



# Bonanza at Bland

By Lillian R. Petherbridge

Map of the Jemez country, showing Bland's location



"CANYONS rich with gold and silver", was the exciting news that intrigued my husband into accepting a position with the Cochiti Gold and Silver Mining Company, located in northern New Mexico. Bland, a teeming mining town in 1900, was in a district of 3000



The boom had passed on, Bland was a ghost town





*Power plant of the Cossack Mining Co., in 1914*

people, situated in the southern part of the Jemez Mountains in the center of a rich mining field.

Three canyons, running almost parallel with each other, were united a few miles below the town. In these canyons, many promising claims were located, and thousands of dollars worth of ore shipped monthly. Gold bricks at the

Albemarle Mine valued from \$3000 to \$3500 were cast every six days.

People were moving in from every direction.

I traveled to Santa Fé by train, and from there to Bland rode an Overland Coach pulled by six horses.

The descent of La Bajada Hill in the days before the modern highway was a thrilling adventure. Carcening from side to side, with a constant jerking backward and forward, we thought the coach was well named, "Jerky." With his hands fully occupied, and one foot on and off the brake, it was a marvel to us how the driver kept his seat.

Eventually we made the foot of the hill in safety, much to our astonishment. There, a fresh relay of horses was waiting for us, and our puffing, heaving, sweat-drenched animals were led away to rest and food.

I was traveling with my Irish Setter, trying to keep him quiet in the coach. It was hard

for him to understand why he had to sit so long on his haunches, with his forefeet in my lap. Happily for him, when we reached the Rio Grande the driver suggested that the dog run awhile. That day, I happened to be the only woman traveler, but the coach was overflowing with men, even to the top, where the baggage (Continued on Page 53)

*Bland in 1900—at its peak*





Old and New Placers when the air was thick with dust, even when there was no wind. One amateur statistician, using the basic data of average lung capacity of a minimum of 200 miners blowing 20 puffs a minute for two hours a day as they separated gold from other concentrates, found a respectable breeze of 451,000 cubic feet blowing across the diggings—enough to raise a cloud of dust or to ventilate a moderately large mine. This warm air as it came from the miners' lungs had a total moisture content of 28,000 cubic feet — sufficient, if it could have been condensed, to wash out considerable gold!

While the miners at the Ortiz and San Pedro Mountains were blowing their lungs out, Johan Augustus Sutter was building the agency of New Helvetia on the banks of the Sacramento River in California. The rippling water in Sutter's millrace was to have a distinct echo in the deserts of New Mexico. In 1839, the year of the opening of the New Placers, Biela's comet passed near the earth and astronomical calculations set 1846 as the year of its return from the perihelion of the elliptical orbit. Stargazers calculated well and on January 13 of that year, Matthew Maury announced from the Naval Observatory in Washington that Biela's comet had been sighted and that somewhere along its curved path through frigid interstellar space the ball of fire had split in two.

In New Mexico no one either saw or even heard of the phenomenon; their attention was occupied by the turmoil around them. Kearny had occupied Santa Fé and left soon thereafter for the "California Republic" at whose birth Fremont had officiated. The Mormon Battalion passed through New Mex-

ico, following the Rio Grande to the vicinity of Socorro, then veering southwest to the Lordsburg area, eventually striking the Gila River in central Arizona, on their march to the Pacific. Zachary Taylor defeated Santa Ana at Buena Vista and late the following year Mexico City fell to Winfield Scott. In 1848, two years after cosmic disaster overtook Biela's comet, a similar catastrophe of fission fell on Mexico—New Mexico and the vast area reaching to the Pacific became a territory of the United States.

—Hobart E. Stocking.

(This is the fourth of a series of articles by Mr. Stocking on the mineral wealth of New Mexico.)

## Bonanza at Bland

(Continued from Page 23)

was loaded. Judging by appearances, these were men of widely varied culture and background, but they were all interested in the same topic: mines, ores, processes, production, transportation, and market for gold and silver.

There was considerable travel, all headed in the same direction. There were good-looking men in good-looking conveyances, others with wagons and horses; some drove burros packed with mining equipment; others rode mules, and still others walked with their camp outfits on their backs. We passed most of these people along the dusty, white road.

After crossing the Rio Grande several times, we came to Pena Blanca, a one-street village. It was my first sight of a "string-town" where all the houses are on one street.

Here, the men all tumbled out to get a drink. A native woman handed me a glass of *vino del pais*, a home-made wine. The driver nodded his head to me in assurance, so smilingly I thanked the woman, gave her some change and drank the wine.

Again we crossed the river and ascended quite a hill, which led to the little Indian Pueblo of Cochiti, for which the Gold and Silver Mining Company of Bland was named. Here we stopped again for a little look-around.

We still had fifteen miles ahead of us before reaching our destination. The canyon became narrower, and the high, cliff-like walls towered 1200 feet above us on either side of the road. I began to think the road had come to an end in the face of a tall cliff, which seemed to have moved itself right out before us. Suddenly, our lead team swung around a clump of young trees, and we found ourselves on the other side of the wall.

It was an extraordinarily beautiful canyon. The high, steep hills were covered with pines, juniper and spruce, and in summer there were grasses and flowers at their feet. The tall, stiff bonnets of rock that crowned the hills were draped in straggling vines and short-stemmed flowers that nodded in the breeze. The little stream that struggled down the canyon unfortunately was ruined by traffic and humanity's slatternly ways.

At Pena Blanca the driver had invited me to sit on the box with him. We took up the dog, too, for the waters of the creek carried the poisonous tailings of the Company's mill. Bodies of dogs, rabbits, squirrels, and birds which died after drinking this water, were all along the banks of the creek.

We passed the Cochiti Reduction and Im-



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provement Mill at Allerton, later known as Woodbury. There we had another change of horses. On the way up the narrow roadway, which was the main thoroughfare of the town, we came to the 250-ton stamp mill, pounding the refractory ores, night and day.

The little town of Bland sprawled along the narrow, precipitous road. Natives of this area, with their teams and wood wagons were ever stuck in the road, or headed in the wrong direction. At times, traffic was at a standstill, while the *hambres* in their effort to get out of the way of other traffic whipped their teams and swore in both Spanish and English. As a last resort, a man from some other conveyance would get down and coax the bewildered burros out of the way. All was well until other wood wagons were encountered.

At 1:00 we reached the center of the town, and stopped at the Post Office. The men, hunting a place to quench their thirst, disappeared like leaves before a windstorm. I waved my hand to my husband, standing in a crowd of people who congregated to see the arrival of the stage.

Rooms were very scarce. My husband had finally found one about a mile below town, near the Mill. That night, I discovered the "Monster" of the Stamp Mill never slept, nor cared if anyone else did so. His stomping never ceased. The first night I got very little sleep; but the next night I was tired enough not to be bothered by the noise, or else its rhythmic beating seemed to create a recurring pattern that was quieting to the mind. After that I slept fairly well.

Bland, named for the free silver advocate, Richard P. Bland, of Missouri, consisted of the usual stores, eating places, Post Office, telegraph, and telephone station, and a plentiful supply of saloons. Houses happened along the winding roadway, tucked in wherever there was a place to put one. In one instance, the outdoor toilet was built in front of the house on the main thoroughfare, as there was no other place for it.

The little community was not without its diverting incidents. The women of the town organized both a school and a church. One of the first contributions to the latter project was an altar and a Bible, given by the widely known "Diamond Queen" of the red light district.

The first teacher of the school was a young lady. She found the boys unmanageable and soon departed. The next teacher, a little heavier weight, stayed a while longer; but it took P. Carick Shannon to straighten out

the roughnecks, at the same time enjoying his pipe during school hours.

An interesting character was Mrs. Bruce, wife of F. B. Bruce, a mining man. Mrs. Bruce was blind, but very remarkable in that she could do almost anything. She was

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Mrs. Bruce, one who knew her

Bland is at a miles northwest north of Albuquerque this section as did not begin in

The first discovery, often called named John or 1890's.

In 1892, two Cauley discovered gold, which they the same canyon discovered. Norman and Chester Gray which they named a wonderful prospect worth of ore. In claim sold for \$1

The Iron King covered about the \$200,000 wagon train to the smelter Crown Point also

Pilkey took in others as part of his rich Washington, who had grown

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musician, playing both piano and violin, often playing for the dances. As a housekeeper, she was immaculate, and a fine cook, besides. By running her hand over a visitor's dress, she could describe it accurately, almost to the color of it. At night, she insisted upon carrying the lamp to the guest's room, for fear the guest might stumble and fall with it. Later, she came in to see if the lamp had been properly turned out.

Mrs. Bruce was a favorite with every one who knew her.

Bland is at an elevation of 7400 feet, 48 miles northwest of Santa Fé and 65 miles north of Albuquerque. Prospectors visited this section as early as 1880, but production did not begin until 1894.

The first discovery was made in Pino Canyon, often called Bland Canyon, by a man named John or Charles Pilkey, in the early 1890's.

In 1892, two men named Smith and McCauley discovered another vein, very rich in gold, which they named the Crown Point. In the same canyon where the other veins were discovered, Norman Bletcher, Henry Woods, and Chester Greenwood found a big vein which they named the Lone Star. It became a wonderful producer, shipping \$2,000,000 worth of ore. In its early development this claim sold for \$100,000.

The Iron King was another rich claim discovered about this time. These mines shipped \$200,000 worth of ore by wagon and train to the smelter at Pueblo, Colorado; the Crown Point alone produced \$75,000 worth.

Pilkey took in Otero, Lead, Sturgis, and others as partners and continued to work his rich Washington Claim, but Henry Lockhart, who had grubstaked Pilkey, in 1894 and

1895 instituted proceedings against the partners. After being in the courts twelve years, and once in the Supreme Court, the case was decided in Lockhart's favor. During that time the mine produced \$80,000 in gold and silver, which was awarded to Lockhart.

Henry Wood, Herman Bletcher, and Henry Lockhart were the original locators of the Albemarle Claim in the Colla Canyon, which they developed into a mine and later sold to the Cochiti Gold and Silver Mining Company, which took over in January, 1898.

The Albemarle group consisted of 13 claims. The ore ran from \$6 to \$28 per ton. The sale of this group of claims stimulated new interest in the entire district; new capital poured into claims already working, and more prospectors arrived daily.

The Company put up iron and steel buildings at the mine, including a 250-ton mill. A road was built connecting Colla and Bland Canyons. This piece of road, only three miles in length, ascending 1500 feet in one mile, was blasted out of solid rock at the cost of \$50,000.

The canyon in which the Albemarle was located was only 60 feet in width, with towering rock walls on either side. In order to put up the mill, boarding house, and other necessary buildings, space for them had to be made by the blasting of these massive walls.

Moving heavy machinery to the mines required from ten to sixteen horses hitched to the heavy wagons, part of the teams pulling while other teams pushed. Two or three teams were hitched to a pole that extended from the rear of the wagon. A driver rode one horse and drove the other horses by means of a jerk line. When all was ready

to go, the driver of the front teams gave a crack of the whip, and the signal "Hup! Hup!" Then altogether the stout and steady animals, digging in with their iron-shod hoofs, pulled together, tugging and straining until the heavy wagon began rolling up the hill.

A proposed railroad, to be known as the Cochiti and Northwestern was much talked of for more than a year, and without doubt it would have become a reality had not the fall in the price of silver caused the close-down of the mining industry.

The cyanide process used in the early days of mining, recovered only 40% of the valuable ore, while 60% went down the creek. Notwithstanding this, the Albemarle group produced \$1,000,000 in gold and silver bullion.

The silver depression caused by the demonitization of silver was a sad blow to the western mining industry.

There were a few mines working in 1912. Among them was the Lone Star in Bland Canyon, leased by the Cossack Company which operated the mine until beginning of World War I.

In 1941 some little interest was revived when the Sandoval Gold Mining Company was organized with Dr. J. J. Du Praslin as president, and Reuben Perry, Chester T. French and Walter Roder as incorporators. Du Praslin obtained an option to purchase patented and unpatented claims of the Cochiti Gold and Silver Mining Company. The new Company began interesting people on the outside in their new venture. A group of Texas people was ready to start for New Mexico to investigate this mining property, when an unforeseen tragedy happened. Dr.



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Du Praslin, returning from California, was killed in an automobile accident. This unfortunate accident also "killed" the mining deal. World War II brought an end to any further activity.

In the Bland mining district there were 38 patented mining claims besides many promising unpatented ones.

The Black Girl ore ran as high as \$180 a ton. The Iron King struck a rich streak, a foot in width.

The Albuquerque Journal of March 6, 1901, carried the following statement made by one of the company men of the Cochiti Gold Mining Co. This was not long before the mines closed down. To quote: "In the Albemarle Mine the 800-foot level was attained with increased ore value. Never in the history of the Company has such ore been taken out, and never has the shipping of the bullion been so frequent and so valuable."

As restrictions on mining are being removed, Bland is again beginning to attract the interest of mining men, and a new chapter in Bland's mining history may yet be written.

## Bookmaking As a Fine Art

(Continued from Page 26)

which is known throughout the book world as printers of fine books. Then she and her brother Bruce opened their own print shop in San Francisco where they produced some notably fine editions now vainly sought by book collectors. Then she went to New York to help found Holiday House.

"It just seemed the natural thing to do,"

Miss Gentry said when asked how she happened to take up book designing. "My brother and I both were always interested in books, and it seemed the natural thing to do, learning to make them. And printing was the first step."

"What part of the work have you found most interesting?" I asked.

"It is all interesting," she replied. "But I think perhaps I enjoyed meeting with the illustrators most, for one must understand the illustrator's point of view before one can really make a satisfactory design for a book. It's like building a house. You must consult with the architect and the owner as well. It really is a 'building', a 'construction' job, designing a book."

Book designing appears to be a good profession for women, and there is no question but that one woman, Helen Gentry, stands among the best in America.

Her work is always included among the Fifty Best Books of the year.

## Dialogues of Don Placido

(Continued from Page 8)

the mountains and pyramids of the sun. Checker-board farms in little valleys match the sunspots on the lowering clouds. We pass *lagunas* and *lagunitas*, small lakes that glisten like Mexican fire opals in the sunset. Now and then we hear soft guttural words spoken to soothe a sick child, sometimes a strange oath to chase away a dog. The sound is not Spanish. It reminds us of much older days, long, long before Cortez, Cabeza de Vaca and other conquerors came. At twilight we hear

the unmistakable twang of a Mexican guitar and hear a very familiar voice sing:

"Allá en mi rancho bonito  
Cuando la tarde declina"

And so we stop for the night, *amigos* *a pasar la noche, bajo las estrellas*, under the stars below the Rio Grande. We offer a silent prayer of thanksgiving for these lands, these Americas, unravaged and undamaged where a man can still breathe freely in the night, and where even the *pajaritos*, green *gorriones*, sparrows outside the poorest peasant door are better fed than children in many other lands. *Qué bendición*, what a blessing my friends, and what a responsibility!

*Hasta otra vez, amigos de Don Placido*

## A Quarter Century of Ceremonials

(Continued from Page 15)

sands of visitors to New Mexico every August for one of the grandest and most interesting shows ever staged. Yet it still is the product of volunteer work and civic enterprise. It has survived by the persistence and nerve of Gallup people willing to sacrifice their time, energy and money in behalf of this community activity.

Many early records of the Ceremonial are missing, and copies of programs and publications lack names, dates and places. Consequently events and dates had to be verified from files of Gallup newspapers published a quarter-century ago. The first hint of things to come was a report in the *Carbon City News* of a Kiwanis Club meeting on March 22, 1917.



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