

Silverton, Colorado

Rich in Mining History and a Fun Place to Visit

This town of just over 660 full-time residents has a history steeped in mining. These days, Silverton, Colorado survives on tourists who frequent this community to ride the Durango-Silverton Train, or to go 'off-roading' on one or more of its challenging dirt roads. A few of us, interested in Geology go there to visit the remnants of its old mines and mills. John and I have been members of WGS for over twenty years, but we have been visiting the town of Silverton for many more years.

This tiny town is nestled at the bottom of some of Colorado's highest peaks, many over thirteen thousand feet although the town sits at an altitude of just over 9,000 feet. It is the capitol of San Juan County and has an ordinance that does not allow any chain establishments. If you are looking for a Starbucks or a McDonalds, you're out of luck.

In years gone by, the town band would walk down the center of the main street on a Sunday evening wearing period costumes and playing tunes by John Phillip Susa. Now they play 2 or 3 concerts a summer. We were lucky enough to hear one of those concerts this summer when we visited over the 4th of July, 2021.



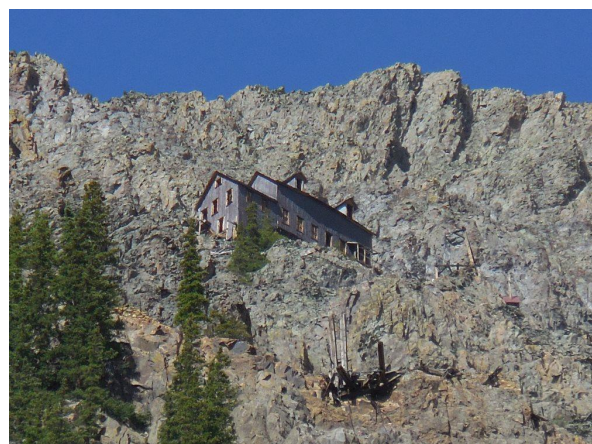
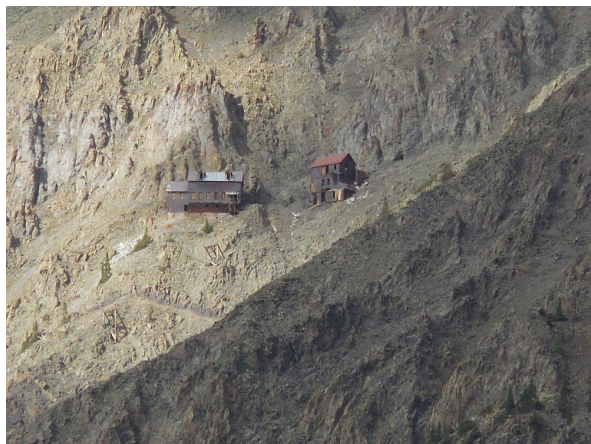
Over our 15 to 20 visits, we have made friends with several of the band members. One of those folks is Scott Fetchenhier, a geologist, miner, snare drum musician in the town band, and County Commissioner. He is also the owner of Fetch's Mercantile that sells local t-shirts, but most importantly, he sells the best selection of historical mining books available in town. He is also the author of one of those books, *Ghosts and Gold*.

Scott has been giving us leads on where to find minerals in the area for as long as I can remember.

Scott's book, *Ghosts and Gold*, is the story of the Old One Hundred Mine located just outside of town. The mine offers a wonderful tour and well, worth doing if you visit. You can also tour the Mayflower Mill. As you head out of town, you can't miss it and one of the old bucket trams that hangs over the road.



You can't miss the bright orange building that houses Fetch's.



The original boarding house and mine high above the Old One-hundred Mine Tour in Cunningham Gulch outside of Silverton, CO.

A short way further up Cunningham Gulch is one of our favorite stops, the Green Mountain Mine. This mine went bankrupt years ago with the shoots still loaded with rich ore. Since then, it has been hit by several avalanches and it currently stands almost totally demolished. Below is a series of pictures that we have taken over the years.



This road-side mine site in the early 2000's thru 2016



On our trip in 2016 we also saw this lynx on the road not far from the mine.



2018



During winter 2018-19 the Silverton area had the most snow and avalanche damage since 1958. The road to the Green Mountain Mine was still blocked by snow in early July, 2019



Green Mountain Mine July 2021 following the 2019 avalanche