

Historic Trail Map of the Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle, Central Colorado

By Glenn R. Scott
1999

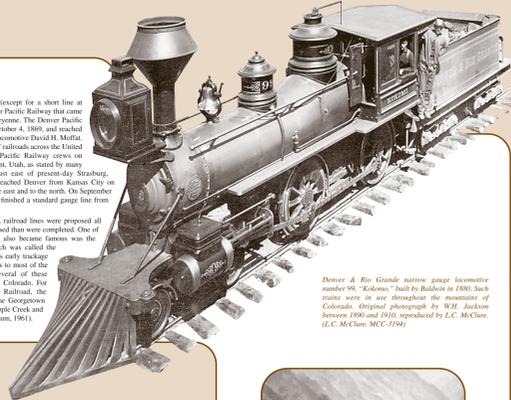
Geologic Investigations Series
I-2639 (Sheet 2 of 2)
Pamphlet accompanies map

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RAILROADS

The first railroad to enter Colorado (except for a short line at Interoceanic) was the standard gauge Denver Pacific Railway that came south from the Union Pacific line at Cheyenne. The Denver Pacific train crossed the Wyoming line about October 4, 1869, and reached Denver on June 17, 1870, pulled by the locomotive David H. Moffat. The last segment of a continuous chain of railroads across the United States was completed by the Kansas Pacific Railway crews on August 15, 1870, at its terminus at Pueblo, Utah, as stated by many authors, but at Comanche Crossing just east of present-day Strasburg, Colorado. A Kansas Pacific train then reached Denver from Kansas City on August 15, 1870, providing service to the east and to the north. On September 22, 1870, the Colorado Central Railway finished a standard gauge line from Denver to Golden, Colorado.

During the twenty years after 1870, railroad lines were proposed all across Colorado; many more were proposed than were completed. One of those that not only was successful but also became famous was the Denver and Rio Grande Railway, which was called "Baby Railroad" because nearly all its early trackage was narrow gauge. This railroad ran rails to most of the metal mining camps in Colorado. Several of these narrow gauge lines are still running in Colorado. For example, the Durango and Silverton Railroad, the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, the Georgetown Loop Railroad, and the 3-foot gauge Cripple Creek and Victor Railroad (Colorado Railroad Museum, 1961).



Denver & Rio Grande narrow-gauge locomotive number 99, "Robbers," built by Baldwin in 1880. Such trains were in use throughout the mountains of Colorado. Original photograph by W.H. Jackson between 1890 and 1910, reproduced by L.C. McClure, L.C. McClure, MCC-3194.

Originally, access to the Colorado mountains was made possible by private parties who built toll wagon roads through the rugged valleys and over the mountain passes. Walkers, horseback riders, wagons, and stagecoach trails were used, but they were unsatisfactory for passengers and for light freight. However, when mining increased in the mountains and the transport of ore grew, the need for larger and faster ways of shipping called for railroads. Because of the steep grades and sharp curves in the mountains, narrow-gauge lines were usually used. Narrow-gauge tracks are 3 feet wide, whereas standard-gauge tracks are usually 4-foot-8.5-inch wide.

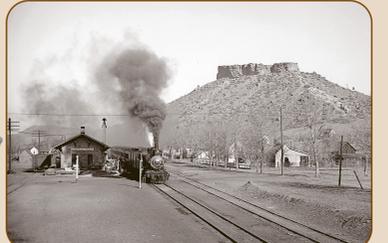
Snow created serious problems for the mountain railroads. Generally, the higher the mountains the deeper the snow. At first it was claimed that trains would seldom be delayed by snow. However, after a few long delays as long as 3 months or more, a solution to the problem had to be found. Snow fences were tried but they were found to be useless in keeping the tracks clear. Snow sheds were built of a wooden frame and where blowing snow accumulated, and they immediately proved their worth. Snow sheds were wooden structures, sometimes quite long, that enclosed problem stretches of track. The snow sheds could be heated by stoves or blowing snow, while trains safely chugged through the wooden structures (Colorado Railroad Museum, 1961; Taylor 1992). In addition, special train engines were equipped with front-mounted rotary snowplows that could remove snow 10-12 feet deep, and hydraulic "ice picks" attached to the front of some engines cleared tracks covered by solid sheets of ice that could easily derail trains (Hollinger, 1950).



The Georgetown Loop, the famous narrow-gauge tracks of the Colorado & Southern Railroad. View looking up the mountain grade up Clear Creek in a direct line from Georgetown to Silver Plume via one steep 18.75 percent grade for miles in climb; tracks lead to the grade did not exceed 3 percent. This required 4.5 miles of railroad track that gently climbed Clear Creek valley, whereas, to direct line the distance is a little over a mile. From an 1898 painting by W.H. Jackson, (Temp 16).



Locomotive of the Colorado Central Railroad and part of the mainline of Central City, between 1875 and 1881. Central City High School is the prominent two-story building in the upper part of the photograph. The steeple of St. Paul's Episcopal Church can be seen to the left of the school. The mountain slope in view is one and a half miles from the school. The place contains mineral veins that contain gold. (Joseph Collier, c.1920)



Denver & Rio Grande Railroad engine number 1009 and passenger train heading south from station at the town of Castle Rock. The prominent flat-topped house in the background is also called Castle Rock, which was named by the Long Expedition in 1820. The town was named after the mine in 1871. About 1902-1908. L.C. McClure, MCC-1709.



Miner panning for gold west of Denver. He swirls sediment and water in his gold pan. Between 1890 and 1910. L.C. McClure, MCC-7919.

THE GOLD RUSH

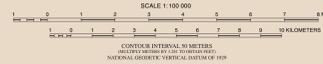
In the 1850s, gold was found at several places near present-day Denver. In 1858, news of the strikes brought scores of people to the area seeking fame and fortune. The gold they found on the plains near Denver was in small patches along the streams and was very fine, and each deposit was soon exhausted. The prospectors looked for placer gold in streams from the Pikes Peak area northward to the Wyoming border, but they failed to find any really profitable deposits east of the mountains. Nevertheless, when fall came and winter was approaching, several parties of miners returned to the area and in the winter of 1858-1859 were the first to discover the present-day Cherry Creek and South Platte River and named their rapidly growing small communities Auraria, St. Charles City, and Montana City. Many prospectors brought few provisions with them, so within a short time their supplies were in short supply. A hundred-pound sack of flour cost \$20 if it could be found. Bacon, coffee, and sugar sold for 30 cents a pound. About the only source of food was wild game, such as bison, antelope, and mule deer. Deer, the least cheapest, hunters had to go farther from camp to find game. Also, after the ground froze, game hunting became almost impossible.

In 1858, there were almost 300 people in the three new towns and two cabins to house them all, and only a few cabins had fireplaces. Some people either took turns in the warm cabins or slept around campfires outdoors. They also cooked all food outdoors. The discomfort and the difficulty of getting food began to decrease their interest in gold. Fortunately, on Christmas Eve, 1858, Richard Lang, William, a friend of William Bent and Kit Carson, showed up with a wagon he had driven from Taos, New Mexico, loaded with flour, sugar, bacon, dried apples, and bags of coffee. Soon the goods were unloaded into one of the cabins, and a store was started. Trade for such goods was made throughout the country. The item of greatest interest was three barrels of "Texas Lightning." DRINKS FOR ALL!

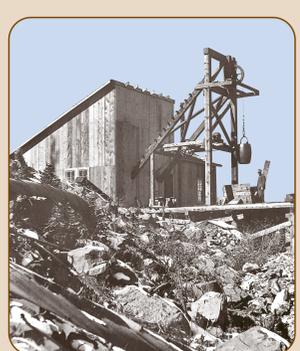
The next spring, because of the lack of new gold finds, many discouraged gold seekers gave up and started their long journey back east to civilization. However, larger and more profitable gold deposits were found by George A. Jackson at present-day Idaho Springs on Jan. 7, 1859 (kept secret until spring), and by John H. Gregory at present-day Blackhawk in May 6, 1859. News of these new and more profitable strikes spread like wildfire. Soon thousands of fortune seekers straggled into Colorado from all over the country and from overseas. Thus the gold rush of 1859 began, and an estimated 50,000-100,000 gold seekers flooded the area in 1859-1860. The search for gold then spread across most of Colorado. In the following decades, many deposits of gold, silver, and other valuable minerals were found in a narrow belt that extends from the San Juan Mountains southeast to Boulder (Dovec, 1970).



Base from U.S. Geological Survey Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle, 1911



Enlarged Map of the Northwest Quarter of the Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle



Miner's building in the mountains of Colorado, east of present-day Blackhawk. One bucket is suspended over the mouth of the mine shaft, and a mule is pulling a cart. Between 1890 and 1910. (H.C. Peck, P-045)



Tom May and his burro "January" in a mining tunnel in the Mendocino Mine, Silver Plume, Colorado. The burro carries two lanterns on its back. Between 1875 and 1910. (L.C. McClure, MCC-3195)



Newspaper masthead of "Weekly Colorado Miner," Georgetown, Colorado, between 1874 and 1880. (L.C. McClure, MCC-3196)



Blackhawk, Colorado, between 1862 and 1869 (possibly 1864). The Commission House (lower right) is a white-stucco and red-glass-fronted store, stands next to a meat market, and further up the street is a covered wagon and its team of horses in front of a grocery and liquor store. The Blackhawk Presbyterian Church, built in 1863, is at middle right. On the mountain slope in the left background are mine-shaft buildings, some of which contain steam engines that provided power for hoisting ore and waste rock and for running heavy stamp mills that pulverized the ore. The mine-shaft buildings belong to the "Gregory vein," which varied from a few inches to several feet thick and contained gold ore. The Gregory vein was discovered by John H. Gregory on May 6, 1859. Photograph of an original photograph by unknown photographer. (H. H. Lake, L-537)



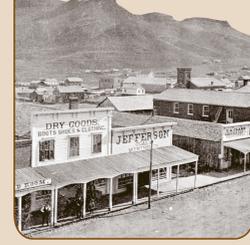
As early as 1859 and continuing into the early 1860s, "hard rock" lode deposits of gold were discovered in the Gregory (Central City) and Blackhawk areas, Georgetown, and Idaho Springs districts. Vertical and inclined shafts and horizontal tunnels were driven hundreds of feet into the solid rock of these deposits using only hand tools and blasting powder. In many mines, steam engines provided power for hoisting ore and waste rock out of the mines and for running heavy stamp mills that pulverized the ore to release the gold.



Index Map Showing Location of the Denver 1° × 2° Quadrangle (Blue) and other Published Historic Trail Maps

EXPLANATION

- TRAIL OR ROAD—Dashed when approximately located, queried when inferred. Dates of use shown for some roads. Routes plotted from General Land Office (GLO) land files, early maps, or aerial photographs. Main trail or road names are from original sources such as land files. Some shorter trails and mail routes on the GLO land files were omitted to avoid cluttering the map excessively. Some shorter trails are mentioned on their construction is queried where their destination was not shown but mentioned in land files, parts of early maps are assumed to have been modern courses of streams. Trails date from 1850's to 1880's. Abbreviation used: CC = Comanche.
- TOWN OR OTHER CULTURAL FEATURE—Approximately located, showing approximate date of founding of a town or establishment of a post office, not generally the date of the first person to settle, although town names and dates are in parentheses. Most newer town names are in boxes. Locations of towns shown on previously published maps very reliable, and some locations shown here may be inaccurate. Abbreviation used: P.O. = Post Office.
- TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURE OR HISTORIC SITE
- RAILROAD—Date shows beginning or date of operation. Currently operating railroads are shown in boxes. Abbreviations of railroads are explained in the pamphlet text. For more details about railroads, see books about railroads listed in the "Sources of Information."



Flour-bush buildings with covered boardwalks along Washington Avenue in Golden, Colorado, in 1872. Castle Rock and South Platte Mountains in background. (L.C. McClure)

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