“Daughter, I’ve Struck It Rich.”
Thomas Walsh and the Rich Camp Bird Mine, 1877 to 1902
Ouray County, Colorado
By Ken Kucera

In 1936, Evalyn Walsh McLean related the story of the discovery of the Camp Bird mine after her father Thomas Walsh had received assays of rich gold ore from newly purchased mining properties. He reportedly said this now famous line – “Daughter, I’ve Struck It Rich” - quoted in his daughter’s book about the Walsh family titled “Father Struck It Rich”. (Walsh, 1936)
Introduction and Overview

A story in the Horatio Alger tradition - working hard and persevering through adversity - figured prominently in the discovery and development of the Colorado’s famous Camp Bird mine. This time the person of courage and perseverance is Thomas Francis Walsh, an immigrant from Ireland who moved to Ouray about 1896, after making previous stops in other Colorado localities, including Del Norte, Cripple Creek, Central City, Kokomo, Rico, and Silverton.

Thomas Walsh (1850 – 1910) discovered the fabulously rich Camp Bird mine in 1896, then sold it in 1902. During the mine’s heyday, it was the world’s largest and richest gold mine owned solely by an individual. From 1896 to 1990, the mine produced almost 1.5 million ounces of gold and 4.6 million ounces of silver – worth about $2.8 billion in today’s metal prices. The mine was a major source of base metals, producing more than 36,000 tons of lead, 6,000 tons of copper, and 33,000 tons of zinc (Hutchinson 1988; Rosemeyer, 1990).

The mine’s early profits made Walsh a millionaire many times over. He had no business partners, never incorporated, and sold no stock, so all profits went to him alone. He was widely praised for his philanthropy and progressive views on labor relations, including implementation of an 8-hour work-day for his miners.

The Camp Bird mine is considered by some as its own mining district – for this article, the mine is considered in the Sneffels District. The mine is located about six miles southwest of Ouray, Colorado. It lies in southwestern Colorado's Imogene Basin in the San Juan Mountains. See Figure 4. The mine is at an elevation of 11,200 feet and was in operation from 1896 to 1990.

At its zenith, the Camp Bird was the one of the largest and most profitable deposits of gold in the United States. It generated profits for the Walsh family helping Evalyn Walsh McLean (daughter of Thomas Walsh) to purchase both the Hope and Star of the East diamonds.
The Camp Bird mine is truly notable, not only because it enabled later owners to pay annual dividends of more than 50% for many years, but also because it was mined for silver and base metals long before, and long after, its enormous amount of gold ore was discovered and extracted.

In today’s metal prices, total gold and silver production from the Camp Bird would be valued at about $2.8 billion.

Geologically and historically, Camp Bird was something of a misfit. With only a few notable exceptions, the San Juan mining camps were predominantly silver-lead producers. The Camp Bird was a prolific gold camp. Chronologically, its history was out of step with a large part of Colorado’s mining industry. Its discovery and prime production period occurred after the collapse of the Colorado silver mining boom in 1893.

From the late 1890’s through the early 1920’s, the Camp Bird produced many fine gold specimens in quartz, in addition to large groups of stunning milky-white quartz crystals. In the rich, upper levels of Camp Bird, gold occurred in the native state with small amounts of the tellurides petzite and hessite. Most of this gold was fine-grained and concentrated in dark, thin undulating bands made up of gold, chalcopyrite, galena, sphalerite, and manganese oxides. The gold also occurred as tiny flakes and specks scattered in crystalline quartz, giving the quartz a buttery-yellow appearance.

Much of the gold from the Camp Bird was not readily visible to the naked eye. It occurred as very fine grains and specks in crystalline quartz, and in narrow dark sulfide-quartz bands.

Figure 5 (left): This beautiful specimen from the Camp Bird mine is from the Colorado School of Mines Museum of Earth Science display collection - “Gold & Chalcopyrite in Quartz”, catalog #8353, Camp Bird mine, Sneffels mining district, Ouray County, Colorado. Specimen size approximately 10 cm x 5 cm. The piece shows rich masses of very fine-grained, buttery-looking gold with bright-brassy pods of Chalcopyrite in a white quartz matrix. (Image credit: author)
History of the Camp Bird Mine, 1877 - 1902

The first wave of prospectors seeking gold and silver in Colorado’s San Juan Mountains was in the 1860’s. Due to the numerous rich silver-lead discoveries in the 1870’s, the area became known as the “Silvery San Juans”.

Ouray and the Imogene Basin

The town of Ouray’s fortunes ebbed and flowed with its minerals. The rich Red Mountain mining district to the south produced a silver bonanza, then experienced a major decline after 1893, like the rest of Colorado’s silver producing areas. To the southwest of Ouray, the Imogene Basin saw a lot of prospecting activity but no mining bonanzas. Its early prospectors were certain that the basin’s potential lay in silver, not in gold. Even though claims were staked on a prominent silver-bearing quartz vein in Imogene Basin, prospectors either failed to recognize or bypassed the rich gold-bearing ore contained in the Camp Bird lode. An early prospector of the area, Andy Richardson, gave the name “Imogene” to both the basin and pass, in honor of his wife. However, an Englishman named William Weston would soon bring greater attention to the area.

The original discovery on what would become the expansive property of the Camp Bird mine, was made in the late summer and fall of 1877, in the upper reaches of Imogene...
Basin, just east of Chicago Peak. In September 1877, William Weston – an Englishman and ex-promoter for the Kansas Pacific Railroad - arrived in southwestern Colorado having fallen victim to the lure of silver. Weston wasted no time making the trek to Imogene Basin between Ouray and Telluride. Weston met and formed a partnership with another Englishman experienced in mining, named George Barber. They built a log cabin and began staking mining claims. The seven claims they staked that fall were the Gertrude, Una, Crusader, Conqueror, Monument, Emily and Norma, with the intention of working them for silver-lead ore (Stewart, 2002). The claims were located over a quartz vein outcrop – later well-known as the prominent Camp Bird vein - near the head of Imogene Basin at an altitude of 11,850 feet. See Figure 9. They were snowbound much of the year and difficult to access. Of these, only two were destined for success, the Una and Gertrude - but not for William Weston and George Barber. Weston named these claims in honor of "Gertrude" his sister-in-law in London and "Una" his niece, Una Weston (Stewart, 2002).

For the Una and Gertrude claims, the gold values assayed ran from $12 to $20 per ton of ore. Such ore was not considered profitable. At the time, it cost about $35 per ton to pack the ore by mule and ship it to the nearest smelter in Silverton, and another $45 per ton for ore-reduction or smelting. Accordingly, ore values in the range of $100 per ton of ore were needed to make a profit (Bureau of Mines, 1948).

In September 1878, Weston and Barber arranged for mining engineers Hubbard and Caleb Reed, to drive a 50-foot tunnel along the line separating the Gertrude and Una claims. The intention was to have the tunnel intersect the gold vein 150 feet below its surface outcrop. As payment for their time and effort, the Reeds could choose one of the claims to keep - they chose the Una (Engineering and Mining Journal, 1910; Ouray Herald, 1911). The Reeds tunnels further into their Una claim but found only low-grade values of mineralization. Unfortunately for Hubbard and Caleb, their original tunnel between the claims later proved to have crossed a very high-grade gold vein at a "dead spot", or "pinch," where there was ore was not exposed in paying quantities. Reportedly, as the mining fates would have it, a slight directional change in the tunnel of ten feet could have made the Reeds very wealthy (Stewart, 2002).

In 1881, an engineer named W.C. Coman examined the Gertrude claim for Orrin Skinner, an Illinois lawyer. Coman liked the potential and recommended a purchase. Weston and Barber sold the claim to Skinner later in 1881 for a reported $50,000 (Stewart, 2002). To run the mine, Skinner organized the Allied Mines Company. Weston stayed on as mine manager, with Coman in charge of mill and metallurgy.

Allied Mines started a second fifty-foot tunnel in the Gertrude claim. Only thirty-eight feet could be completed before winter, and for some reason, no samples and assays were taken of rock that was mined. Mismanagement quickly wrecked the company. Before further exploration work could be done in 1882, Allied Mines Company declared bankruptcy. In 1884, the final twelve feet of the intended fifty-foot tunnel were driven, which was only enough to fulfill legal requirements for a claim patent. Once again, no samples and assays were taken. The story's ending would have been vastly different had they done so. Rich gold ores had been unknowingly exposed, but the Gertrude claim was largely written off as a failure. No further work would be done on the claim until 1896. Stewart (2002) states accounts have some conflicting details, but there is general agreement that the rich Camp Bird gold ore found later and recognized by Walsh was first missed, then overlooked, and samples/assays were not taken at critical points in the exploration process.

**The Gold-Rich Gertrude Claim Was Interested in Only One Suitor**

In the words of one writer, the Gertrude claim had only one suitor in mind. At the time, that suitor was elsewhere in Colorado, an Irish immigrant named Thomas Francis Walsh (Rickard, 1907; Rosemeyer, 1990; Melrose, 1947).

In 1894, with the collapse in the price of silver a year earlier, greater attention was being paid to gold by area prospectors. By the mid-1890s, the silver-lead mines and claims in Imogene Basin were largely closed and many abandoned. Walsh decided to explore the Imogene Basin in 1896 and changed mining history in the San Juans.
Walsh was born April 2, 1850, at Clonmel, Tipperary, Ireland, into a farming family. While in grade-school, he started his life-long interest in geology. Reportedly, he was motivated in-part to leave Ireland because all mineral rights belonged to the British crown, leaving no opportunities for mine ownership for Irish citizens (Stewart, 2012). He immigrated to the United States at the age of nineteen. Walsh was quickly caught up in the westward movement. With the financial panic of 1873, Walsh joined the gold rush and moved to the mining town of Del Norte in the Colorado territory, where he split his time between carpentry and prospecting. He spent time in the gold rush to the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1876, and reportedly returned to Colorado in 1878 (Stewart, 2012). Stints in Leadville, Cripple Creek, Kokomo, Silverton, Rico, and Ouray would follow.

Walsh’s fortunes ebbed and flowed along with his diverse business ventures. These included, a lucrative gig as owner of the Grand Hotel on Chestnut Street in Leadville; a smelting company in Kokomo named the Summit Mining and Smelting Company; mine owner in the Ouray and Telluride areas (American Nettie, Black Girl); and a stint as a manager and part-owner of a smelter in Silverton after the silver crash of 1893. His smelting operation in Silverton would open some fortuitous doors.

With the collapse in the price of silver in 1893, prospectors were starting to pay more attention to finding gold.

Walsh’s new pyritic smelter was in Silverton, south over the intimidating Red Mountain Pass, and was completed in July 1894. The operation was primarily bankrolled by an English company operating the famous Guston mine in the nearby Red Mountain mining district. The ore Walsh was treating at his smelter was mainly low-grade pyrite that required a siliceous flux for an efficient recovery of metals (Rosemeyer, 1990). He decided the smelter needed additional low-grade ore for flux and looked to the Imogene Basin as a source. By this time, the basin held many abandoned silver-lead mines and claims operated eighteen to twenty
years earlier. He formed a friendship with an experienced prospector familiar with the basin, Andy Richardson, and
started exploring. Richardson knew the basin well but did not believe the Imogene held any gold values. Walsh
disagreed. He had recognized what he thought to be the same “pink spar” he knew to be a possible indicator of gold
from his work in mines near Cripple Creek (McLean, 1936).

Walsh realized by controlling enough mining claim properties, he could ship large amounts of low-grade siliceous ore to
maintain a consistent smelting operation at Silverton. Since the price of silver had collapsed, he also knew that many
mining properties could be purchased for “a song and a dance”. He was able to pick up a lot of property from owners
only too happy to sell their claims. Several claims, including the Gertrude, would be purchased at tax or sheriff’s sales.

In July 1896, he traveled into the basin to examine one of his new purchases - the Hidden Treasure mine. This trip would
be the catalyst leading to the discovery of rich gold ore and the beginning of the Camp Bird mine. During this trip, on
their way back down the basin, they sampled a “reddish pyritic porphyry” that appeared gold bearing (Walsh, 1908).
This material assayed at only two dollars of gold per ton of ore, but it confirmed Walsh’s speculation - gold was indeed
present in the basin.
The Gertrude and Una Claims – “Daughter, I’ve Struck It Rich”

The Gertrude and Una claims, which Walsh had reportedly purchased for $10,000 in 1896, were only about 300 feet from where the samples of the “reddish pyritic porphyry” had been taken (Ransome, 1901; Walsh, 1908). Walsh had never seen the workings of these claims because a snowslide that never seem to melt covered the portal entrance. He suspected a mineralized vein passed through or near the porphyry dike that carried gold values. He instructed Richardson to inspect and sample the workings of the Gertrude/Una claims. The new samples looked promising enough that Walsh decided to inspect the mine workings himself. On the dump outside the portal, he observed “showy” ore, having zinc, lead, and some “copper pyrites” (chalcopyrite). He went underground at the Gertrude and found an eighteen-inch streak of the same kind of “showy” ore that was on the dump. He also found a vein with about three feet of barren-looking quartz. It showed “little specks and thread-like circles of glistening black mineral all through it”, that Walsh thought was a telluride of gold (Walsh, 1908).

Most miners in the area accustomed to seeing the usual silver-lead minerals in the basin would have probably regarded this material as worthless. When Walsh sampled and assayed the barren-looking quartz from both underground and from the dump, the assay values were astonishing - up to $3,000 in gold per ton of ore! Walsh had found the Gertrude’s long-held secret. (There are several versions of this discovery. The one described here belongs to Walsh, which he gave to the 1908 graduating class at the Colorado School of Mines (Walsh, 1908)).

Years later in 1936, Evalyn Walsh McLean, daughter of Thomas Walsh, related the story of the discovery of the Camp Bird. After her father had received assays of the rich gold ore found at the Gertrude/Una claims, he reportedly said the now famous line “Daughter, I’ve struck it rich” (McLean, 1936).

There are many professional lessons to draw from the Camp Bird discovery. In the words of renowned mining engineer T. A. Rickard, who inspected Walsh’s property, "Never fail to test the ore of a drift that is penetrating into new ground, and never assume that ore is poor because it looks like ore you know to be poor" (Rickard, 1907). In 1908, years after the discovery, Walsh told young engineering graduates at the Colorado School of Mines, from his Camp Bird experience they can draw not one, but many professional lessons. Among them, “…It teaches you not to despise modest looking rock for sparkling, showy ore. It teaches you to have a thorough knowledge of all kinds of mineral bearing ore” (Walsh, 1908).
After his discovery, Walsh quickly staked all the open ground along the Camp Bird vein and acquired most of the basin’s unclaimed ground. It’s believed by at least one source that he accomplished the entire purchase of the basin for around $20,000 - $25,000 (Rocky Mountain News, 1910). Another source has him paying $60,000 for the Una claim alone. Deeds of record for Ouray County state a total of $52,850 was spent for Walsh’s 1896 - 1910 purchase of mining claims in the Imogene Basin (Stewart, 2002).

In the fall of 1896, news of the gold discovery broke. It didn’t take long for folks around Ouray to know that Walsh had made a big gold strike. As bigger and bigger orders for mining machinery went out by telegraph the news spread, first throughout Colorado and then to the big city newspapers. There was no gold rush to the area because Walsh owned everything!

Rise of the Camp Bird, 1896 to 1902 – Miners’ Porcelain Dishes and Tons of Gold

Is it true that Thomas Walsh, poor and out of luck, discovered a rich gold deposit and rapidly built a world-class mine that paid for itself? A common myth. Eastern bankers and investors, pillars of mining development in the west, were noticeably absent. Walsh apparently had some luck on his side before finding the rich Camp Bird. The Black Hawk mine at Rico was reportedly his first mining acquisition in the San Juans. The Black Hawk had been hemorrhaging money, but Walsh was able to find a large sulfide ore shoot for which a Durango smelter was willing to pay a lot of money. He “cleaned up a neat little fortune”, said a source (Rocky Mountain News, 1910). He also made profits from his earliest Ouray ventures, such as the Black Girl and American Nettie mines. The discovery and early development of the Camp Bird required Walsh to dig into his own pockets and the money was there.

During the period 1896 – 1899, development and expansion of the mine were fast paced. In the fall and winter of 1896-97, Walsh and Richardson organized the Camp Bird Mining Company, the legal and business umbrella for the operation (Fell and Twitty 2006). The first two shipments of rich ore went out in October 1896. This was followed by three shipments in November, six in December, five in January 1897, seven in February, and progressively increasing amounts after that. The early mining operation produced both gold and silver, along with a gold-silver-copper-lead concentrate. The first ores were processed at the old U.S. Depository Mill, one mile away. See Figure 9.

Figure 11 (right): Carrie Reed Walsh, wife of Thomas Walsh. Date unknown. Credit: Wikipedia.

Figure 12 (right): Camp Bird miners with pneumatic drill circa 1900. Credit: Western Mining History.com. Inset - rich gold ore (gold, white quartz, chalcopyrite, gray sulfides) from the early Chicago level of the mine. FOV about 6.0 cm. Credit: James St. John.
Ore production rapidly expanded. From the first tunnel driven in 1897, called the “Gertrude level”, a stope was mined out 120 feet long by 129 feet high, and a raise was driven to the surface 200 feet above. The “Bluebird tunnel”, at about the same elevation, reached the Camp Bird vein in July. In September, miners started a new tunnel 220 feet lower than the Gertrude, at 11,500 feet, called the 2 level. See Figures 16 and 17. Plans were also being finalized for a more modern amalgamating-concentrating mill, located two miles below the mine, at the junction of Canyon and Imogene Creeks. The mill would replace the old U.S. Depository Mill and be connected to the mine via an aerial tramway. See Figure 15.

On November 12, 1897, Ouray’s Silverite-Plaindealer newspaper printed, “Between 80 and 100 men are on the payroll and it is the consensus of opinion among the workmen that they could receive no better treatment in any other mine in the state” (Ouray Silverite-Plaindealer, 1897). In 1898, a three-story luxury boarding-house,
workshops, and warehouses were completed. Living conditions for Camp Bird miners were very comfortable. These comforts included: bathrooms furnished with marble-topped basins and porcelain tubs; subscriptions to a reported seventeen newspapers and magazines; modern kitchens where miners ate from porcelain dishes; and buildings lit with electricity and steam heated. Room-and-board cost each miner one-dollar/day. Wages for an eight-hour day at the Camp Bird varied by mining jobs. Miners’ wages were reported to be $4.50/day, blacksmiths earned $4.00/day, and engineers earned $4.50/day (Purington, Wood, and Doveton, 1903).

Walsh implemented labor and business practices considered progressive for the time. He was praised for his views on labor relations. The Camp Bird implemented an 8-hour workday, when most other mines worked 10 or 12-hour days. Treating workers well was not just a matter of good will but was probably a matter of good business for Walsh. Case in point, the Camp Bird escaped most of the mine labor strikes and associated violence common in the western states during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Walsh implemented efficient business practices. He would stop and restart mining operations based on fluctuations in the prices of gold or silver (Stewart, 2012). Walsh also implemented a policy of “development rather than production”, requiring several years of future production be identified and “blocked out” before any increase in mining output was authorized (Stewart, 2002).

In February 1898, the 2 level tunnel reached the Camp Bird vein 750 feet into the mountain. A month later a raise driven upward from the 2 level reached the Gertrude level. At about the same time, the new amalgamating-concentrating mill was completed. Two mule pack trains per day now transported the mill’s rich output - gold-silver retort “sponge” and gold-silver-copper-lead concentrate - down the steep Canyon Creek Road to the Denver and Rio Grande rail connection in Ouray (Stewart, 2002). See Figure 13.

In September 1898, another major tunnel called the 3 level, was started at 11,200 feet, eventually intersecting the Camp Bird vein in the spring of 1900. The 3 level tunnel would be critically important. Its length from portal to vein was 2,300 feet. By November, exploration from 3 level had shown rich ore bodies were present above and below the level. Eventually, all ore production from the Camp Bird, until Walsh sold the mine in 1902, would be sourced from 3 level (Stewart, 2002). See Figures 16 and 17. Ore production was increasing so rapidly that new capacity (stamps) was repeatedly added to the mill. The Camp Bird had just about reached its greatest surface extent, with 103 lode mining claims and twelve mill site claims, covering a total of 941 acres (Mining Reporter, 1900; Denver Times, 1900; Rosemeyer, 1990).
On December 3, 1899, the Denver Republican newspaper carried an informative full-page article titled, "Story of the Wonderful Camp Bird Mine." The article reported the mine had generated close to $3,000,000 in total production, with 4,400 feet of tunnel levels exposing the Camp Bird vein. More than six miles of the vein had been traced or identified. All ore production had been taken from the 120-by-129-foot stope in the Gertrude level and the more recent 2,300-by-40-foot stope in the 2 level and related drifts. The mine's potential was still very promising since this production reportedly only amounted to development of something more than one-eighth of the vein's length. The reporter stated the gold ore, "stands alone among the ores of Colorado as yet discovered. It is a pure white quartz, streaked with seams of black telluride ore. There is no indication of the values contained in either material, and yet the white quartz frequently carries from six to eight ounces in free gold, while the streaks of telluride sometimes runs as high as 200 ounces." The article goes on to say seventy-five percent of the gold values in the ore are recovered through the new amalgamating-concentrating mill. The effusive newspaper reporter concludes "when the extent of the underground

The bonanza gold ores – those mined when Walsh owned the Camp Bird – represented the upper, richest gold-bearing zones in the mine. Almost 210,000 ounces of gold would be produced during this period, valued at over $370,000,000 in today’s metal prices.
development is taken into consideration, the assertion that it is the greatest gold mine in the world is fully warranted" (Denver Republican, 1899).

By 1900, expansion of underground workings below 3 level encountered the unusual condition of much of the gold ore proving to be as rich as ore found in the higher/upper levels of the Camp Bird ore shoots. As a result, large quantities of high-grade gold ore would be produced until about 1921, well after Walsh sold the mine (Hutchinson, 1988).

The well-known geologist Charles W. Henderson appraised the Camp Bird in July 1900. He reported that from start-up in 1896 through the date of his appraisal, the mine had produced gold, silver, lead, and copper valued at $2,535,512, with a profit to Walsh of $1,650,000 (Henderson, 1926). In the same month, T.A. Rickard produced the same values as Henderson in a report prepared for a group of prospective buyers from London. Rickard appraised the mine's value in 1900 at $6,000,000, with an estimated $6,118,800 worth of ore in reserve (Rickard, 1907). Rumors were now rampant that the Camp Bird was for sale.

While rumors of a Camp Bird sale continued to swirl for another two years, Walsh continued business as usual. One report in February 1902, told of ore shipments bound for Ouray, now totaling $5,000 to $10,000 daily (Denver Times, 1902). The sale of the Camp Bird came within three months.

In her 1936 book, Evalyn Walsh McLean recalls the lavish nature of the time...” The Camp Bird mine was producing $5,000 a day in profits. Each morning we Walshes arose richer than we had gone to bed. The profits were beyond the dreams of avarice” (McLean, 1936).
Sale of Walsh’s Camp Bird Mine

In 1902, Walsh negotiated the sale of the Camp Bird. He sold part of his holdings to the “Camp Bird Mining Company”, a Colorado corporation organized for the purpose of acquiring all his interests. The bulk of his holdings, including the most valuable claims, were sold to a London based organization called the Venture Company, that would later be called the “Camp Bird, Limited”, for a reported total of $6 million (Bureau of Mines, 1948; Rosemeyer, 1990; Sentinel Grand Junction, 1902). This is the same company that bought Winfield Scott Stratton’s Independence Mine at Cripple Creek. According to Henderson (1926), the financial terms of the sale to Camp Bird, Limited were as follows:

“By terms of the new deal Walsh was to receive $3,500,000 in cash and $500,000 in shares. And he was to obtain a further $2,000,000 in the form of a royalty of 25% on profits from ore not then considered sufficiently proven.”

In addition to the proceeds from the sale of the Camp Bird, Walsh had already mined a reported $4,035,512 worth of ore during the period 1896 – 1902, making a 59% profit of $2,400,000 (Rosemeyer, 1990).

Flush with cash, Walsh and his family moved to Washington D.C., where he put his Camp Bird fortune to use. He spent $2.1 million (over $66.2 million in 2021 dollars) building and furnishing a mansion on Massachusetts Avenue and quickly became a member of the capital's "high society". Due to his newfound social status and frequent political donations, he enjoyed the close social circles of three U. S. Presidents – William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and William H. Taft. He endowed two libraries as well as a research fund at the Colorado School of Mines for the study of radium and other minerals, contributed to many social causes, and supported irrigation projects such as the Gunnison River tunnel near Montrose (Stewart, 2012).

Due to profits from the sale, Walsh enjoyed newfound social status and made frequent political donations, cementing access to the social circles with three U. S. Presidents. His social circle also included King Leopold II of Belgium, the notorious exploiter of human beings in the Congo (Stewart, 2002).

The Legacy of Camp Bird’s Metal Production, 1896 – 1902

Through its operational life under Walsh, the Camp Bird’s production of precious and base metals was enormous. From 1896 through 1902, Camp Bird produced and milled a total of 127,709 dry tons of ore yielding 209,550 ounces of gold, 201,277 ounces of silver, for a total of value of about $379,000,000 in today’s metal prices. The mine also produced 680,000 pounds of lead. Copper and zinc production is not available (Hutchinson, 1988).

The Camp Bird continued to flourish for many years after Walsh sold the mine in 1902. For the next eighty-eight years, the Camp Bird’s remaining precious and base metal deposits were mined off-and-on by at least seven companies.
Limited mining along the Camp Bird lode lasted until 1990, when its owner Federal Resources Corporation closed the mine.

In 1995, almost a century after the important discovery made by Thomas Walsh, what was left of the more modern components of the Camp Bird mill site, were being dismantled and transported to Mongolia (Ouray Plaindealer, 1995). The mining heritage of the American West was continuing its journey to frontiers in the Third World.

References

(Note: Numerous excellent, detailed reports have been written on the geology and mineralogy of the Camp Bird vein and adjacent areas. For detailed information, interested readers are referred to the following references: Ransome (1901); Lipman et al (1973); Titcomb (1902); Purington, Woods, and Doveton (1903); Spurr (1925); Moehlman (1936); Burbank (1941); Burbank and Luedke, 1964); Paul (1974); Hutchinson (1988); Rosemeyer (1990); Rosemeyer (2011).


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