

Colorado Mining History

Subject Area: History

Unit Title: Colorado Mining History

Grade Level: 4th & 5th grade

Objectives: Students will develop an understanding of how mining shaped Colorado History.

Colorado Content Standards to be covered:

HISTORY

Standard I - Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.

Standard II - Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.

Standard III - Students understand that societies are diverse and change over time.

Standard IV- Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.

Materials:

- sticky notes (or scraps of paper)
- Colorado map you can point to as your go through various cities in Input section below

Anticipatory Set: Create a class “KWL” on the board by brainstorming with your students and having them fill in what they already know about Colorado mining history on a yellow sticky note (post these in the first column “K”). Do the same with what your students want to learn (middle column “W”) and after the lesson have them fill out sticky notes to post in the last column with what they learned (“L”).

Directions:

Explain to students that you are going to have them fill in a timeline as you go through the lesson. Give them each a copy of the timeline handout (next page) to use, and tell them to pay specific attention to the dates you will be mentioning.

Input:

The search for gold had a large impact on the settlement and history of Colorado. In 1858, prospectors discovered gold in the gravel of Cherry Creek (just south of Denver). The gold rush was on!

As word of gold spread, prospectors came seeking their fortunes. Mining camps sprang up throughout the mountains. Soon more gold was discovered in vein deposits around Idaho Springs, Black Hawk, Central City, South Park, Boulder, Colorado City, Gold Hill, Hamilton and Tarryall.

Colorado’s largest gold discovery was made in Cripple Creek in 1891. This area alone produced more than \$20 million worth of gold in 1900. This made it the fourth largest gold camp in the world. Gold is still mined in Cripple Creek. It is the last remaining gold mine in Colorado.

At this same time, coal was also discovered near Boulder and in parts of Weld County. For awhile, this area had more than 100 coal mines! Today, most of the coal mined in Colorado comes from the northwestern part of the state.

With mining came communities supported by farmers, ranchers, grocery stores, newspapers, banks, schools, stagecoaches, and railroads. Over time many mines shut down. Some mining camps turned into ghost towns.

Other towns continued to grow and became the cities that we still have today.

While looking for gold in 1860 in the Leadville area, prospectors found silver ore. The silver rush began. Soon Leadville became a bustling mining camp. Mining in this area continued through the 1990s. Zinc and lead were also mined.

Other natural resources were discovered in Colorado. In 1862 the first oil well was drilled near Florence. In 1879, molybdenum was found in Climax, north of Leadville. Molybdenum, a metal, is used to make rockets, jet engines, auto parts and tools. The Climax area was the largest source of molybdenum in the United States. Molybdenum is still mined in Colorado today.

Radium, vanadium, and uranium were discovered near Montrose in 1881. Radium is used in medical testing. In the late 1950s and 1960s uranium was used for nuclear power.

In the late 1800s, coal mining near Trinidad and Walsenburg was big business. In 1882, Pueblo built a steel mill. Electrical power for the mill was generated by burning coal. That was about the same time that telephones and electricity came to Denver.

Checking for Understanding: At the end of this section choose one of the following for a quick check: ask the students to partner share and think, pair and share, do a quick 3 word write up as an exit slip, do a quick sketch or give each other a quick thumbs up or down to check for understanding. Determine the level of mastery for each student and provide individual remediation as needed.

Procedures/Activities:

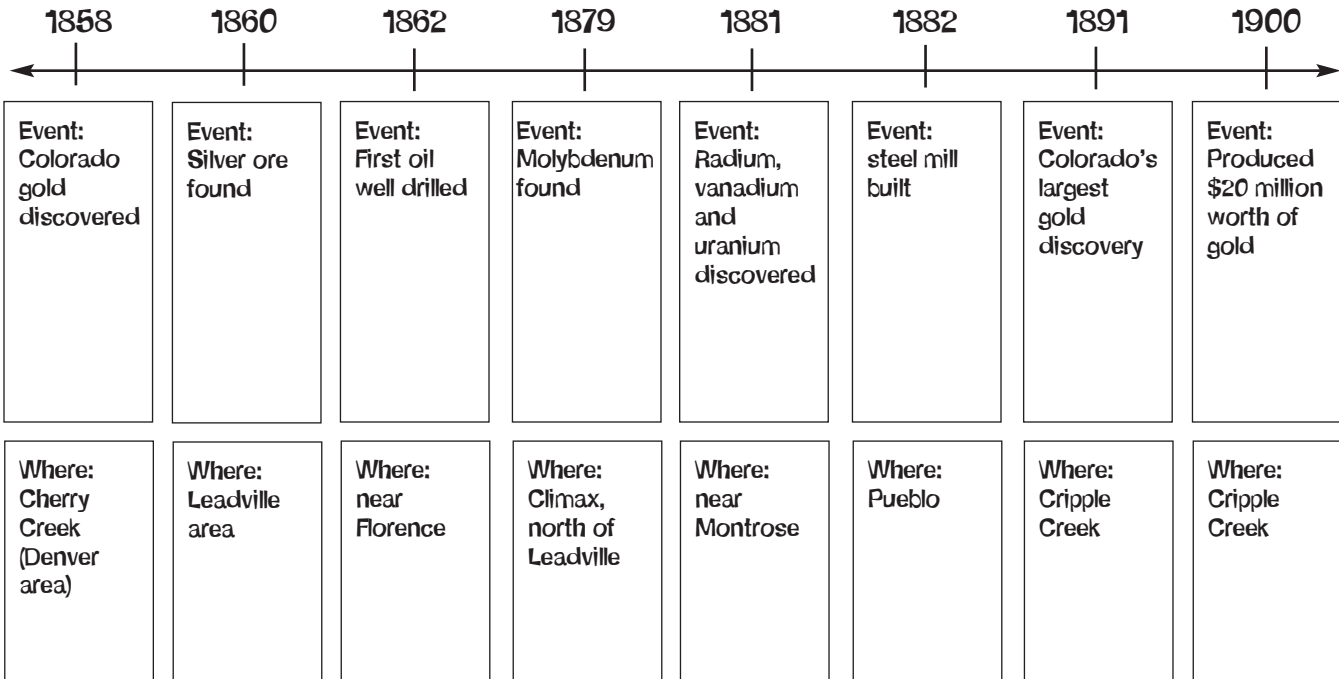
Activity 1: Select one of the many mining camps from Colorado history. Discuss the relationship between the mining operation and the growth of other businesses in that area. Did the mining camp become a ghost town, or is it still a community today?

Create a map showing the mine and its effects on the region. Indicate roads, railroads, bridges, buildings, etc. An example of this would be Cripple Creek and its relationship to Colorado Springs. Much of the money min-

Colorado Mining History Timeline

1858	1860	1862	1879	1881	1882	1891	1900
Event:	Event:	Event:	Event:	Event:	Event:	Event:	Event:
Where:	Where:	Where:	Where:	Where:	Where:	Where:	Where:

Colorado Mining History Timeline KEY



ers earned in Cripple Creek was used to build the beautiful Victorian houses that can still be seen today in Colorado Springs. In some Colorado mining towns, old brick buildings have been turned into gambling casinos. Variation: Give students a map with all the above on it and have them evaluate and explain how mining influenced the area or caused change.

Activity 2: Find out about the history of mining in your area. Are there any abandoned mines? Find and interview someone who has worked in the industry. Gather photographs, maps, and information related to local mining. Put your research findings into a presentation. Place your completed project in the library or online.

Activity 3: If there are some active mines, milling or fabrication operations in your area, plan a field trip. Observe the geology, mining, reclamation, and recycling. If you live in or near Leadville, check out the Mining Hall of Fame or visit them online at <http://www.leadville.com/miningmuseum/>. If you are in the Colorado Springs area, visit the Western Museum of Mining and Industry.

Closure:

Review and clarify the key points of the lesson by having students fill out a sticky note with what they learned to be posted in the “L” column on the “KWL” chart on the board.

K (Know)	W (Want to Learn)	L (Learned)