



The sun has set on E-town's glory

There was Gold in Every Gulch

By W. Edmunds Claussen

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

Map by Wilfred Stedman,
right, shows location of
Elizabethtown

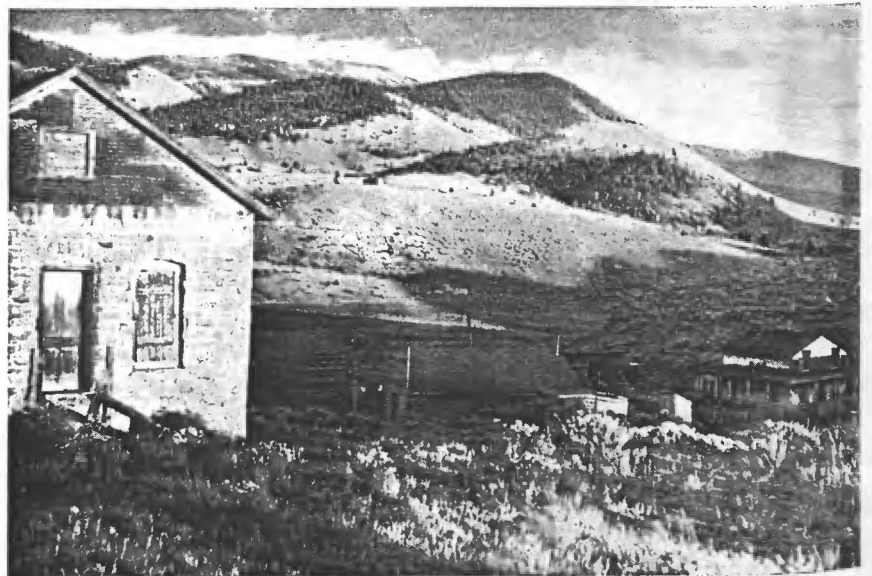


A few people live in E-town, mostly newcomers

THE CRY went out that there was gold in the mountains, and men dropped their daily work and streamed by the hundreds into the gulches that slashed the shoulders of Baldy Mountain. Gold so rich it could be picked from between the grass roots, and it carried clean down to bedrock!

Those who remember the boom days are no longer many, but a flush steals over their cheeks and their eyes sparkle when the talk turns to E-town. Elizabethtown in the late sixties and seventies was surely a roaring camp!

Gold was twenty dollars an ounce as it came from the gravel. In their day, millions of dollars poured out of Spanish Bar, War Eagle, Red Bandanna, Twin Lode and Humbug Gulch—names that today stir the blood and fire the imagination. They caused a fever of mad excitement in those far-off years. There was gold in every gulch around





The ghost of what was a booming gold camp

Baldy Mountain for a distance of eight to ten miles, and every foot of pay-gravel was staked and claimed. The population of E-town is estimated all the way from 2,000 to 7,000. The figure of 5,000 seems conservative, and is widely accepted. The population was largely migratory and obviously difficult to determine.

Elizabethtown lies five miles north of Eagle Nest Lake, some forty miles west of Cimarron. It all began when Ute and Apache Indians came into Fort Union with samples of copper-bearing ore. In traveling to Maxwell's mill and the Indian Agency in Cimarron, the Indians roamed freely over the slopes of Baldy Mountain and picked up samples of this ore. Eventually this found its way to Fort Union.

Here William Kroenig, William Moore, and others be-

came interested in the samples. For a small consideration they persuaded the Indians to show them the source of this copper. They located a mine and commenced operations on what was known as the Copper Mine. It was renamed the Mystic Lode later when gold was discovered in heavy quantities in their workings. Such news could not long be held a secret, and before they realized it there were plenty of neighbors.

By the spring of 1867 the first locations had been made at Willow Creek, measuring the locations from a tree which was designated for years as the discovery tree. Michigan Gulch came into being, along with Humbug Gulch, which at first was thought useless but which later proved a heavy producer. The famous Spanish Bar was in Grouse Gulch.

When the camp began to take on the proportions and bustle of a roaring town a number of the original locators met in session and commenced to plan some form of organized society. Mr. Moore was among these organizers, and it was in honor of his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, that the camp was named. Elizabeth Moore later became Mrs. Lowrey. The year after the town was given her name is thought to be the most remunerative in the camp's history.

The town grew until it became the county seat, when Colfax County was taken from Mora. Cimarron took the court house next, and then, finally, came Springer.

One stands in the gulches today, amid the quiet and the stark, vivid beauty of the mountains, and marvels. Baldy peak towers 12,500 against the blue sky, and McGinty Mountain rises to 12,000. The majesty of their bare, sharp crests takes away one's breath. What a site for a gold camp!

It was not always so quiet. George Turner, now of Cim- (Continued on Page 46)

This quiet place was once the scene of mad excitement



to make changes midway in the process, positive that you will be happy living in the house it represents—then, swear by all your household gods to resist to the death any attempt on the part of yourself or anyone else to make changes. This can't be stressed too much both from the standpoint of getting your house finished and the final cost of it.

'So, there you are. Here's luck to your efforts and strength to your back. May your adobe casa be all your hopes and dreams come true.

There was Gold in Every Gulch

(Continued from Page 19)

arron, recalls when E-town was in its glory. Fifty years ago, he tells you, there were three stagecoach lines into E-town. There was the coach from E-town to Springer; the line passing through from Trinidad to La Belle; the line from Questa to E-town. All three brought men eager to find their fortunes in this fabulous land.

E-town was awake with the sounds of living in those days. There were seven saloons in E-town and five general mercantiles. There were drug stores, two hotels, and three dance halls. It may seem odd at first, but there was no restaurant within the camp. Upon reflection the fact becomes justified in the simple logic that most miners probably were content to do their own cooking, or eat in the hotel dining rooms. If they cared for a more varied menu than their own skills afforded, there was always the barroom. In time a few boarding houses sprang up, but these generally

catered to their own clientele and could hardly be classed as restaurants.

Into E-town in 1866 came Henri Lambert, who had once cooked for General Grant and Abraham Lincoln. It was the gold fever which had first brought him from his native country. Here in E-town he worked the placers for six months. The second hotel in E-town was conducted by Lambert until the fall of 1871 when he moved into Cimarron to negotiate for the opening of his celebrated St. James Hotel.

One of the most remarkable engineering feats of the early West was attempted in E-town. Water was needed in the gulches with which to wash gravel. Accordingly, Engineer Capt. N. S. Davis was sent for. After exploration he decided it would be possible to tap the headwaters of the Red River and bring water into camp.

Although the actual distance was only eleven miles, a series of ditches was necessary that ran for forty-two miles, circling the shoulders of the mountains and bridging the gulches. In those days of 1868 the work, of necessity, was done by hand. The cost was \$280,000, and the ditch brought water into Humbug Gulch first on July 9, 1869. Water was later tapped by feeder ditches running to Moreno Creek and Ponil River. The ditch became known as "The Big Ditch". Evidence of it remains today.

The ditch had been constructed to bring a capacity of 600 inches of water, but due to seepage and evaporation it fell short. Later cabins were built, each spaced ten miles apart along the ditch. From these two ditch workmen then patrolled the banks in either direction. Working with pick and shovel they

would repair any breaks. As the placer season was all too short at best, hundreds of miners would join in and help during early spring, shovelling ice and rock in order to get water into E-town at the earliest moment.

Another remarkable engineering feat was the tunneling of Baldy Mountain. At a high altitude, this shaft struck straight into Baldy and eventually came out in the neighborhood of the old Aztec workings, on the Baldy town side, a distance of more than five miles. Although old mining men have said gold was never recovered for all this effort, old accounts tend to show that both gold and copper were found, although in such quantities that the tunnel operations probably never were a financial bonanza.

Another enterprise, much more lucrative, proved to be Reiling's dredge, put into operation on a lake formed in the lowlands. H. J. Reiling came from Bannack, Montana, where he had put such a dredge into successful operation. The dredge worked slowly upstream, eating out great holes in the earth before itself with its sixty-five mammoth buckets. As it moved it piled gravel in its wake, building its own dam as it moved.

The dredge had a capacity of handling 4,000 cubic yards of earth daily, and it reputedly cleared \$100,000 during its first year of operation. Each cubic yard of gold-bearing dirt yielded from thirty cents to three dollars. The dredge was placed in operation in February, 1901. At colorful ceremonies, it was christened "Eleanor" by a lady visitor to E-town. The honored guest made an appropriate speech before breaking her bottle of champagne over the Eleanor. Such an occasion would prove one long to be remembered for the miners.

Natives now living in E-town claim that no

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vestige of the remains of the Eleanor can be sighted. Others tell that until recently a few of her hull planks were visible above the grass. The Eleanor, apparently, has sunk into oblivion in her own silt and tailings just opposite E-town.

E-town, too, had her crime waves. Stories run rife of violence and pillage and her night life. In 1873 a gentleman known as Coal-oil Johnny, in company with Long Taylor, who stood six feet seven inches, held up the Cimarron stage in the Palisades and got away with \$700. A year before another gentleman seems to have run a veritable house of nightmares. Men stopping by to spend the night were never again heard from. This continued until one day his frightened wife ran into E-town and confessed her husband's sins. They found the fellow burning the bones of his many victims over a fire to destroy evidence of his crimes. They took him into E-town and were arranging for a trial when the miners, afraid justice would not be forthcoming, stole him from the court room. They fastened a rope around the culprit's neck and dragged him over the rutted streets until he was dead.

Another crime took place on July 4, 1886, when George Greeley was killed in his own saloon by a Winchester in the hands of an assassin. Mr. Turner still recalls first hand stories of this murder that was still a topic of E-town gossip when he was a boy. The murderer was then serving time in the Santa Fé penitentiary.

An old building is pointed out as Colfax County's first jail. It is constructed of wooden 2x4s, nailed together. Someone has removed its roof.

Of the gold town that roared little remains today. The old timers have moved away and have scattered. The people who live there now are mostly newcomers. But the houses they occupy form part of what once was the scene of a gold boom. And evidence remains of the vast workings that once taxed the brawn of many men. When the light is right one still read the faded letters that embellish one false-front. Barely discernible, one can spell them out: "GEORGE'S PLACE".

This is the shop whose owner was called home to his Maker in the crash of rifle fire one Fourth of July.

An advertisement in a souvenir booklet supplies a touch of color. The title page is

missing. The paper is yellowed. The book is said to be a product of an E-town press.

"Montezuma Bar & Club Rooms"

The choicest bonded whiskies only are carried in stock, with a complete line of choice wines, rums, mineral and soda waters. The cigar case is supplied with the best brands of domestic and imported cigars. Mr. Dericks has had 15 years experience in the business and runs a quiet, orderly place, catering to the better class of trade.

Somehow the words have a way of taking one back to those days that can never be again. During its heyday, E-town must have been quite a place!

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