

History of Park City, Utah

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Park City was once a spirited mining town comprised of colorful characters. Today it is a year-round resort destination.

In the late 1860's, a group of prospecting soldiers, stationed near Salt Lake City, discovered silver in the hills surrounding what is now Park City. In 1872, a trio of prospectors tapped into an extremely rich silver vein about two miles south of Park City, in Ontario Canyon. Word of the strike spread quickly, and adventurers from around the world flocked to the area, turning the camp into a thriving boom town.

The new population soon put down roots; the weekly *Park Record* newspaper was launched; and schools, churches, and businesses were established. In 1884, the growing community was incorporated as a town.

The town's residents enjoyed great prosperity for a half century: the mountains surrendered \$400 million in silver.

Many fortunes were established, including those of Utah's Silver Queen, Susanna Bransford, and George Hearst, father of newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst. More than a thousand miles of tunnels wind through the surrounding mountains, attesting to the tenacity of those earlier residents during the mining era.

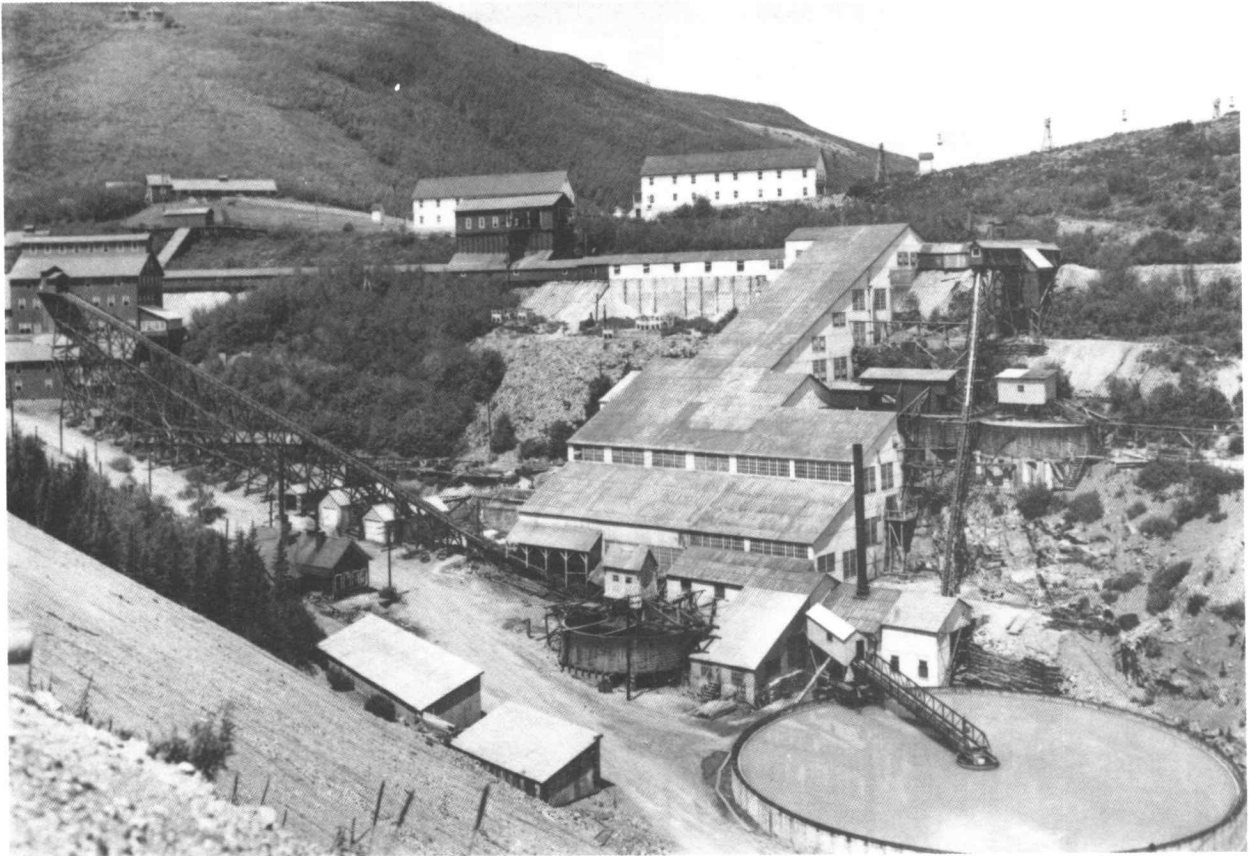
Being a mining town, Park City was one of few Utah towns that was established by non-Mormons. During the mining boom, 27 saloons existed on Main Street to "wet the whistles" of the early miners.

The area is full of intriguing stories passed down through the generations of Parkites. One such story comes from Utah's Prohibition days when Park City mortician George Archer kept locals supplied with liquor. Archer would drive his hearse to nearby Evanston, Wyoming, load up with illegal whiskey, pull the shades, and solemnly drive back to his funeral parlor. Local tavern owners would then replenish their supply by visiting Archer's garage in the dark of the night.

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The fire of 1898. The east side of Main Street is pictured with City Hall on the left and the First National Bank on the right. The Marsac Mill is in the background.



The Silver King Mine, mill, and flotation pond, about 1935.



A view of Park City looking north from Rossi Hill, about 1935.

As with many boom towns, a variety of nationalities flocked to the area during the mining days. The majority were Irish, but other nationalities included Swedish, Finns, Cornish, Chinese, Scottish, and Yugoslavians.

Park City was not without set-backs. In 1898 a major fire destroyed more than 200 businesses on Main Street. Eighteen months later the city was rebuilt. Park City was touted (Ringholv 1983) to be the greatest silver camp in the world with enough ore to last another 100 years. By the 1930's, falling mineral prices ended the boom years. Enterprising Parksites began turning their attention from the treasure in the ground to the snow on the surrounding slopes.

Ski jumpers from around the world started competing at Ecker Hill in 1930. In 1946, the town's first ski area opened. As the sport of skiing caught on, three more ski areas were opened within four miles of town. Treasure Mountain Resort, now the Park City Ski Area, opened in 1963. The ParkWest Ski Area opened five years later in 1968. Then, in 1981, Deer Valley Resort opened, incorporating many of the old Snow Park runs.

Today, Park City not only is known for its world class skiing, but is rapidly becoming a year-round resort community.

References

Ringholv, Raye, 1983. Diggings and Doings in Park City. USA.

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