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Chapter 1 : Georgetownâ€™Silver Plume Historic District | Articles | Colorado Encyclopedia

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Georgetown and Silver Plume Share article to First developed as silver mining towns in the s and s, Georgetown and Silver Plume prospered until After World War II, they began to be recognized for their rich mining history, and in they were declared a National Historic Landmark. The town grew quickly, but it did not really boom until silver was found nearby in September Hamill House Silver Plume Share article to Located about two miles up Clear Creek from Georgetown, Silver Plume developed as a more working-class town with a diverse population of miners that included many European immigrants. Silver Plume Georgetown Loop Share article to Despite the short distance between Georgetown and Silver Plume, connecting the towns by rail proved difficult because of the steep climb. To solve the problem, the track was extended via a series of large curves and a full loop to reduce the average grade. Completed in , it was abandoned in the late s but rebuilt in the sâ€™80s by the Colorado Historical Society. The area declined after the Panic of but revived somewhat after World War II thanks to the rise of ski traffic, automobile tourism, and historic preservation. Griffith, who discovered gold in the area on June 17, Originally from Kentucky, George and his brother David T. Griffith had come to Colorado in October , during the initial excitement about gold discoveries near what is now Denver. On June 15, they set up camp in a three-sided valley along the creek, and on June 17, George Griffith found gold. The Griffiths soon built a cabin at their campsite, which eventually became the corner of Seventeenth and Main Streets in Georgetown. By that September, a town had taken shape in the valley and was named Georgetown after George Griffith. In spring , David Griffith surveyed and platted the town, which had about forty residents and at least two mills. The initial optimism in Georgetown soon waned as the Civil War stalled migration and new mining areas such as South Park took off. One problem, it turned out, was that miners were trying to extract gold out of rocks that, unbeknownst to them, were actually rich in silver. Silver was discovered on nearby Mt. McClellan on September 14, , and news of the find spread over the fall and winter. In spring , Georgetown was flooded with a new wave of prospectors. By that fall, Georgetown and its immediate neighbor to the south, Elizabethtown named after a Griffith sister or wife , were full of tents and other temporary shelters. The Silver Queen It took several years of development, but by the late s the Georgetown area was booming. As Georgetown matured into the commercial hub of the most important mining district in the state, it was able to combine with nearby Elizabethtown and wrest the Clear Creek County seat away from Idaho Springs. By , the population surged to 3, In William Cushman completed a two-story building to house his Bank of Georgetown, and he later added a third story and put an opera house on the top floor. The same year, an enigmatic Frenchman named Louis Dupuy opened a stylish hotel and restaurant called the Hotel de Paris , which featured luxuries such as indoor plumbing and French cooking. Georgetown became home to a growing number of merchants, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals who attempted to replicate the society and culture of the East. In the s, mines had been developed in Brown Gulch, just west of present-day Silver Plume, and the town of Brownville formed at the base of the gulch. By the s, activity had moved east to what is now Silver Plume. Incorporated in , the town housed a melting pot of more than 1, miners from Cornish, Irish, English, German, Italian, and Scandinavian backgrounds. They were served by a bustling commercial district with groceries, dry goods stores, saloons, and boarding houses. Stability In Georgetown hit its peak of prosperity. That year, 5, people lived in and around the city, which had two newspapers, a telegraph office, a bank, five churches, and several hotels. In August the Colorado Central Railroad arrived, providing a cheaper and faster way to ship ores and promising growth in the years to come. But Georgetown soon lost its boomtown glow when silver was discovered at Leadville. Meanwhile, Georgetown maintained steady production over the next fifteen years. Because it existed in the shadow of Leadville, it was able to develop a measure of stability outside the rapid booms and busts that usually defined

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mining-town economies. In the s and early s, stately houses and prominent commercial buildings went up throughout the town. Electric streetlights were installed in , and City Park was completed in . When the Leadville boom began, the Colorado Central planned to extend its line west from Georgetown over the Continental Divide and ultimately to Leadville. The project soon ran into problems. All this took years to plan and build, and it was not until March that the first trains rolled into Silver Plume. The line was extended up the valley to Graymont near Bakerville but never went any farther. Built to haul silver ore, the scenic line soon became popular among sightseers. Georgetown became a tourist destination and boasted more than a dozen hotels. Mines failed, businesses closed, and people moved away. Without much freight to haul, the Georgetown Loop connecting Georgetown and Silver Plume limped along on tourist traffic for several decades before being abandoned in . This change began even before the war, when US 6 went through Clear Creek Valley, but took several decades to develop. Meanwhile, Denverites started to buy old Victorian houses in town and spruce them up as summer homes. By the late s, the town claimed several hundred second-home owners. The people who came to Georgetown were attracted by its picturesque Victorian blocks, which had never been razed by fires, and started working to preserve them. By the s, however, Georgetown was starting to face what some locals perceived as threats to its well-preserved Victorian charm. As Interstate 70 marched up the Clear Creek Valley, initial plans called for it to cut Georgetown in two and destroy what was left of the old Georgetown Loop route. The Colorado Department of Highways saved Georgetown and the Georgetown Loop route by shifting the interstate onto a bench blasted high into the side of Republican Mountain. Spurred by the interstate threat and the prospect of hosting events for the Winter Olympics , in local residents formed Historic Georgetown Inc. It also acquired and restored the Hamill House, which was opened for public tours. Meanwhile, in the Colorado Historical Society now History Colorado , spurred by board chair James Grafton Rogers, had started to acquire land with the goal of reconstructing the Georgetown Loop. After the rerouting of Interstate 70 saved the old railroad grade, reconstruction of the line began in the early s. By the middle of the decade, tourist trains could run part of the way from Georgetown to Silver Plume. The grand opening of the revived Georgetown Loop was held in August . Two years later the Silver Plume Depot was restored to its original appearance. Today Georgetown continues to be a popular destination for tourists driving up Interstate 70 from Denver. Bierstadt or Grays and Torreys Peaks. Originally home to working-class miners rather than wealthy merchants and professionals, Silver Plume has seen significantly less restoration and tourist development than Georgetown and receives far fewer visitors. It is located in the Upper Clear Creek valley about forty-five miles west of Denver. Silver Plume developed as a diverse town of working-class miners. George and his brother David T. On June 15, they set up camp along the creek, and on June 17, George Griffith found gold. The Griffiths soon built a cabin at their campsite. This location eventually became the corner of Seventeenth and Main Streets in Georgetown. They formed a mining district, organized as the Griffith Mining District in June . The Griffiths built a twenty-mile toll road from their district to Central City. By that September, a town had taken shape and was named Georgetown after George Griffith. In spring , David Griffith surveyed and platted the town. It had about forty residents and at least two mills. The initial optimism in Georgetown soon faded. One problem was that miners were trying to extract gold out of rocks that were actually rich in silver. McClellan on September 14, The Silver Queen By the late s, the Georgetown area was booming. Georgetown matured into the commercial hub of the most important mining district in the state. The same year, a Frenchman named Louis Dupuy opened a stylish hotel and restaurant called the Hotel de Paris. It featured luxuries such as indoor plumbing and French cooking. Georgetown became home to merchants, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals who attempted to replicate the society and culture of the East. It had several new wings, a glass solarium, and oriel and bay windows. In the s, mines had been developed in Brown Gulch, just west of present-day Silver Plume. Incorporated in , the town housed a melting pot of more than 1, miners. That year, 5, people lived in and around the city. In August the Colorado Central Railroad arrived, providing a cheaper and faster way to ship ores. It promised growth in the years to come. But Georgetown soon lost its boomtown glow when silver was discovered at Leadville in 1861. Because it existed in

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the shadow of Leadville, Georgetown developed a measure of stability outside the rapid booms and busts that usually defined mining-town economies. Electric streetlights were installed in City Park was completed in The climb straight from Georgetown to Silver Plume was too steep for a railroad. In March , the first trains rolled into Silver Plume. Georgetown became a tourist destination. This caused a decline in silver mining across the country. Without much freight to haul, the Georgetown Loop connecting Georgetown and Silver Plume was abandoned in This led to a new focus on historic preservation.

Chapter 2 : How to get to Georgetown-Silver Plume Historic District, Colorado

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Published in cooperation with Historic Georgetown, Inc. and People for Silver Plume, Inc. Skip to main content Search the history of over billion web pages on the Internet.

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The Georgetown-Silver Plume Historic District is one of the best-preserved historic mining districts in Colorado. It is located in the Upper Clear Creek valley about forty-five miles west of Denver.

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The Georgetown-Silver Plume National Historic Landmark District is a federally designated United States National Historic Landmark that comprises the Town of.