

GOLD BOOM STILL POSSIBLE

BALDY TOWN, N.M. - The who'd mined it would be rich hard-rock miners who climbed beyond belief. More than \$4 million in gold bullion alone, at \$20 to \$35 per ounce, was of the timber line at the edge produced with only the crudest of the Civil War had no tools and equipment. The ghts of permanence or beauty. Mother Lode has yet to be They were seeking gold. found.

And they came back many Early inhabitants of the times because Baldy Town Southwest had more use for lived and died many times stones and mud than gold. at the whim of man. By most However, Antonio de Menstandards, living was hard doze, Viceroy of Mexico, here at these headwaters of dispatched an expedition in Ute Creek. But nature was 1539 to search for the fabled generous with the forests and Seven Cities of Cibola and wild flowers. There was plenty their streets paved in gold. of game and gold for those A big black named Estevan who could find it. was the guide who marched

If the gold and silver taken the unsuspecting gold-seekers from Baldy Mountain were into the village of the Zunis marketed today everyone in what is now western New

Mexico where most of them were killed, including Estevan.

Francisco Vasquez Coronado spent two-and-one-half years seeking the cities of gold before he reached and conquered the Zuni pueblos. He almost lost his life, but found no gold.

Don Antonio de Espejo, an experienced miner from the Zacatecas area of central Mexico, discovered rich silver south of the San Francisco Peaks but realized the impracticability of mining ore in such a remote location.

In 1598, Captain Marcos Farfan, a member of the Don Juan Onate party of explorers, found gold along the east bank of the Rio Grande. Fray Cristobal de Salazar, Onate's cousin and sargento mayor, died on his way back to Mexico to summons reinforcements in 1599. A peak at the end of the mountain range was said to resemble the hand and face of the old friar, and it is called today Fray (Fra) Cristobal Mountain range. It runs parallel with the Jornada del Muerto. A camping place near present-day San Marcial was called Paraje de Fray Cristobal. Gold was rediscovered here in 1683 by Pedro de Abalos.

Jose Francisco Ortiz and Ignacio Cano discovered and worked the first gold lode west of the Mississippi in 1828. They petitioned the Mexican Government to register a vein of ore in an area 10 by 11 miles square, lying



RUINS OF DREAMS that, some people believe, may yet come true are relics of old gold mines on Baldy Mountain near Ute Park and the Moreno Valley in northeastern New Mexico.

between Golden and Madrid, N.M.

The Territory of New Mexico was changed little by the Civil War. Its residents preferred supplying goods to the armies, rather than joining them.

Baldy Mountain, with its lofty peak rising 12,441 feet above Moreno Valley (near Ute Park, N.M.) was the hunting grounds of the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches, who carried "pretty rocks" from its hillside into Cimarron when they went for their government allotment. Soldiers from Fort Union had been sent to investigate Indian attacks on livestock and traded for the rocks.

Lucian Beauble Maxwell claimed Baldy Mountain as part of his Mexican Land Grant, but nothing could turn back the hordes of miners who came when news of the Soldiers' discovery leaked out.

One pan from the streams on Baldy Mt. was said to yield from 15 cents to \$1.75 in gold.

By 1868 there were two stamps mills operating on the west side of the mountain and T. G. Rowe was surveying a townsite they called Elizabethtown.

In the Spring of 1869, the Swansea Lode was discovered on the South Ponil Creek. Unconfirmed reports said the ore assayed at \$430 per

ton.

Close by, a group of Frenchmen led by Henry Burel sank a 60-foot shaft and had a sizable ore pile ready for the mill by the spring of 1870. Maxwell gave Burel a deed to the French Henry Mine, but refused to process the ore.

At the confluence of Ute Creek with the Cimarron River, in July 1869, a prospector picked up a two-ounce nugget worth \$40 in the creek-bed. Maxwell attempted to defend his property by hiring men to work the gravel in the stream from surface to bedrock, a distance varying from

Lot's of B.S. - use with caution!

two to 30-feet, with powerful hoses. One week's effort produced \$700 worth of gold.

A government report, written by Rossiter W. Raymond in 1870, said there was evidence the Spaniards or Mexicans had carried out placer operations in the district as early as 1640. In 1897, W. Edmunds Claussen, writing in the Mining and Scientific Press, reported crude diggings that may have been 400 years old. Claussen also said he suspected Maxwell received royalties from the area as early as 1862.

Arthur & Co., operating on Willow Creek, produced large quantities of gold for the Denver Mint in 1869. They too used big hoses to work an area 10-feet long, 14-feet wide and 13-feet deep in one day. With low overhead, even 33 ounces of gold during their first five weeks of operation brought a profit.

The miners never questioned Maxwell's rights to the land and they paid him a lease fee, when they had to. But after he sold out to a group of English capitalists, they were openly belligerent. Several times the governor of the territory ordered military troops into the district. Finally they disarmed the miners and ordered them to leave.

In the 10 years following 1880, the Blady district showed signs of revival. The original Aztec discovery was closed down because of a dispute between the owners, and the two mills in the Ute Creek area had closed and paralyzed most of the other hard rock mining operations. However, the Rebel Chief mine was purchased in 1880 by I. W. England, publisher of the

New York Sun, and Frank Hoxie of New York. The Hoxie brothers who had first worked the Chief had completed only 30 feet of development. Now a 140-foot tunnel into the claim patted two veins. The company built offices, a boarding house and blacksmith shop. By March 1881, some 200 tons of ore had accumulated on the dump. Then someone dropped a pick into a new 45,000 pound pulverizer that was too new to have ever been used.

Frank Springer, an energetic young attorney from Cimarron, tried to revive the disabled Aztec. A five-foot vein was found in early March 1881 and Blady Town grew up around the mill site as plans were made to reopen the mine. Timber was cut to build a boarding house, saloons, a store and numerous log cabins.

When Springer tired of pouring money into the mine development, his lease was taken up in 1884 by V. S. Shelby, Thomas B. Catron and James Lynch. Many smaller claims opened up along Ute Creek in the meantime. But a violent rain storm in August 1885 flooded them and most owners couldn't afford the equipment necessary to pump them out. Many of those abandoned were restaked and worked in later years.

Unlike many western states, New Mexico had both silver and gold. So, when Washington was debating the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, the territory promoted the use of both minerals.

Springer returned to the Aztec as head of the Maxwell Land Grant Co. and his friend N. C. Creede, who had successfully prospected in Colorado and for whom Creede, Colo., was named, came to Blady Town to help Springer promote the sale of the smaller mines.

When the government did stop buying silver, Eastern capitalists were eager to

contribute their capital to gold mining investment and Blady Town saw a new wave of prosperity.

The Maxwell Co. set their own regulations for prospectors on Grant land. A man could lay claim to a plot 1500 feet wide by 300 to 600 feet wide by posting a notice on the site and setting out boundary markers. Within 60 days after the initial discovery he was required to sink a 10-foot exploratory shaft and pay the company a \$12 fee. The company reserved an extension of equal size at either end of each claim assuring them of part ownership in every mineral discovery. Many of these small claims were worked, but few if any fortunes were made.

Col. Robert C. Beattie of Trinidad, Colo., and a man named Mr. Mattingly contacted a London syndicate under Clinton Butterfield which financed the re-opening of the Aztec mine and townsite. But four men jumped a part of the Aztec claim. They timbered two old tunnels, built a cabin to live in, and hauled out the Englishmen's ore.

French Henry Bureul, claiming rights to an old mining claim, declared his ownership of the Aztec mill site and water near it. It was just a matter of time before the Aztec mining company's creditors foreclosed and the mine was shut down.

The Black Horse mine, located on a tributary of Ute Creek, just south of the Aztec, was typical of lode operations on the east side of Baldy Mountain. John Kempt first discovered and filed on the claim in 1871, but abandoned it shortly thereafter with only limited development. Thomas W. Knott and Charles L. Mills relocated it in 1880 as the Four Creeks Mining Co. They accomplished little until Baron Phillip H. Van Zuylen joined them in 1891. Van Zuylen, a Dutchman, had come here in 1884 and leased land on Ute Creek where he set up a small mill which crushed ore from the mines that managed to survive the difficult years. Van Zuylen moved his equip-

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ment to Black Horse Canyon where he enlarged it and added concentrator tables to remove a large percentage of the gold. For 15 years the Dutchman bought and sold interests in the mine and mill, supervised the operations and made himself a comfortable living. "Van" never married, but saved his money for a trip back to Holland. His dream was fulfilled in 1897. On his return, the Baron started back to work on the old mine. However, it became involved in litigation and Van moved into Cimarron. During the summer of 1901 he had hurt his back in a tunnel cave-in. The Black Horse went out of operation.

The Mystic Mine, where copper float had attracted attention about 1870, stayed active because it was bought and sold so frequently. Apparently the difficult milling process necessary to remove the silver, gold and copper combinations reduced profits and retarded profitable development.

A Chicago syndicate in 1898 planned to erect a cyanide plant to more effectively separate the gold taken from the Rebel Chief but this project never materialized and production ceased.

J. B. Wheeler of Colorado Springs bought the French Henry Mine and mill in 1894. After a complete overhaul and a 2700-foot bucket tramway installation he extracted ore quite profitably for several years.

There is no doubt that the Aztec mining operation overshadowed all others in the Baldy district. From its early

beginning in 1868 when the first six days of operation produced 120 ounces of gold on a market of \$22 per troy ounce, it was used to the advantage of the Maxwell Land Grant Co. Each time a new discovery was made the Dutch-controlled company managed to get the lease canceled and the mine returned to their management.

This was again the case in 1909 when they wrested control of the mine from the Baldy Gold Mining and Milling Co. of Denver. With J. T. Sparks as superintendent, the Maxwell Co. put down four shafts, still identified numerically at intervals of 75 feet along the Aztec Ridge. Shaft number four struck a contact formation ore body late in 1911. During the next four years activity at the Aztec centered at this pit. By early summer of 1914, three crews were working 24 hours a day to drive a tunnel in a southwesterly direction from the bottom of the number four shaft to test a theory of a second rich contact formation. The assay returned on ore samples from this tunnel showed a value in gold of nearly \$3000 a ton. There was a large body of the high-grade ore, but for some as yet unexplained reason very little of it was removed. The management pleaded for new tracks inside the mine to

the movement of hand carts of ore, and hand drilling was slow. Tailings, thrown out into huge piles below the mill, are still visible today. These were found to contain \$9 in gold unretrieved from every ton.

the war in Europe cut off many needed materials, labor was scarce and prices prohibitive. Despite all these drawbacks, between 1912 and 1920, the Aztec produced \$1,680,718 in bullion . . . still on a \$22 market.

The Aztec was revived again by Robert G. Mullin as the Aztec Gold Mines Co. in 1921, but a shortage of working cash forced the corporation to dissolve. It was replaced by the Rosita Gold Mining Co. in October 1923. The Maxwell Co. cancelled the Rosita lease in 1926 and made plans to reopen the mine themselves, using new diamond drills and compressors.

In 1927, the late J. W. Doc Leitzell who later made his permanent home in Cimarron, arrived at Blady Town penniless from his home in Illinois. By 1930, Doc and Walter H. Elrich, lessee at the Nancy Hanks mine, were the only ones remaining at Baldy Town to protect supplies and equipment from vandals. But when the government announced

it would buy gold at \$35 an ounce, Matt W. Gorman, former Baldy Town assayer, and Jay Van Houten negotiated a lease with the Maxwell Land Grant Co. Again, as things prospered, the company cancelled the lease and hired Gorman to run the mine for them. Inside Aztec Ridge, Gorman discovered ore bodies six to 15 feet below the contact zone. By breaking through floors of tunnels dug earlier, Gorman located substantial quantities of valuable rock.

The company brought in Victor J. Van Lint, a Dutch engineer with extensive mining experience in Indonesia. Van Lint quickly made himself intensely unpopular among employees at the mine and in Baldy Town. There are still persistent stories about a Mexican named Archuleta who felt that Van Lint treated the native people like Indonesian slaves. Archuleta supposedly retaliated by covering up what might have been the Mother Lode.

Despite complaints, life at Baldy Town had become quite comfortable with electricity and steam heat as long as the mill was operating. However, Van Lint decided that as an economy measure they would shut off the generator that provided electricity at 10 p.m.

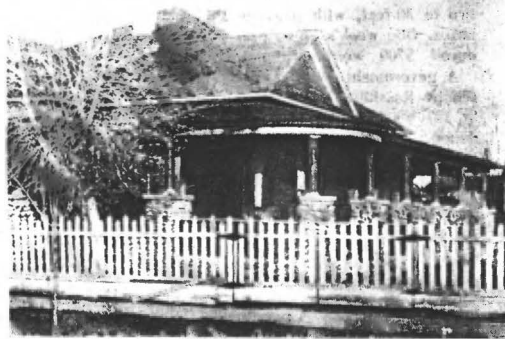
Feedings between Van Lint and Gorman became openly hostile and the Dutchman refused to renew his superintendent's contract in the spring of 1938. When Leitzell's store lease expired that same year, Van Lint found it advantageous not to renew it either.

In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act forced the company to pay miners an hourly wage minimum of 25-cents, with additional amounts for time over 40 hours.

The mine work stopped during the usual winter shutdown in 1939 and never reopened. Holland was overrun by Nazi armies in May 1940 and company officials overseas lost contact with the U.S. Within two weeks, the little town of Baldy was virtually abandoned. By early 1941, houses were demolished, mill machinery sold and rails, pipe and everything movable was hauled away. Baldy Town was dead.

Matt Gorman returned in 1937 as resident manager of the French Henry Mine but the ore proved to be worth only \$14 a ton. On the advice of geologists from the Arizona Bureau of Mines, the French Henry was closed for the last time.

At the headwaters of Ute Creeks, the deserted remains of Baldy Town have been grown



CAN YOU GUESS WHERE THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN? And, WHEN? Note the cement hitching post on the extreme left. This is the "Geyer House," the residence of Mrs. Clementine Geyer Gaines on Maxwell Ave. (south of the Methodist Church) in Springer. The picket fence has been replaced by a low cement wall. This was a post card mailed from Wagon Mound Jan. 10, 1919 by F.E. Hixenbaugh, sent to his wife at Miami, N.M. Photo courtesy Mabel Ikenberry of Springer.

over and hidden by a new forest of evergreens and pine trees. The crumbling walls of Doc Leitzell's stone store and parts of the foundation of the mill are eroding slowly. Vivian Leitzell, who still lives in Cimarron, returned to Baldy Town for the last time a few years ago only to find the townsites so changed that she could not identify the place where she and Doc had lived for 11 years.

In 1962, the Maxwell Land Grant Co. sold the last of its holdings, including the Aztec and French Henry

mines and 10,098 acres of land on the eastern slope of the big bald mountain to the

National Council of Boy Scouts of America. For \$196,520 in cash the Dutch corporation

delivered the final deeds for its land, minerals, timber and water rights to the Boy Scouts.

IS THE TRUE Mother Lode that has eluded everyone all of these years ever to be discovered? Did Archuleta really seal it off from the Dutchman Van Lint? These questions may never be answered. But, one thing is sure, anyone who ever lived at Baldy Town would be willing to return. It's worth the trip if you don't fall into an air shaft.