The Amethyst, one of Colorado's richest silver mines, returned a \$1,000,000 dividend for a \$25 grubstake. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



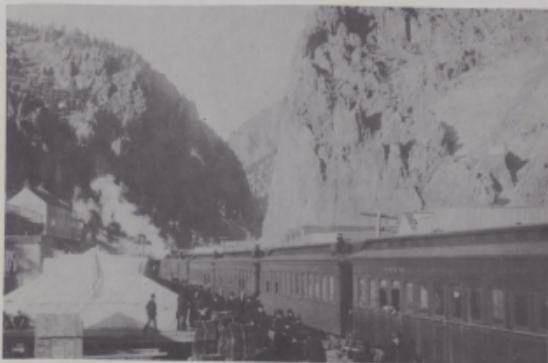
The giant Humphrey Mill. Raw ore went in at the top and gravity carried it down through the refining processes. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Stumptown with about one hundred residents hung on the side of Bachelor Hill along with the Amethyst and Last Chance mines. (State Historical Society of Colorado)



Aerial view of the Homestake Mining Company's new Bulldog mine and silver-lead concentrating mill at Creede. Construction of the 300-ton per day mill was completed in March of 1969. Homestake employs seventy persons in its Creede complex.



The arrival of each Denver and Rio Grande passenger train brought hundreds more to the mushrooming town adding to the disorder and creating more serious housing problems. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



During the boom, there were two passenger trains each way every day between Creede and Alamosa and Denver. The DENVER REPUBLICAN said: "It looks like everybody is heading for Creede." (State Historical Society of Colorado)

## RAILS TO CREEDE

Soon after the boom really got underway, the Denver & Rio Grande started pushing its narrow gauge rail service toward Creede from Wagon Wheel Gap. There had been rail service to that point from Alamosa since 1883. The ten mile extension from Wagon Wheel Gap was completed in October of 1892 and within four months the line had paid for itself. Business was that good!

The little train hauled people into the silver camp by the thousands. Of the early passenger service, one observer wrote: "The train, when it comes into sight, is a sight to behold. Men sit on each other and on the arms of seats, stand in the aisles, and hang on the platforms."

During the peak interest in the camp, one train left Alamosa every morning at 8:15 and arrived in Creede at 11:25. It returned to Alamosa late in the afternoon. A second train, also a daily, left Pueblo at 7:30 a.m. and arrived in Creede at 5:25 p.m. Returning, that train left Creede at 6:00 a.m. It arrived in Alamosa at 9:05 and continued on to Pueblo and Denver, arriving in the capital city at 6:50 p.m.

Long freight trains steamed in and out of Creede at all hours. A reporter for the **Denver Republican** wrote: "The Rio Grande freight house at Creede is overflowing with merchandise so that whiskey, billiard tables, and crated bar fixtures are stacked roof-high." There's one report of a "prefabricated" saloon building coming in on a freight at ten in the morning. At noon, it was open and serving ice cold beer over its mahogany bar.

Until the depot was built in Creede, a big tent, pitched right by the tracks, made do. The ticket office was housed in a box car. On the sidings, the Rio Grande parked quite a number of Pullman cars for their own help and to ease the impossible housing shortage.

After the Silver Act, service was cut considerably by the railroad. Even so, in 1902, standard gauge service was completed to Creede and passenger service continued until 1932. As late as 1956, steam powered freights clattered to and from Creede. The rails are still there and there are quite a number of old cars in the railroad yards of Creede. But it's a long time between trains today and the only crowds at the old depot these days are the history buffs who come to see the interesting collection of **Creedania** it now holds.



Creede's railroad yards were clogged with boilers, boxes, bags, barrels, and beer kegs according to one observer. (Denver Public Library Western Collection, photo by Pascoe)



Creede's depot (elevation 8,840 feet) was 370 railroad miles from Denver. The train trip took more than twelve hours and cost \$15. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Bachelor, one of Creede's neighbors, was well on its way to becoming a ghost town in 1910. During the silver boom, 1,200 people lived there and it was about as wild as Creede itself. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede had its own unique disposal system. Some of the johns hung out over Willow Creek as late as the 1930's.



By 1900, Creede's population had slipped to just a little over 900. There was still more than \$1,000,000 worth of silver, lead, zinc, and gold being mined every year and the Denver and Rio Grande ran a passenger train daily between the mining town and Alamosa. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)



Creede Avenue about 1920. Still a mining town, Creede was then being "discovered" by tourists and sportsmen. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

## CREEDE TODAY

Bigger and bigger crowds of tourists are pouring into Creede every year now and for good reason. The town itself is a delight and some of Colorado's most magnificent scenery is to be found in the upper Rio Grande Valley. Here, too, is some of the state's best fishing and hunting country.

With the Rio Grande River and its many tributaries, there are well over 200 miles of trout streams within a short drive of Creede. Dozens of high mountain lakes are well stocked with native, rainbow, and brook trout. Deer, elk, and bear abound in the high San Juans.

While Creede's greatest appeal is to the sportsman, it is a town to be enjoyed by the history buff, rockhound, and photographer, too. In more recent years, it has also attracted summer theatergoers by the thousands with the excellent Creede Repertory Theatre. Now recognized as one of Colorado's very finest professional theatres, it was established in 1966 by the Creede Junior Chamber of Commerce.

More than 12,000 people attended the Theatre during the 1981 three-month season. Then, a talented company presented six different plays ranging from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* to Noel Coward's *Hay Fever*. There was also a well supported poetry and concert series.

Creede's "Days of '92," held annually on the Fourth of July, brings mobs of people to the city for a real rip-roaring mining town kind of celebration. The annual Rio Grande River raft race between Creede and South Fork attracts big June crowds.

Accommodations in Creede are not too posh. There is the old-brass bedded Creede Hotel which is historically important. There is a small, comfortable motel. Within the area, there are many guest ranches ranging from adequate to elegant and nine Forest Service campgrounds. Creede provides a variety of restaurants and all the shops and services to be expected in a little town of some 700 persons. There is a fine school, five churches and a well equipped medical center.

But, Creede is not just a tourist center. Creede is still very much a mining town!

While it has always been an active silver producing area, Creede got a real boost in 1969 when the giant Homestake Mining Company moved in and began to develop its Bulldog Mountain property right above town. The company now employs some 175 persons there and produces over 100,000 tons of ore every year.

The Emperius Mining Company, established in 1934 by B.T. Poxin and Herman Emperius, has ceased operations. The company

which pretty well kept Creede alive for close to half a century has leased out most of its Mineral County holdings.

In addition to Homestake, there are other new faces in Creede. Minerals Engineering Company of Denver and Chevron Resources Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of California are very much involved in area exploration and development.

In sizing up Creede's mining activity today, one older miner put it this way: "There are still plenty of treasurers buried up there in the hills. But, there ain't liable to be no more stampedes. Now its all big business. All nice and orderly."

True! It is a far cry from the way it was in '92 when Creede was just about the wildest town around. Even so, there is still plenty of life in the old place and probably no little mining town in Colorado has more honest flavor.

There is something very special about Creede.



Creede's main street now mixes tourists, sportsmen, and mining men.



The Creede Hotel. Just beyond it stands the Opera House, home of the Creede Repertory Theatre.



The old depot at Creede now houses the little town's interesting museum.



The population of Mineral County is less than 1,000. This is the courthouse in Creede.



A railroader's hotel, the Rio Grande, was built in 1892.



The Denver and Rio Grande depot at Wagon Wheel Gap, ten miles from Creede.



Sunnyside Cemetery where many of Creede's pioneers rest.



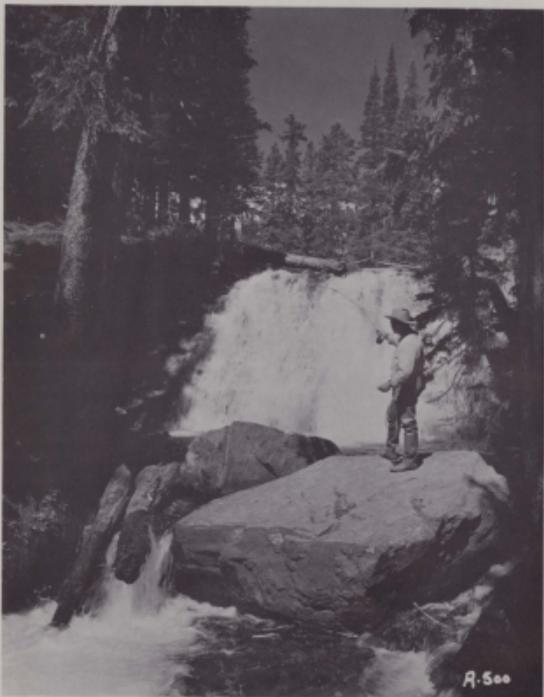
An 1890 grave at Sunnyside.

A few epitaphs from tombstones at Sunnyside:

*Budded on earth to bloom in heaven*

*Sleep on sweet babe, and take thy rest,  
God called thee home, He thought it best*

*God needed one more angel child among His shining band,  
And so He bent with loving smile and clasped our darling's hand.*



Some 200 miles of trout streams are to be found within a short drive of Creede. The area has long been known for its good fishing.



Wagon Wheel Gap. Through it passed most of those who rushed to Creede during the boom. The river is the Rio Grande. Tracks of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad are seen beside it.



The upper Rio Grande Valley's most sensational scenery is at Wheeler, about fifteen miles from Creede by trail. The wildly eroded area was set aside in 1908 as a national monument by President Theodore Roosevelt.



Bachelor, a ghost town, is about three miles from Creede. It sits in an especially pretty spot at an elevation of 10,500 feet. (Denver Public Library Western Collection, photo by Paulette Campbell)



Spar City's "main street" is quiet now. Several hundred people lived there in 1892. Then the town had a newspaper called the SPAR CITY SPARK and there was regularly scheduled stage service to Creede, fourteen miles away. (Denver Public Library Western Collection)

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 Creede Camp



A scene from *The Talisman*, one of the five major productions of the 1981 season of The Creede Repertory Theatre.

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