

CITY OF BLACK HAWK HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

Black Hawk, “the City of Mills,” is one of Colorado’s oldest cities, one of a number of towns that grew up in “Gregory’s Gulch,” the narrow ravine where Georgia prospector John H. Gregory first discovered lode gold in the western part of Kansas Territory in 1859. Within months, thousands of would-be miners poured into the gulch hoping for more big strikes like Gregory’s. A few found bonanzas, many found paying claims, but the great majority either moved elsewhere to try their luck or, proclaiming the whole “Pike’s Peak Gold Rush” a hoax, went back to their settled lives in the States.

Mountain City was the first name given to the ragged string of camp-like settlements, but as the boom subsided and the hard work of extracting the gold began, the remaining population began to coalesce into more organized townsites. Lying up the gulch to the west was Nevada—also known as Nevadaville or Bald Mountain. Below it was Central City, and further down, where the gulch flowed into the North Branch of Clear Creek, was established Black Hawk Point. Most accounts insist the name came from an early “stamp” mill brought in from Illinois and named for the famous Native American chief.

With its abundant supply of water, something in short supply elsewhere in the gulch, to drive water wheels and flow through sluices, Black Hawk quickly became the milling center for the gold ore mined throughout what became known as Gilpin County. First by ore wagon, and later by train, tons of precious rock were sent to Black Hawk for various processes designed to extract the maximum amount of gold from the quartz ores.

Black Hawk was incorporated by an act of the territorial legislature on March 11, 1864. The future seemed assured, but trouble lay on the horizon. As the rich surface veins began to play out, deeper hard-rock mines began to yield complex sulfide ores called sulphurets—rocks that prevented the simple stamp mills from recovering but a fraction of the gold locked inside.

Within a few years, the Colorado Central railroad line had reached Black Hawk, making it possible for coal to be shipped to the smelters and mills and supplies to be delivered up to the growing mining towns. The town’s skyline also boasted a new school and Presbyterian Church. Fine brick business “blocks” spread along the gulch from the intersection of Main and Gregory Streets.

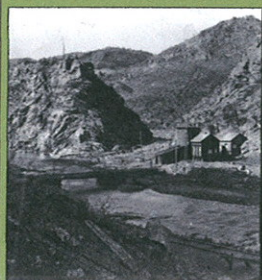
But the economic boom was an environmental disaster. The creeks were polluted by human, animal and industrial wastes. The trees had long since been cut down for miles around for timbering mills and power mine engines, leaving the narrow gulch subject to frequent flooding that eventually raised the level of Gregory Street by a full story in some places.

Through it all, though, the towns along the gulch continued to grow and prosper. From the outset, many of the miners and millworkers were immigrants, primarily from England and Ireland. Cornish miners experienced in hard-rock mining arrived in the 1870s, battling with their British brethren until all were united by the threat of Tyrolean miners willing to work for lower wages near the turn of the century.

Beneath them all, socially, was a small band of Chinese miners organized by Chin Lin Sou. These “Celestials” specialized in placer mining the dumps and tailing piles left behind from previous hard-rock operations and pulling the last few dollars of gold from the previously worthless slag.

After peaking with a population of over 1,500 in 1880, Black Hawk began to decline in numbers in the early 20th century. A tramway—a tiny railway even smaller than the narrow-gauge Colorado Central (later Colorado & Southern) line that went from Denver to Black Hawk (and, in 1878, was extended to Central City) was constructed in 1886 to make it easier and cheaper for the mines in the surrounding hills to get their ore to

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City Hall

Incorporated March 11, 1864, Black Hawk has one of the oldest charters in Colorado. In April 1864, the first election of officers took place, and John Kinney, a manager of the Black Hawk Mining Company, became the first mayor. In 1871, it was written of Black Hawk that "no city in the world is more orderly; the administration of the laws is attended with no difficulty, and due attention paid to religious and moral observances by all."

Black Hawk completed this City Hall building in December 1877, and the structure still serves its original use. The ground floor has traditionally housed the fire department, which was organized as the Black Hawk Fire & Hose Company in 1879. Prior to the buildings completion, officials met in the Knights of Pythias Building.

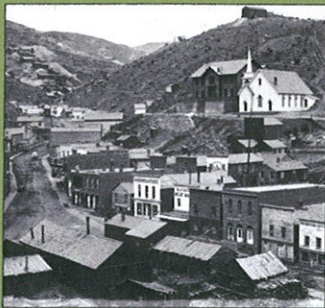
The train trestle once carried the Colorado & Southern Railroad over Gregory Street.



First Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church and its neighbor the schoolhouse form a striking visual landmark noticed immediately upon entering town. Dedicated in 1863, the wood frame church displays the features of the Gothic Revival style then popular throughout the county. The board and batten siding, steep gable roof, and pointed windows help achieve the desired effect of verticality. The bell in the steeple was carried across the plains by ox cart and was the first bell installed in any Presbyterian Church west of the Mississippi River. The building was wired for electricity in 1897.

Although this building has served as a church and a gymnasium for the nearby school, the City of Black Hawk uses this building as an annex for the location of the Planning Department, and holds all of the Board of Aldermen and Historical Architectural Review Committee meetings. It is said that this church is one of the oldest operating buildings in Colorado!



Black Hawk Schoolhouse

Prominently situated on the hillside overlooking Black Hawk is the town's two-story frame schoolhouse, constructed in

1870. Black Hawk's official school system, however, dates back to November 7, 1862, when townspeople held a meeting to organize a school board. The site of the first school is now uncertain, but it is presumed to have been in a wooden structure now located at the rear of the Gilpin Hotel.

The building you see here cost over \$14,000 to construct in 1870. Edward O. Wolcott, who later served in the U.S. Senate, taught school here in the 1870's. During Black Hawk's prosperous years, the school boasted five teachers and several hundred pupils, but during the twentieth century, enrollments declined because of the fading mines. The doors of the schoolhouse closed in 1960, and the building was later rehabilitated to house the City of Black Hawk's Police Department.

Gregory Lode Mountain City

This marker commemorates the site where on May 6, 1859, John Gregory discovered the first lode gold in Colorado. This finding accounted for the permanent settlement

of Gilpin County. In 1860, the population of Mountain City (the settlement located near Gregory Lode) was estimated to be 15,000 people. That same year, the census for the entire Colorado Territory was 25,000!

By 1875, the Gregory Lode had produced more than \$8.5 million, making it the premier producer in Gilpin County.



Mountain City

Mountain City was the aptly named original settlement in Gregory Gulch, adjacent to John Gregory's gold discovery on May 6, 1859. Black Hawk and Central City sprang up on either side of Mountain City and eventually absorbed the



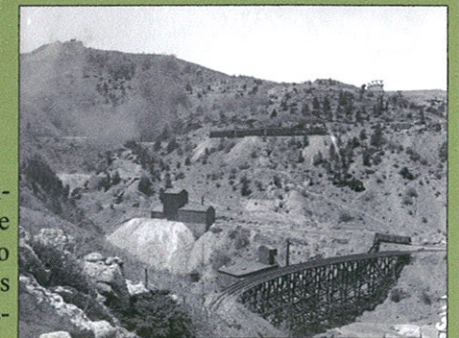
first Rocky Mountain settlement; it lost its post office in 1869. Gradually its residents moved away and its deserted homes succumbed to weather and vandals; some were even moved to growing towns down on the plains. Its unused streets withered into dim trails. The historic neighborhood simply disappeared. But a beautiful rebirth has come in the 21st century. The site of historic Mountain City is now a string of jewels glittering on the mountainside. Nine of these twelve buildings were relocated during construction of the casinos on Main Street. Now the houses are destined to become useful citizens of the town once again.

(text courtesy of "The Colorado Gambler" news magazine, written by Linda Jones)

Colorado & Southern Narrow Gauge Railroad

The Colorado & Southern Narrow Gauge Railroad first came into town in 1872. This train transported passengers from Denver

and Golden, up Clear Creek Canyon, into Black Hawk, went through a series of switch backs up Miners Mesa, and eventually culminated in Central City. For most part of the 1880's, the Colorado & Southern Narrow Gauge railroad was the only means of transportation for passengers traveling into town, unless you were willing to ride along the Guy Gulch, Dory Hill or Enterprise (Smith Hill) wagon road. However, by the late 1800s, towards the end of the mining boom, train transport into Black Hawk began to wain and by the 1910s, train service



halted all together. The tracks were abandoned and later sold for scrap metal during the first world war. The great trestles that once spanned the gulch's were also dismantled and sold for scrap wood. However, is you look closely in the hills above Black Hawk and Central City, you can still see the existing railbeds that were the foothold to this once great train line.



Bobtail Mine and Tunnel

This old blacksmith shop sits at the base of Bobtail Hill at the entrance to the Bobtail Tunnel. Of all the mines located on the hillside, the Bobtail was the richest; in

fact, it ranked second only to the Gregory as the richest in the district. Opened early in the gold rush, by 1876 the Bobtail had produced more than \$4 million in gold. The strange name owes its origin to a bobtailed ox that hauled ore down the hillside. According to old-timers, it was once possible to enter the Bobtail Tunnel in Gregory Gulch and walk underground all the way to Idaho Springs, several miles away! At first, mule drawn cars carried the ore; then, in later years, an electric tram was installed to connect the tunnel to the Fifty Gold Mines Mill.

The Flume

While walking along Gregory Street, it is hard to imagine that you are walking over a natural waterway. During the early days of Black Hawk the city was built over a natural waterway, which is Gregory Gulch. The idea behind building in the gulch was to allow for the most direct route to Central City and Nevada. However, to do so, they had to construct a flume that allowed the water to pass under the street.

Over time, there have been several improvements to the flume. If you look closely next time you are walking, you might notice Gregory Creek disappearing underground near Mountain City, and reappearing at the intersection of HWY 119 and Gregory Street, as it converges with North Clear Creek.

Crook's Palace

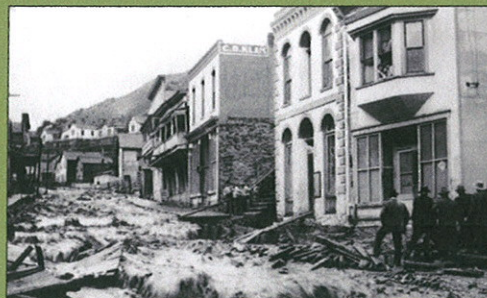
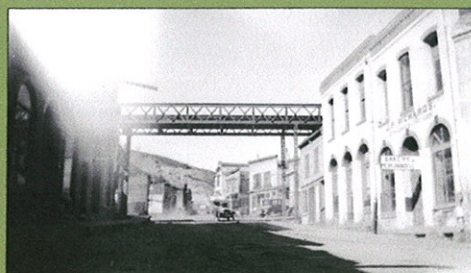
From it's earliest days, Black Hawk counted numerous saloons among its business establishments. They were all places where miners could get together to eat, drink, play cards, and relax. Thorwald Crook became the proprietor of one of Black Hawk's most successful saloons, known as Crook's Palace. The building was constructed in 1900. When completed, one writer said: "Of all the refreshment resorts in the three cities, the Crook Palace on Gregory Street is simply and without exaggeration the finest place of its kind to be found in the country...The finest selection of choice wines, liquors, ales, brandies and cigars are for sale, together with an elegant quality of beer."



Colorado & Southern Train Trestle

During the 1800's, the Colorado & Southern railroad crossed over Gregory Street on top of a train trestle. The trestle allowed the railroad to safely pass over the top of pedestrians, as it made it's way up North Clear Creek (below the Presbyterian Church). The trestle was one of the most recognized structures in Black Hawk until it was dismantled for its steel.

Today, you can notice remnants of the trestle footings between Crook's Palace and the Rohling Inn.



Floods

Mother nature has always had her way with this area. Floods, fires, snowstorms and cave-ins have always been part of the price you pay for living in such a beautiful

area. But, of all of the disasters this area has seen, nothing has wreaked more havoc on Black Hawk than floods.

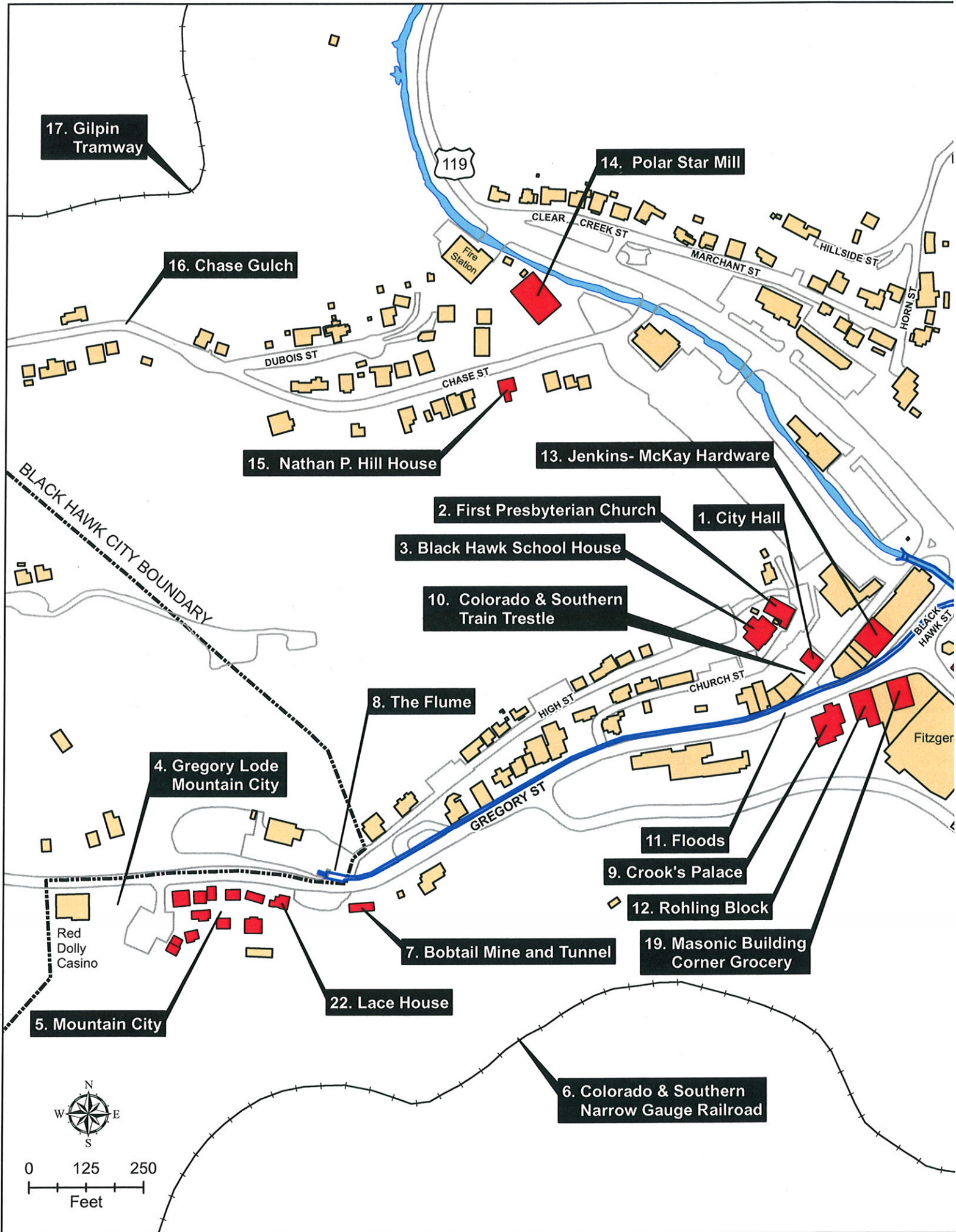
From the beginning of it's inception, Black Hawk has had to deal with heavy rains and heavy run offs. As the smelting companies began to strip the hillsides of their precious trees, and the towns continued to build on top of the existing creeks and drainage ways, there was nothing holding the water back as the rains came down. There are several photos which display the effects of floods on Black Hawk. But, the most amazing evidence is when you get a chance to go into the basement of any of the buildings along Gregory Street. Most of the basements in this part of town are the one-time first floors of the buildings they are located in. Because so much soil was deposited during the rainstorms, the street actually rose every time there was a flood.

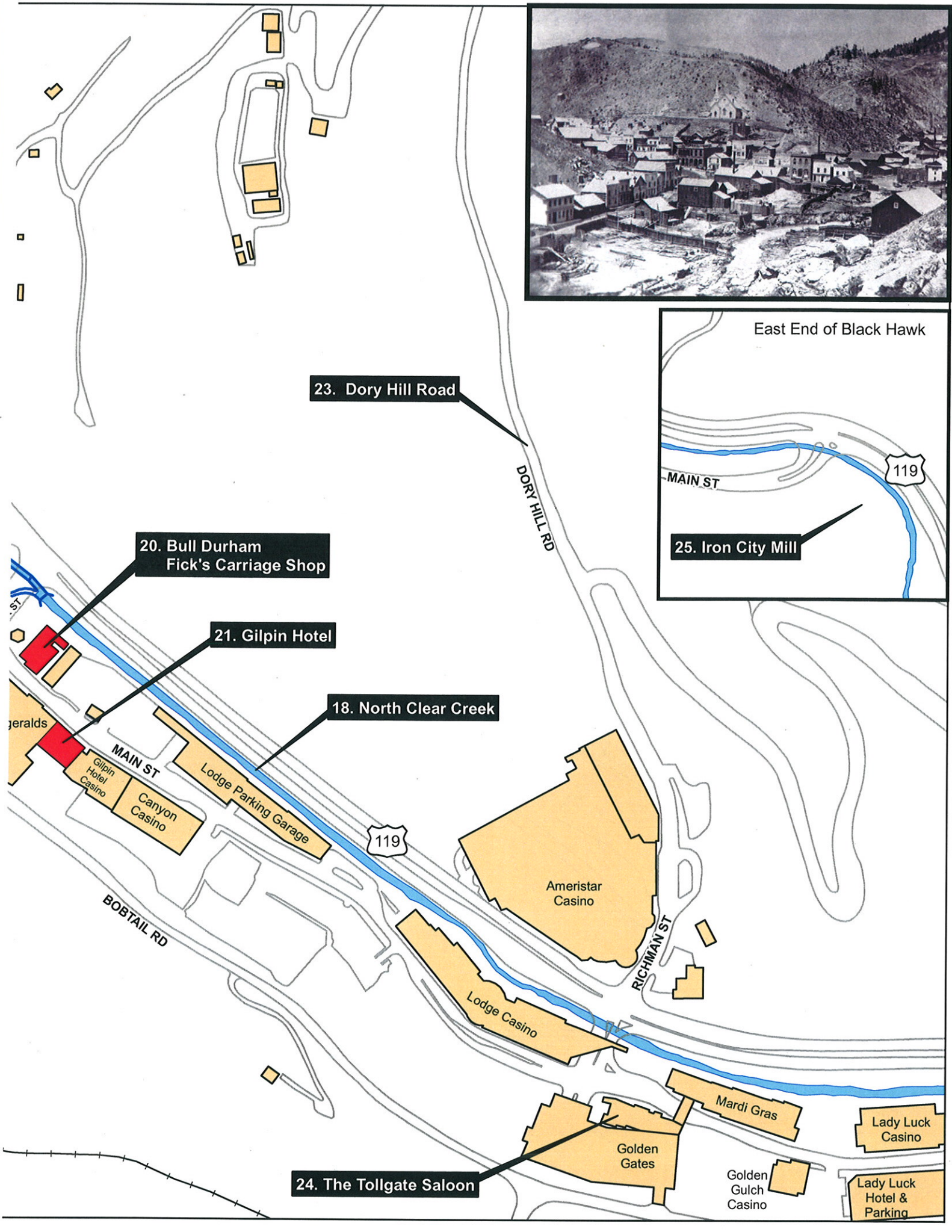


Rohling Block

Early photographs show this building under construction in the early 1860s. Although it was first called the Ettien and Clayton Block, it became better known

as the Rohling Block, named after J.H. Phillip Rohling, merchant and mayor of Black Hawk. By 1898 it was said that this was the "largest dry goods store in the county and...certainly one of the best equipped." Among the cast array of items for sale were ribbons, capes, cloaks, shoes, hats, silverware, jewelry, and novelties. The upstairs in this building had apartments. Legend has it that Elizabeth McCourt Doe, better known later as Baby Doe Tabor, lived here in the 1870s with her first husband.





23. Dory Hill Road

20. Bull Durham Fick's Carriage Shop

21. Gilpin Hotel

18. North Clear Creek

24. The Tollgate Saloon

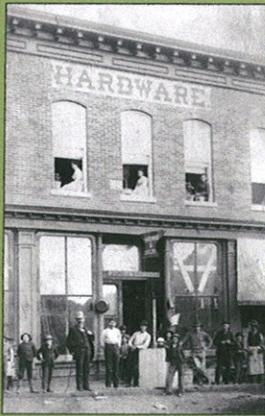
25. Iron City Mill

Jenkins-McKay Hardware

For most of its existence, this building has housed hardware stores: Wells & Lowell, Lowell & Clark, Clark & Rogers, and finally Jenkins and McKay, whose sign is still visible. One of Black Hawk's two banks—Smith & Company—also took space in this building. Upstairs, the building had apartments as well as a meeting space known as Buffington Hall.

The combination retail space on the first level and living quarters on the second was typical of commercial buildings of this period. Proprietors and their families often lived over their place of business. This was in sharp contrast to the late twentieth-century lifestyle built around commuting.

Today, this building serves as the center piece of the existing Bullwhacker's Casino, which was constructed in 1993. Most of the original structure remains primarily as a façade and interior supports.



Chase Gulch

This quiet neighborhood has always acted as a residential retreat for residents of Black Hawk since it's inception. Therefore, most of the houses found in the neighborhood were constructed in the 1860's on. However, during the 1920's, many of the

homes were torn down by the property owners for either building materials for other houses (sometimes in Denver) or so that they wouldn't have to pay property taxes. For whatever reason, there is no remaining record of their existence, except for the skeletal retaining walls found on the hillsides that bank Chase Street.

Chase Gulch was also the site of several mines during the gold boom of the late 1800's. A walk up the gulch, past the homes, would show the remains of several mining structures, mine tailings, and an occasional hand-stacked footpath.

In fact, high above this gulch you will also notice the hand-stacked walls of the Gilpin Tramway, which at one time carried ore from mines to various mills located further down in North Clear Creek canyon (such as Polar Star Mill). A close look further up Chase Gulch would show where the tramway was trestled across Chase Gulch.



Polar Star Mill

Built in the 1860s, the Polar Star Mill had a long career and was one of the last mills to remain in operation. It had eighty stamps that would crush 350 tons of ore daily. Ore from the Gregory, Fisk, Bobtail, and other lodes was carried to the mill

by electric train from the Bobtail Tunnel and then through another tunnel underneath Bates Hill. At one time, the two-foot tracks of the Gilpin Tram ran up behind the mill, as did the three-foot-gauge track of the Colorado & Southern railroad, which carried the concentrates to smelters in Denver.



Nathan P. Hill House

The modest frame house behind the tall evergreen trees is easily missed, but this home is associated with one of Black Hawk's

most significant figures, Nathan P. Hill. A pioneer in the American smelting industry, Hill established the first successful smelter in Colorado. The complex, high-heat process he obtained in Swansea, Wales, had the ability to recover gold, silver, and other metals from the area's "refractory" subsurface ores. More than anything else, the plan Hill established in lower Black Hawk helped revitalize Colorado's troubled mining industry in the late 1860's.

Hill probably built this house when he moved to Black Hawk in the late 1860s.



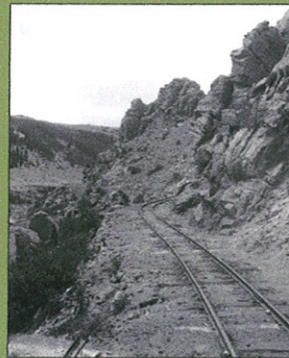
Gilpin Tramway

The Gilpin Gold Tram was the only two-foot gauge railroad in Colorado, a state noted for its narrow-gauge lines. Though short-lived, this colorful little railroad added an exciting chapter to the history of Colorado.

Serving as the main artery for the flow of ore from the mines above Central City to the smelters at Black Hawk, the Tram twisted and turned its way over some 20 miles of track, pulled by Shay locomotives.

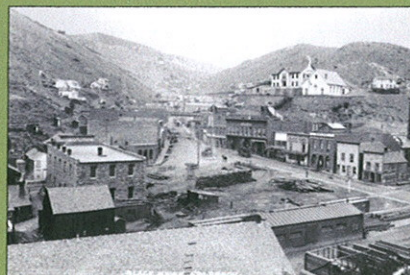
Today the tramway is preserved in old photographs and yellowing waybills. In places, the stone wall grade of the old road can still be seen around Black Hawk as a reminder of a time when the Tram was an integral part of this historic community.

(text courtesy of "The Gilpin Gold Tram" by Mallory Hope Ferrell)



North Clear Creek

As you stand along the creekscape walk that hugs the banks of North Clear Creek, you probably never would have guessed that this stretch of the creek, beginning at Gregory Street extending almost to



Richman Street, was once underground. The early decision makers decided to allow for developers to flume a portion of North Clear Creek to allow for more development opportunities on the canyon floor. Buildings, roads and even the Colorado & Southern Railroad were once built on top of this natural water feature.

Masonic Building— Corner Grocery

This structure dates from the 1870s. A wood-frame, false front building once stood on the site, but



like many structures it was torn down to make way for one that would be more permanent and more fire-resistant. That was how Black Hawk evolved in the 1870s. As the town became more established, the use of brick became more common.

This building has had numerous occupants over the years. Notable was the Harris & Kohn Dry Goods & Clothing Store about 1890, followed by a variety of grocery stores.

The adjacent brick building is a later addition to the commercial district. Constructed by the Masons in 1910, it also replaced a wooden structure and once housed the post office on the ground floor. Fitzgeralds Casino now owns the structure and is anticipating to include it in a future casino expansion.

Bull Durham's Fick's Carriage Shop

The blacksmith and carriage shop once located here did a thriving business until the advent of the automobile. The best known owner, William Fick, served as mayor and alderman.

In the late 1800s the American Tobacco Company employed

four sign painting crews that traveled throughout the country promoting Bull Durham smoking tobacco. This mural is one of the few left.

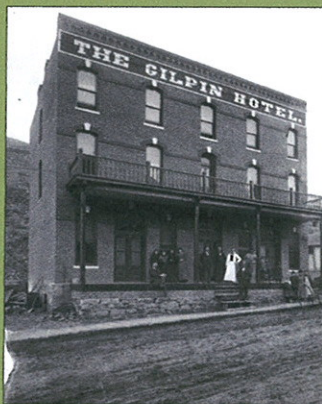


Gilpin Hotel

Hidden within the Gilpin Hotel Casino was one of the grandest and most spacious hotels in Black Hawk. At one time, there was a wooden structure located at the rear of the imposing brick edifice that apparently served as Black Hawk's first school, as a printing shop for the town's early newspapers, and as the original Gilpin Hotel. Its first use as a hotel is uncertain, however. Some say

that the hotel originated in the 1860s and hosted such dignitaries as President U.S. Grant and Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune. The Gilpin Hotel first appeared in the Black Hawk Business Directory in 1883.

The Gilpin Hotel Casino still represents the three-story brick structure that was constructed in the 1890s. The original builders incorporated the original wooden structure as part of the kitchen.



Lace House

One of the most photographed homes in Colorado is the Lace House, considered by some to be the state's finest example of Carpenter Gothic architecture. The board and batten siding, steep pitched roof, pointed windows, elaborate porch, and decorative gable trim combine to make the house a textbook example of this type of Victorian architecture. The name comes from the delicate, "lacey" detailing.

Despite its distinction, the building's survival has sometimes been precarious. It was constructed about 1863 for Lucien K. Smith at a place called Tragedy Point. One of its early owners, a Mrs. Lydia Osborne, is said to have entertained such famous pioneers as H.A.W. Tabor and Peter McFarlane. The house went through a succession of owners, and after 1916 began to deteriorate as the mining industry waned. The home passed in and out of the hands of the city several times on account of delinquent taxes. Finally, in 1974, a Mrs. Hume generously donated it to the city. This marked the property's rejuvenation as fund-raising efforts restored and converted it into a museum. In 2008, this building was relocated to Mountain City.



Dory Hill Road (Four Mile Gulch)

This road uses the same route that John Gregory used as a connection to Black Hawk, from his Toll Road (which is now Highway 46). Although John Gregory left Gilpin County for good in 1862,



this roadway was used for many years to transport prospectors and their supplies from the Front Range to the gold mines of Black Hawk and Central City. A letter from a passenger reported that this road was "one of the most dangerous character, crossing mountains so steep that to ascend or descend them with cattle would appear almost impossible."

However, the roadway became less used after the construction of the Colorado & Southern Railroad in the 1870s. The railroad route came up Clear Creek, the same route that Highway 119 takes today.

The Tollgate Saloon

Although no longer in existence, the Tollgate Saloon once was a prominent structure along the entrance to Main Street, as you came into town.

Although this structure had several owners in its existence, one of the more recognizable was Ingrid Hauseberger, former Mayor Kathryn Eckers' grandmother. In fact, Eckers' father and her



two uncles were all born on the third floor of this structure. At this time, home births were common and births in a more commercial establishment was also common, because they had more provisions on hand.

The Tollgate Saloon, was once located where the Golden Gate Casino is now located and was once used as the tollgate to enter town. It was razed in 1958.



Iron City Mill

Upon entering town, you might have noticed some hand stacked retaining wall above the southern banks of North Clear Creek. If you look closely, you might notice the outline of a foundation and the level-railbed for ore cars. This was once the loca-

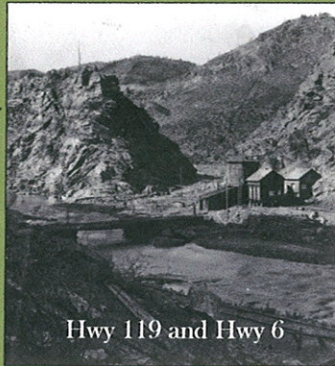
tion of the Iron City Mill.

Not much information has ever been collected as to the production outputs of the mill or when it was dismantled. But old photographs show that this was once a very proud mill that stood to greet visitors when they came to this great mountain town.

North Clear Creek

North Clear Creek may look like a minor stream in nature, but historically holds the accord of being one of the most travel corridors in Colorado history. As John Gregory headed up Clear Creek Canyon from Golden in search of the larger source of the placer dust found in Denver, he followed the western tributary until he found where the gold was more concentrated. That tributary was North Clear Creek and that more concentrated source is now known as "The Gregory Lode".

News of the strike up North Clear Creek spread and in a few days, thousands of miners were making the arduous journey up the rocky creek, taking heavy gear, supplies and people by horse and oxen. This was the main route to the gold strike until a few enterprising individuals create wagon roads along aboriginal migration routes. These wagon routes are now known as Guy Gulch, Dory Hill, Smith Hill and Highway 46.



Hwy 119 and Hwy 6



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to the mills along Clear Creek. But by World War I business had declined to the point where it, too, proved unprofitable and the tracks were dismantled. By that time, the town had just one mill left in operation, and by 1920 the population had fallen to only 250.

A revival of placer miner greeted the rise in the price of gold to \$35 an ounce in the 1930's, and the re-opening of the Central City Opera House in 1932 sparked a similar increase in tourism. The business district gradually reflected this change, with gift shops and restaurants replacing hardware stores and milliners.

Though Black Hawk was spared the devastating fires that destroyed many early mining camps, the very longevity of its structures also contributed to their continuing decay. Floods continued to be a problem, as the town lacked funds to attempt any sort of water or sewer improvements. With cars replacing trains as the primary means of tourist travel, rail transportation was discontinued in 1941. But the new mobility proved a mixed blessing, and more and more local residents began commuting to jobs outside the county, while tourists began to bypass the quaint old mining towns for more distant destinations.

Even the formation of the Central City—Black Hawk National Historic Landmark District could do nothing to stem the tide of decay. Faced with declining population, deteriorating infrastructure and disintegrating architecture, city leaders banded together with their peers in Central City and Cripple Creek to offer an initiative on the 1990 Colorado ballot that would allow limited stakes gambling in the commercial districts of the towns, with much of the proceeds earmarked for historic preservation efforts statewide.

The measure passed overwhelmingly, and speculators began renovating historic structures for use as casinos. Beginning with opening day on October 1, 1991 gaming proved spectacularly successful in attracting new investment to the gulch in amounts unheard-of since the gold boom more that a century before.

Moreover, the same easy access and level land that had made Black Hawk suitable for the mills and smelters of the gold rush days now made it attractive for larger casino, hotel and parking projects. By the fifth year of gambling, Black Hawk was accounting for more than 50% of the total wagering in the three towns, with still larger projects in the works. The unexpected pace and scale of the development led inevitably to some disillusionment, with existing institutions trying hard to cope with the flood of changes.

No one could argue, however, with the influx of fees, tax monies and preservation funds that enabled businesses and homeowners alike to renovate structures suffering from a century of neglect.

City government led the way, remodeling the historic church and school on the skyline for office space, building a new fire station just north of the central business district, and finally completely restoring the 1877 City Hall.