

GOLD FEVER

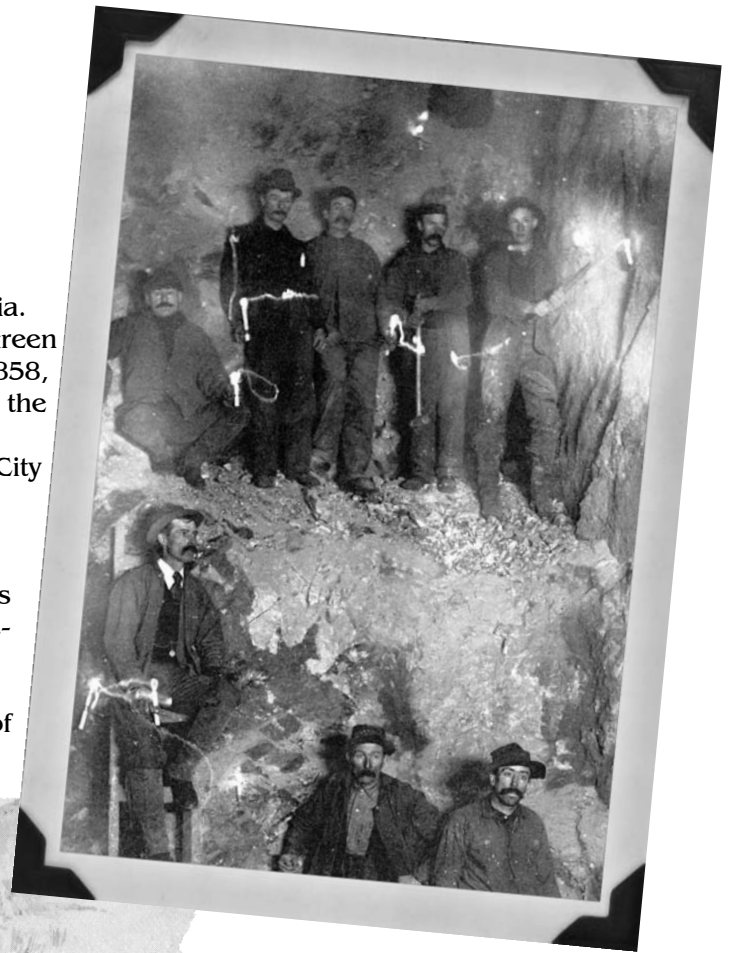
150-YEAR LEGEND

Gold was first discovered in Colorado in 1848 by the Cherokee on their way to California. But the news did not travel far nor cause much excitement until 1858 when William Green Russell and a group met with the Cherokee and explored their findings further. In July of 1858, Russell's group found "good diggings" at the mouth of Little Dry Creek on the South Platte, the first significant gold discovery in the region. The site of the discovery is in the present-day Denver suburb of Englewood. More deposits were located at what were to become Central City and Idaho Springs.

The Colorado Gold Rush officially began in 1859 (when the land was still in the Kansas Territory) and lasted throughout the early 1860s. The Colorado Gold Rush occurred about a decade after the California Gold Rush and resulted in a dramatic influx of emigrants into the Rocky Mountains. "Pikes Peak or Bust" became the nemesis for the rush of prospectors that flooded the mountains with gold fever.

This influx led to the creation of many early towns in the region, including Denver and Boulder, as well as many other smaller mining towns, some of which have survived. Many of the smallest gold mining communities became ghost towns. The first decade of the boom was largely concentrated along the South Platte River at the base of the mountains, the canyon of Clear Creek in the mountains west of Golden, and South Park. As prospectors flooded the region in search of riches, the population growth led to the creation of the Colorado Territory in 1861 and to the State of Colorado in 1876. The easy-to-reach gold deposits in the northern parts of Colorado were largely played out by 1863 and things were quiet...

until a major strike was made in 1890 and 1891 in Cripple Creek and Victor. Soon the word spread and the last great gold rush in the lower 48 states began. Prospectors from all over the country flocked to the sunny side of Pikes Peak, looking for riches and a new life in the West. The millions made from 1891 through the present earned this newly discovered area the title of The World's Greatest Gold Camp.



THE NEW RUSH

CRIPPLE CREEK/VICTOR

GOWBOY FINDS GOLD



Bob Womack discovered Gold in Poverty Gulch, staking his claim October 1890.

Small amounts of gold were found in the area by early day explorers but nothing significant enough to cause a stir was discovered.

During the 1880s, the Cripple Creek area was a part of the Broken Box Ranch. A few tried their hands at placer mining and gold panning. A cowboy named Bob Womack, worked on the ranch and prospected for gold in his spare time. He was considered crazy for his dreams of gold and drinking was his other hobby. Bob spent 15 years looking for the source of the gold. In 1890, he finally found it and staked a gold mining claim he called the El Paso. Bob's credibility was not the best, however, and doubt reigned.

STRATTON MADE THE RUSH REAL

While Womack's claim to a gold find in Cripple Creek was being validated, Winfield Scott Stratton prospected 6 miles away. July 4, 1891, above what was to be the town of Victor, he staked claims to the Independence and Washington mines. The news that an itinerant carpenter (Stratton) could find a paying gold mine gave new life to the tarnished reputation of Womack and the district. Stratton later sold the Independence for \$11,000,000, causing an influx of British capital, confirming that the district had "arrived". The Independence Mine can be seen above Victor and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Winfield Scott Stratton struck it rich in Victor in July 1891.

A MUSEUM LIKE NO OTHER

Cripple Creek and Victor are located on the western slopes of Pikes Peak, about 35 miles southwest of Colorado Springs. In prehistoric times, the area was volcanic, creating the riches that made the mining district famous, and the 6 square miles that make up the Cripple Creek & Victor Mining District are located in the caldera of an extinct volcano.

North of the mining district at Florissant was once a lush, prehistoric wetland. Beneath a grassy mountain valley in northern Teller County lies one of the richest and most diverse fossil deposits in the world. Petrified redwood stumps up to 14 feet wide and thousands of detailed fossils of insects and plants reveal the story of a very different, prehistoric Colorado.

The fossils, rocks, hills, and valleys that make up Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument reveal to us an ancient story of redwood forests, volcanic eruptions, and a climate much different than today. In addition to a rich ancient history, the Florissant valley also contains the stories of prehistoric hunting and gathering Paleo-Indians, the Ute and Jicarilla Apache peoples, the travels of a pioneer nation, and of early scientists making their way through discovery into a different time.

This wealth of nature - the remains of dinosaurs and creatures that lived over 35 million years ago and the gold deposits created by prehistoric volcanos - can be seen around every corner of this area.

Nowhere else can you travel within 25 miles and see such wondrous and varied historic sites - the entire countryside is a living museum filled with remnants of days gone by.

A variety of museums, outdoor and indoor experiences, showcase this unique blend of prehistoric times, 1800's ranching, gold mining from panning to hardrock mining to 2009 surface operations and everything in between.

Take a tour and spend a day or a week exploring our heritage and enjoying our present.