

ROUGH AND TUMBLE



Growing Up in a Mining Town

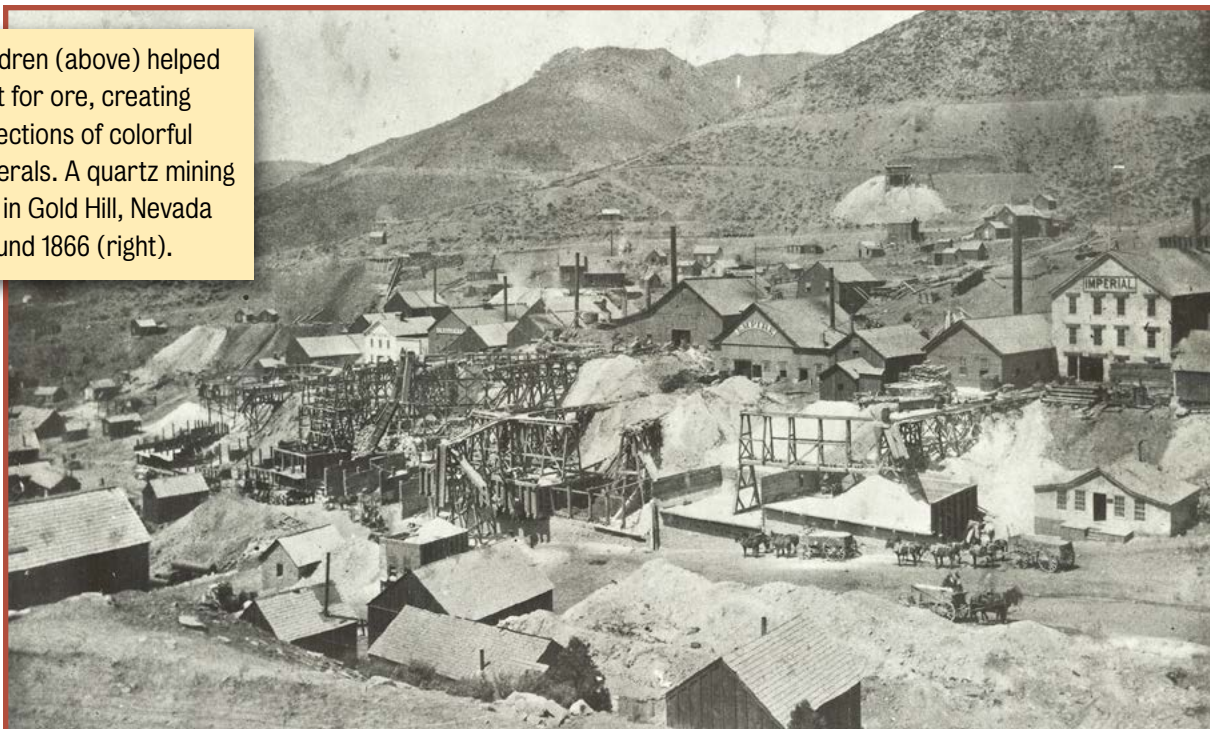
Mining towns in the western frontier were often high in the mountains at the end of narrow, winding roads. Most of the towns could be reached only by mule-drawn wagons. Anne Ellis remembers her log cabin in the silver-mining town of Bonanza, Colorado. “The ceiling of our cabin was usually covered with canvas—

in this, dirt would collect, making it sag in places. Mountain rats also made their nests just on top of the canvas. Once, a rat ran along the canvas and Mama saw the shape of his body and stuck a fork into him.”

All mining towns had a place called an assay office, where the miners brought samples of what

Children (above) helped hunt for ore, creating collections of colorful minerals. A quartz mining site in Gold Hill, Nevada around 1866 (right).

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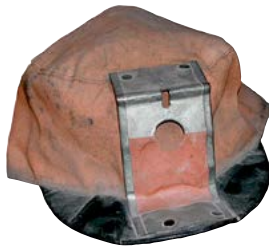
INTO THE MINE

Deep in the heart of the Colorado mountains in the 1870s, mines twist and turn. It is pitch-black inside the mountain. There are no stars to light the way. This is a dangerous place for miners, but gold, silver, and other minerals are precious. Miners do their best to come prepared for the perilous conditions.

So what do they need to enter the mine?

Miner's Candlestick

In the mountains of Colorado, men used candles to light their way. In the mid-1800s, miners secured candles to their caps or to the rocky walls of the mine using a clump of clay. Sometime in the 1860s, miners invented a miner's candlestick by bending the end of a spike to hold a candle. The spike then could be jabbed into a wooden support beam to light the way. Later, miners began using a hook on the candlestick to attach the candle to their hats, creating a kind of headlamp.



Miner's Hat

In the 1800s, miners did not have hard hats to protect their heads. Instead they wore caps made of cloth or felt. Some hats had a metal plate to attach a candle or an oil lamp to light the way through the dark tunnel.

Miner's Lunch Pail

The lunch pail usually had two or three compartments. The lower compartment contained tea that could be heated by a candle. The second compartment held their meal, usually meat, potatoes and vegetables. The third compartment usually held dessert. The miner attached a metal tea cup to the lid of the bucket.

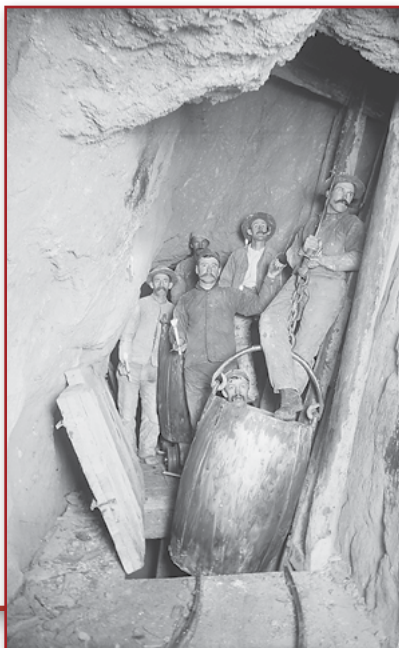


Ore Buckets

While some mines had tunnels entering the side of a mountain, many of the shafts went straight down. It was quite dangerous to transport miners up and down the deep, dangerous pits. In large mines, cages built on platforms were used to lower men. In small mines, men rode in ore buckets. The bucket was large enough for a man to climb inside, and often, another miner or two stood on the rim of the bucket for the jerky ride down!

Miner's Code of Signals

Each mine had a hoister, a man in charge of raising and lowering the ore buckets down the mineshaft. The hoister had to be able to communicate with the miners below. A signal code using bells was used in each mine to relay messages.



They once called me The Silver Queen of Colorado. My name is Elizabeth Doe, but the miners who were digging for gold near our mine in Central City, Colorado, thought I was so beautiful that they started calling me “Baby” Doe. Even after I divorced my husband Harvey, and married Horace Tabor, they still called me Baby Doe. Horace and I were called The Silver King and Queen of Denver, Colorado. We lived in a huge mansion paid for by the millions of dollars Horace made from his silver mines. It was a good life, a grand life, with beautiful clothes and fancy parties and traveling.

But I never forgot where I came from. I was a Wisconsin girl, born there in 1854. My mother despaired of me because I was a tomboy, lively and interested in everything, even though she also said I was the prettiest of all her seven children. I met Harvey Doe and we were married in 1877. Harvey’s father owned a half interest in the Fourth of July Mine in Central City, Colorado, so we decided it was time to start a new life of adventure, away from Wisconsin. “We’ll go west and make our fortune overnight in gold,” Harvey told me. “People do it all the time there!” But Harvey didn’t know how to work hard and the mine wasn’t producing well. So I put on miner’s clothes and went to work right beside him. Some of the people in Central City disapproved of me, but I didn’t care.

Harvey just couldn’t seem to work hard enough to support us, and we drifted apart. When I finally divorced him, I moved to a boarding house in Leadville, Colorado. There I met Horace Tabor, who had made his fortune with silver mines and was now lieutenant governor of Colorado. We fell in love right away. As soon as he divorced his wife Augusta, we were married. Horace said to me, “You’re always so [happy] and laughing, and yet you’re so brave.”

Horace became a U.S. senator, and we moved to Denver and into our mansion. Many of the society folks there did not approve of us because of the scandal of being divorced. They said I was too friendly and didn’t behave like a proper lady should. They made up terrible rumors and gossip about us, but we loved each other very much and it didn’t matter. When some of my proper female neighbors complained about the nude statues in our gardens, I had my dressmaker come and make dresses for those statues! We also had two daughters, Elizabeth and Rose Mary. It was a wonderful life.

Sadly, it did not last. In 1893, the value of silver fell and we were ruined. Suddenly we had no money. We moved into a small rented cottage near the

BABY DOE

THE SILVER QUEEN



Horace Austin Warner Tabor Manuscript Collection, Mss.00614 (scan#10025935), History Colorado

A portrait of Elizabeth Tabor, better known as Baby Doe.



Matchless Mine in Leadville, which we still owned. In 1899, Horace became ill. Just before he died, he told me to hold onto the Matchless Mine. He thought it would make millions again someday when silver went up in price once more. After Horace died, the girls and I moved into a tiny shack near the mine which was once the tool shed. The girls left home, but I stayed in my shack.

It's been nearly 35 years now and I'm still holding on to the Matchless as Horace told me to. Someday it will be worth millions again, I'm sure. I don't take charity. I pick up chunks of valuable ore and trade with shopkeepers for my food (even though I've heard some people whisper that my ore is worthless and the shopkeepers are accepting it as payment just because they feel sorry for me). When I'm cold, I wrap my feet in burlap sacks, tied with twine. When I'm sick I make my own medicine. I write in my diaries and keep the fire going. They even made a movie about me in 1932, but I refused to see it. That life, the life of Baby Doe Tabor, the Silver Queen, is over now.

On February 20, 1935, Baby Doe wrote in her diary: "Went down to Leadville from Matchless—the snow so terrible, I had to go down on my hands and knees and creep from my cabin door to 7th Street. Mr. Zaitz driver drove me to our get off place and he helped pull me to the cabin. I kept falling deep down through the snow every minute. God bless him." The storm continued for days, and when neighbors finally checked on her, they found Baby Doe Tabor, a tiny 81-year-old woman, lying dead from a heart attack, her body frozen on the floor of her cabin. She was buried next to Horace in Denver.

Two children sit on a hill overlooking the Matchless Mine in Leadville, Colorado.