

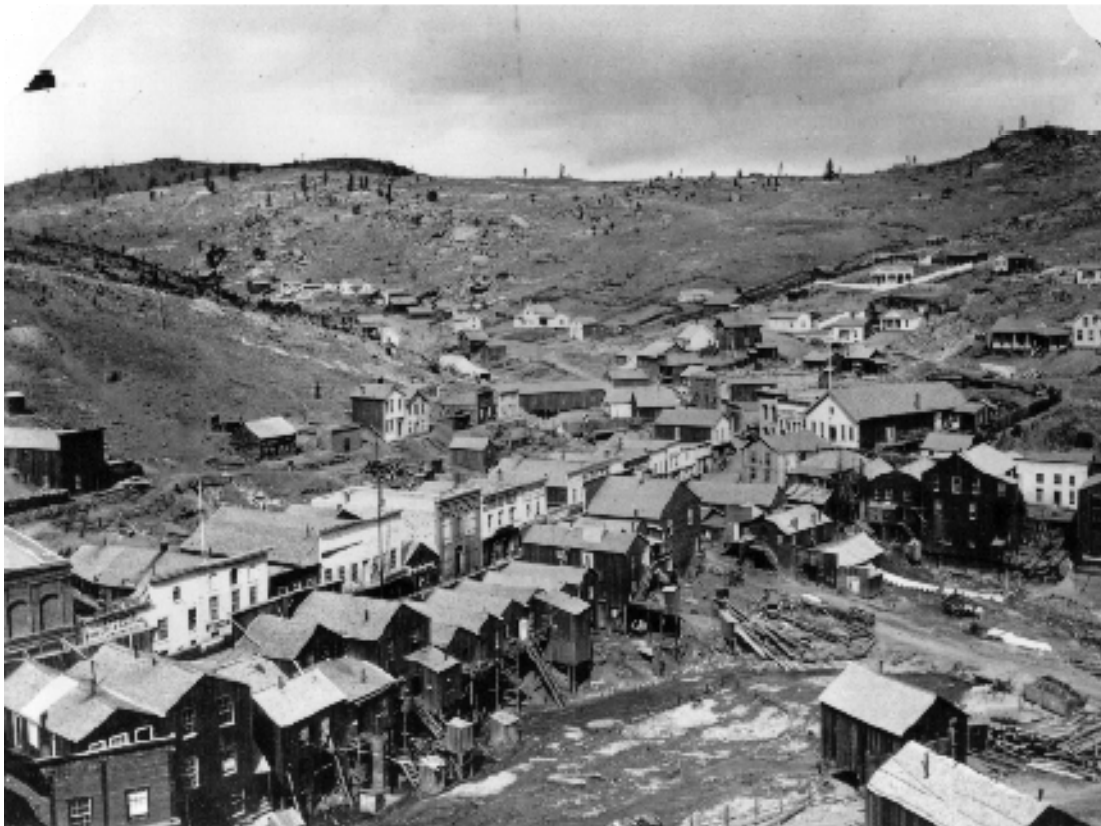
# COLORADO MINERS – MINING TOWNS

## Central City

What do these photos tell you about why miners established mining towns?

### 1864 Overview Of Central City

This is a photo of Central City taken in 1864. It shows the main street of the town and houses on the hillsides.



*Central City in 1864*

*Photo: Colorado Historical Society*

### More About This Topic

Central City was one of Colorado's first mining towns. It grew up in the gulch where John Gregory discovered gold in 1859. This photo was taken five years later. Take a look at the bare mountain behind the town. What do you think happened to the trees that once covered the hillsides?

## Their Own Words

"This narrow valley is densely wooded, mainly with the inevitable yellow pine, which, sheltered from the fierce winds which sweep the mountaintops, here grows to a height of sixty or eighty feet, though usually but a foot to eighteen inches in diameter. Of these pines, log cabins are constructed with extreme facility, and probably one hundred are now being built, while three or four hundred are in immediate contemplation."

*Source: Horace Greeley, An Overland Journey (New York: Knopf, 1964): 103-104.*

## 1864 Street In Central City

This was a business street in Central City in 1864.



*Business Street in Central City*

*Photo: Colorado Historical Society*

## More About This Topic

The merchants of Central City provided the local miners with the supplies they needed. Take a close look at this photo. What stores and other businesses can you find? What does the photo tell you about why mining towns existed?

## Their Own Words

"I have not, as yet seen all of the city, it is scattered along the gulch, as far as I have seen, about two miles, quite compactly built; some very good log houses. We have some eight stores, many groceries, numerous bakeries, any amount of eating houses, one Masonic Hall and nary [a] church."

*Source: P.P. Van Trees, quoted in Duane A. Smith, Colorado Mining: A Photographic History (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977): 11.*

## 1864 Street In Central City

This 1864 photo shows a street in Central City.



*A Street in Central City in 1864*

*Photo: Colorado Historical Society*

## More About This Topic

Take a close look at this photo as well. What businesses can you find in this photo? What does it tell you about why mining towns existed?

## Their Own Words

"In the three weeks that we have been sojourners here there has been some three thousand persons arrived and they have built cabins in every nook and corner within five or six miles of us in every direction."

*Source: David F. Spain to his wife, Arapahoe City, April 30, 1859; in John D. Morrison, ed., "The Letters of David F. Spain," Colorado Magazine, 35 (April, 1958): 106.*

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## Store Fronts

What do these photos tell you about the kind of stores and shops that were in these towns?

### Telluride Hardware Store

This is the front of the J. D. Work & Company hardware store in Telluride. The photo was taken about 1903.



*Telluride Hardware Store*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Photos of storefronts tell us a lot about mining towns of the 1800s. The owner of this hardware store in Telluride used the front of his store to advertise goods that he sold. What do the advertisements tell us about why miners and mine owners needed hardware stores?

### Their Own Words

"In the same block with the Review [a newspaper] were two or three eating houses, two groceries, a hardware store, assay office, a meat market, a drug store, jewelry store, two or three saloons, two dance halls, and perhaps some other places of business."

*Source: George A. Root, "Gunnison in the Early 'Eighties," Colorado Magazine, 9 (Nov. 1932): 202.*

### Bon Ton Restaurant In Ouray

This is a photo of the Bon Ton Restaurant in the mining town of Ouray. One of the people standing in front is the owner. Can you guess which one?



*Bon Ton Restaurant in Ouray*

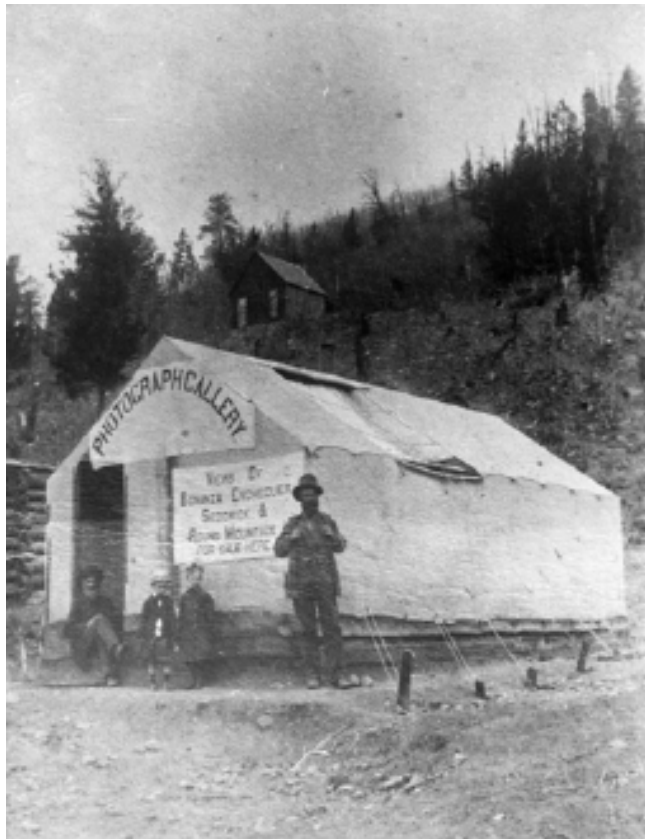
*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Restaurants were a good business in mining towns because miners were poor cooks. Many wrote home to their wives about how much they missed their cooking. They ate in restaurants whenever they could afford it. The Bon Ton Restaurant in Ouray was owned by Mrs. Kitty Heit, the woman at the left in the photo. She made enough money from the restaurant to build the St. Elmo Hotel in Ouray. This photo tells us that women, too, owned businesses in mining towns.

### Tent Photo Gallery In Exchequer

This tent housed a photograph gallery in the mining camp of Exchequer. The sign in front says: Views of Bonanza, Exchequer, Sedwick & Round Mountain For Sale Here. These were mining towns in Saguache County north of Alamosa.



*Tent photo gallery in Exchequer*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Many mining towns had their own photographer. He took individual and family portraits in his studio. Some, like this photographer, also sold photos he had taken of nearby places. As mining camps sprang up, businesses of all kinds were housed in tents.

## Their Own Words

“California Gulch in 1860 and 1861 had a population of something over 10,000 and was The Camp of Colorado. It was strung along through the gulch, which was something over five miles long, that is the mining part of it. There were a great many tents in the road and on the side of the ridge, and the wagons were backed up, the people living right in the wagons.”

*Source: Wolfe Londoner, “Western Experiences and Colorado Mining Camps,” Colorado Magazine, 6 (March 1929): 69.*

## Secondhand Store in Cripple Creek

This second-hand store was located in Cripple Creek. The writing on the lower right corner says that a post office was located in this cabin.



*Secondhand Store in Cripple Creek*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

## More About This Topic

This second-hand store advertised its goods by hanging items on the wall in front. Take a close look at this photo. What items can you find that a miner might need?

## Their Own Words

“The highlight of the day was the incoming mail. The post office was a log cabin, home-made pigeonholes for the letters, the papers frequently tossed into the fire, while hundreds of people waited in line for that letter from home.”

Source: Mrs. A. H. Majors, “Pioneer Days in Crestone and Creede,” *Colorado Magazine*, 21 (1944): 216-217.

## Tent Lunchroom In Cripple Creek

The tent in this photo was a lunchroom in the town of Cripple Creek. The words written on the tent advertised the lunch menu.



*Tent lunchroom in Cripple Creek*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

This lunchroom or restaurant was among the first businesses to open in the new mining camp of Cripple Creek. The menu written on the tent cover included: Hot Soup, 10 Cents; Oysters; Sandwiches, 15 Cents; Coffee 5 Cents Per Cup; and Hot Beef Hash, 10 Cents.

### Their Own Words



"It was not so bad during the day but when darkness came and you could see the big tent-saloons illuminated, hear the music and knew there was light, warmth, entertainment and liquid refreshments to be had our footsteps invariably pointed to those places of diversion and enjoyment. . . ."

*Source: Clayton Nickols quoted in Walker D. Wyman, "Grand Junction's First Year, 1882," Colorado Magazine, 13 (July 1936): 132.*

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## Store Interiors

What do these photos tell you about the kind of stores and shops that were in these towns?

### Bank In Victor

This is the interior of the Citizens Bank in the town of Victor, which is located near Cripple Creek. The metal grill on the left of the men is a teller window. That is where the bankers waited on customers.



*The interior of Citizens Bank in Victor*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Photos of the interiors of places of business also tell us a lot about Colorado's mining towns. We know from this photo that Victor had at least one bank. Why would a miner, a mine owner or a merchant need to go to a bank?

### Butcher Shop In Nevadaville

This is a butcher shop or meat store in Nevadaville, a mining town near Central City. Chickens hang from the rack behind the men. The wall on the right hold hindquarters of beef. Lunchmeat is displayed on the table.



*Butcher shop in Nevadaville*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Stores like this butcher shop sold food to the miners. This shop also provided farmers and ranchers down on the plains with a market for the chickens, cattle, and other animals that they raised.

### Their Own Words

“O I tell you we are neared heaven on them mountains than you poor souls in the low flats States—but I can’t say that we are any more spiritual—indeed I fear that religion here is very much diluted for even now, Sunday at 11 am, the stores are all open, trading is brisk, the Billiard rooms and lager Beer Saloons are in full blasts. This is universal in the mining districts in order to accommodate the miners who live under ground all the week and spending their moneys Sundays.”

*Source: Alonzo Harris Boardman to his wife, Nancy, Aug. 16, 1863.*

## Saloon In Telluride

This photo was taken in a saloon in Telluride. The men on the right are leaning against the bar. Musicians are seated in the rear. On the left, men are seated at a gambling table. The electric lights hanging from the ceiling indicate that the photo was taken in the early 1900s.



*Saloon in Telluride*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Saloons were popular places in mining towns. Miners went there to drink beer, talk with their friends, listen to music, and to play cards and gamble. In some small mining towns, saloons that had iron safes also served as banks. Miners kept their money or gold dust in the saloon's safe.

### Their Own Words

"As I sold newspapers on the street, I was often in Johnny Nolan's saloon, where I sometimes sold all my papers. It was not an uncommon sight to see ten- and twenty-dollar gold pieces piled high in the center of the round, green cloth-covered tables. Of course, there were many stacks of silver dollars. Hard money was always used when the games of chance were in vogue."

*Source: William W. Wardell, "Cripple Creek Memories," Colorado Magazine, 37 (1960): 35.*

## General Store in Central City

This photo shows the inside of a general store. It was taken in Central City about the year 1900.



*General Store in Central City*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

Miners went to the general store to buy most of their food and other supplies. Items for sale in the store is in this photograph include canned food, glassware and dishes.

### Their Own Words

"Sugar, coffee, molasses, mackerel, herring, rope, blasting powder, nails, crackers, boots and shoes, socks, domestics, locks, hatchets, and screws."

*Source: Rocky Mountain News, 1859.*

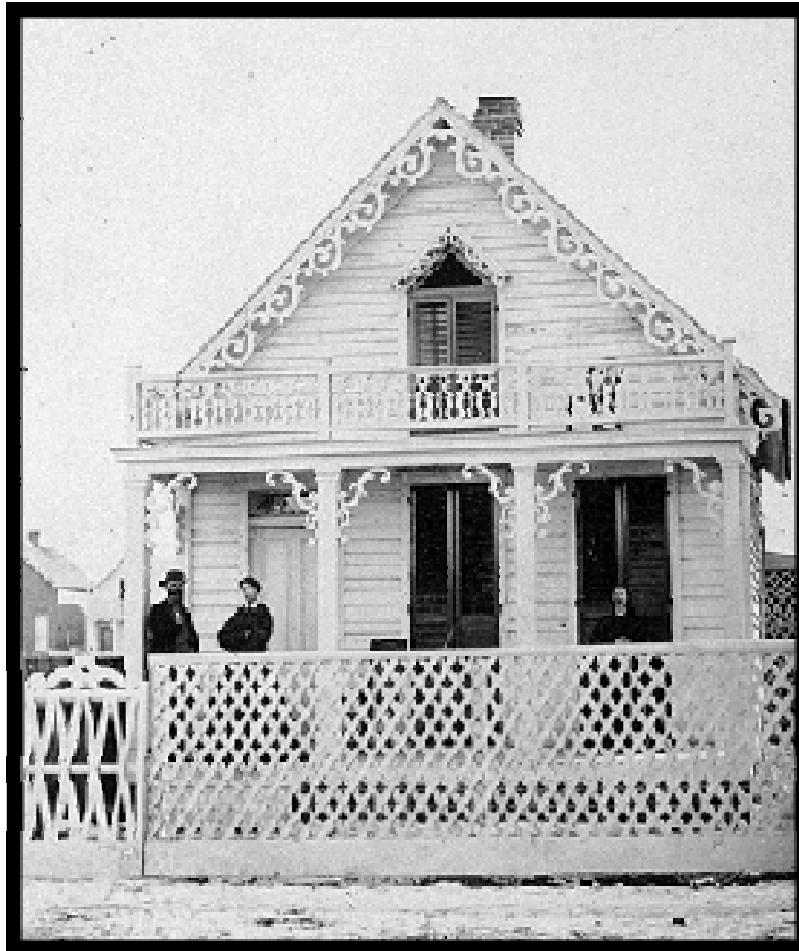
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# Houses

What do these photos tell you about the kind of houses mining town people lived in?

## Frame House In Leadville

The house in this photo is a frame house with “gingerbread” trim. The fancy trim work was made of sawn boards.



*Frame House in Leadville*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### More About This Topic

The first houses in almost every mining town were tents and log cabins. Within a few years, most of the new houses were wooden frame houses. Most were small houses like the one in this photo. The windows in this house have shutters that helped keep out sunlight in the summer and cold air in the winter.

## **Their Own Words**

"The next morning we resumed our journey, passing through lovely valleys and winding up and around towering mountains. . . . Occasionally we saw a parcel of men engaged in making shingles and shakes for market, cutting wood and prospecting, and now and then the buzz of the saw was heard, together with the puff, puff of the laboring steam as it escaped from work below, marking an era in the history of the mountains which had never before resounded with . . . such industry, that was cutting and shaving the heavy timber from their sides into . . . a commodity that brings sixty dollars per thousand in the cities and mining districts."

*Source: C. M. Clark, A Trip to Pike's Peak and Notes by the Way, (San Jose: The Talisman Press, 1958 [originally 1861]): 113.*

## **The Healy House In Leadville**

This is a photo of the Healy House in Leadville. It was built in 1878 for August R. Meyer, a Leadville smelter owner.



*Healy House in Leadville*

*Photo: Colorado Historical Society*

## More About This Topic

The Healy House is a large frame house with three stories. Although built by a wealthy smelter owner, it is simply decorated. Look closely and you will see trim work on the porch. The windows on the first two floors of this house also have shutters. The house is surrounded by a white picket fence.

## Their Own Words

“Father met us in Denver and filled Madge and me with excitement by telling us that a big surprise awaited us in Leadville. . . . He did not tell us before we saw with our own eyes the new house which he had built for us. It was on a hill beyond the stores—on the back side of the hill, the yard running down to the creek. . . . The house did not compare with those on the street in front of us, some of which had barns for horses, or a horse and vehicle of some kind.” “Ours had but two rooms but they were each heated by its own stove, our old range heating the kitchen (which was also the bedroom for us girls), a heater for the other room in which were a real bed and dresser. And there was carpet on the floor. And the house was painted! After, the cabin, which we never saw again, it seem palatial.”

*Source: Georgia Burns Hills, “Memories of a Pioneer Childhood,” Colorado Magazine, 32 (April 1955): 118, 119.*

## The Lace House In Black Hawk

This house in the town of Black Hawk is called the Lace House. The trim that decorates the roof line is delicate and lacy-looking.



*Lace House in Black Hawk*

*Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection*

### **More About This Topic**

The Lace House is a very good example of the decorative trim that is sometimes called gingerbread trim. Although some houses like the Lace House were decorated nicely, the overall feeling of mining towns like Blackhawk was often dreary.

### **Their Own Words**

“Narrow and dingy as is this mining town [Black Hawk] its people are making a brave effort to give it a look of comfort, in pleasant private dwellings, neat churches and fine school buildings, perched up against the mountain-side, where it would seem no building larger than a miner’s hut could find lodgement. Scarcely a tree or shrub is to be seen, or even a flower, except it be in some parlor window: but, as we drove up into Central, we came upon a very pretty conservatory, attached to a neat cottage. It was something strangely cheering, yet touching, in the universal dreariness. . . .”

*Source: Mrs. Sara Jane Lippincott (1871), quoted in Duane Smith, “Mining Camps: Myth vs. Reality,” Colorado Magazine, 44 (Spring 1967): 94-95.*