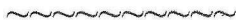


# The New York Times

New York – Sunday, September 11, 1887

## A Trip to Coeur d'Alene Mountains

*By Michael Wilkeson*



### Wardner

A Mining Town of Today in all its Squalor



*Wardner – 1889*

*Barnard Stockbridge Collection, University of Idaho*

## A Trip to Coeur d'Alene Mountains

By Michael Wilkeson

### Prospecting holes to deceive investors

Spokane Falls, Sept. 5, 1887. — In the Coeur d'Alene Mountains and close to the region where the placer mines about which there was such intense excitement among miners a few years ago were found there rages to-day a fierce mining excitement. Gold-bearing quartz and galena [ore containing silver] have been discovered in several places. Two of these discoveries were recently sold for \$700,000. I understand that the purchaser of these mines, the Sullivan and Bunker Hill, is about to stock them. For some reason, probably an excellent one, no one excepting the employees are allowed to enter the mine. It may be that the owner of the great mass of precious ore which it is alleged is visible in these mines does not wish to excite the covetousness of his fellow-men by showing the deposit, and it may be that he fears that the reports of intelligent miners who saw the vein might discourage Eastern lambs from investing in the stock of the Sullivan and Bunker Hill mines.

At any rate, I remember that at Leadville, Colorado the general public were freely admitted into the mines as long as there was plenty of ore in sight. Presently admission was refused. It was dangerous; the presence of visitors interfered with the miners' work; the air was impure; the visitor might get kicked

by a mule. But it mattered not the reasons which were given for excluding visitors, it was claimed by the mine owners that the mines were richer and more productive than ever before. Presently those mines ceased to pay dividends, and the confiding lambs bleated sorrowfully. I have no faith in alleged deposits of valuable mineral which I am not allowed to see. And an investor who buys stock of a mine that is not open to inspection by any reasonable stranger who may be traveling in the region deserves to lose his money. It is easy to dig a hole in the ground and to claim that you have discovered a vast fortune at the bottom of it. And if you stick staunchly to the story and refuse to permit anyone to see the alleged treasure it is difficult to disprove your story. Some fools will be sure to believe the story and to invest money in shares representing the Hidden Treasure Mine. And people who are not fools will also invest if a show of working the mine is made by building tramways and erecting humbug smelting works or petty concentrators.



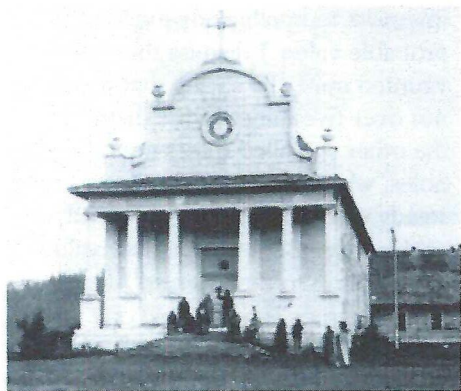
*Bunker Hill "Glory Hole" - 1885  
Barnard Stockbridge Collection, U of Idaho*

There are but five mines in the district. The other so-called mines are mere prospect holes, around the well-like openings of which the shabby, hungry-eyed owners stand and, in effect, shout: "Gentlemen, this is the only first-class mine in the district. Step this way, gentlemen, and see the Golden Calf. This valuable property will be sold regardless of price on account of sickness in the family." Lured by desire to see the golden calf, or the double eagle, or the standard dollar, you climb a high mountain and finally arrive at the mouth of a well, which is 25 feet deep. There are a few pieces of ore lying in a tiny heap by the dump, and there will probably be a little vein matter visible in the shaft. The honest and vociferous miner, whose family is ill, grabs a long pole and thrusts it into the shaft, saying as he strikes the sides of the shaft: "Right there the vein assayed \$150 per ton in silver and 40 per cent. of lead. And there," again thrusting the end of the pole against the walls of the shaft to indicate the precise spot, "and there the ore assayed \$300 per ton in silver and 55 percent of lead." He continues to lie and to poke the walls of the shaft with the pole, and to throw stones into the shaft to indicate points which he cannot reach with his pole, until you tire of the sport and wearily retrace your steps and inwardly curse the Golden Calf.

The Coeur d'Alene miners, unlike those of Montana, are hungry-eyed and keen to sell their property. They one and all claim that they are too poor to properly work their valuable deposits, and that they must sell them. Apparently they are too poor to develop them sufficiently to enable

investors to intelligently judge of their probable value. I dismiss these much vaunted mines by saying that there are not over five mines in the district; all the other so-called mines are prospect holes, which will require at least a year's steady work to develop sufficiently to enable investors to judge their value.

The trip to the Coeur d'Alene mining camps is not a hard one. From Spokane Falls, a station on the Northern Pacific, a railroad runs to the northern extremity of Lake Coeur d'Alene, where there is a shabby little town. The journey from Spokane Falls to Coeur d'Alene City is short, and if it was shorter the travelers would be happier. At the lake the passengers are transferred to a steamer which belongs to D. C. Corbin's Coeur d'Alene Railroad and Navigation Company. The steamer is clean and good meals are served on it. The lake is, in my opinion, the second most beautiful body of water in America, the first being St. Mary's Lake, in Northern Montana. The water of Lake Coeur d'Alene is deep, and blue in color, and well stocked with trout. The hills which surround the lake are high and pine-clad. The steamer follows the narrow, winding lake for 25 miles, then enters the Coeur d'Alene River and ascends that beautiful stream for 35 miles to the old Catholic mission, which was established over 40 years ago, and which is still in charge of the priest who established it among the Indians before Idaho was named. A good pure man is this priest, of whom every one speaks well. A narrow gauge railroad runs from the mission to the mines, and the ride on it is similar to that over any narrow gauge mountain railroad.



*Cataldo Mission – Early 1900*

## **No romance in the mining town of Wardner**

Alas, the romance of mining towns has departed! They are no longer picturesque. They are no longer the homes of men who wash golden gravel and who talk drawlingly and interestingly of "bars," meaning the ferocious grizzly, and not an aquatic deposit of gravel. One no longer hears interesting tales relative to the strange doings of Poker Jim or Seven-up Jack or Faro Pete. There are no camp fires under the pines; no donkeys grazing on the flanks of the foothills; no pack train of heavily laden mules which follow a white mare that wears a bell on a leather collar around her neck. The open-handed, red-shirted, hairy miner who used to sit by the open door of his log cabin is almost extinct. A mining camp of to-day is a nasty, squalid, pretentious village, and the working miners are generally foreign-born blackguards.

I was in Wardner, which is the largest camp in the Coeur d'Alene district, for two days. I put Wardner into my notebook. Here it is: In a narrow gulch, flanked by steep mountains over which a fierce forest fire ran a few years ago, is a 40-foot wide street, the grade of which is exceedingly steep. On each side of the street there is a row of small buildings, all of which are built after the same pattern, and all having false fronts nailed to them to give them a more imposing appearance than they would have if their gable ends were exposed to the street. Almost every other building on the main street is a saloon. In two of the saloons are gambling tables, around which unwashed and mean-faced men sit and smoke and pretend to gamble with ten-cent checks. Tall, fire-blackened stumps stand close to the street on vacant lots, which are held for sale at hundreds of dollars each. All the shabby stores and squalid hotels and dirty eating houses have a row of barrels, which are supposed to be filled with water, standing on a plank which is nailed to their ridge poles. The water in these barrels is to be used in case of fire, and would be fully as effective as a stream shot out of a small-sized squirt gun. The sidewalks on the main street are made of two-inch plank, and are 10 feet wide. At short intervals are steps, sometimes two, sometimes four, to overcome the grade and to trip the unwary or alcoholically disabled.

Nightly men roll down these steps, and nightly they profanely denounce the sidewalks and invoke Divine wrath on the men who built them.

It is morning in Wardner, and I am sitting in front of the Grand Central Hotel, which is about the worst kept inn I ever stopped at. The narrow street is littered with lumber, empty boxes, empty bottles, tin cans, and stones. A little above the hotel and on the opposite side of the street is a large white store, out of which the shopkeeper accompanies a customer, who has a pair of boots under his arm. The merchant twirls his right hand palm uppermost about his right shoulder, as is the wont of certain oriental peoples, and assures his customer that he has a bargain in boots, and the miner goes off satisfied.

Two wagons heavily laden with pine cord-wood, and each drawn by four horses, roll slowly up the street, jolting over stones, flattening tin cans, smashing empty beer bottles, and breaking empty boxes into kindling wood. At short intervals sticks of wood slip off and add to the litter which lies in the street.

A horseman, who makes a pretense to pressure of important business, spurs his horse and gallops madly up the street. The loungers, of whom there are many, with noses of various hues of redness, wonder rather listlessly where Jim or Pete or Bill is going, and some of the more energetically curious call after him to find out. But the horseman fails to reply. He gallops through the town, and reins in his horse at the far end of the street. He is not going anywhere.



Wardner - 1886

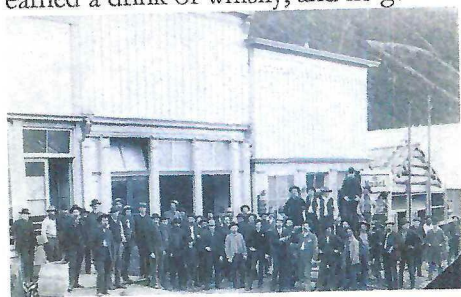
Noah Kellogg's burro that discovered the Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mine. Boys riding are Jerome Day, Sam & Frank Poteet. Several years later, Day discovered the Hercules and became a millionaire.

## A Grifter Sizes Me Up

It is evening, as the sun sinks behind the mountains, men gather in groups in the hotels, on the walks in front of these foul dens, in eating rooms, in billiard rooms, and in drinking saloons, and they talk. Almost all of them are dirty. They have red faces and swollen noses, and there is a network of bright red veins in their cheeks. They are poorly dressed. They talk of mines and talk for the benefit of strangers. They lie and brag and lie again. They spin long yarns relative to free-milling, gold-bearing quartz, of exceedingly rich but remote placer diggings, and of immense veins of silver ore. They covertly watch the unsophisticated stranger to judge the effect their marvelous tales have on him. They eye him hungrily, as though to see in which pocket he carries his money. Finally one approaches him, chair in hand, and seats himself at his side, saying in mellow tones:

"How are you, Colonel?" which remark he quickly supplements by saying: "It is a beautiful evening — eh, Colonel?" This one-sided conversation is considered in all the Coeur d'Alene mining camps as an introduction, and as a vouching for the respectability of the unwashed mountaineer, which should be more satisfactory than a letter from — say, a Bishop. Then he asks you your name, and presently you are introduced to a mob of Colonels and Judges and saloon keepers, none of whom, to judge from their personal cleanliness and puffy faces, ever use water, and all of whom have evidently

had a serious misunderstanding with their washerwomen. These men ask impertinent questions as to who you are, where you are going, where you came from, and what you are doing. They thrust their hands deep into trouser pockets and draw forth specimens of ore, which have served their useful purpose in many mining camps, and these they moisten with their tongues and hold close to the end of your nose for inspection, saying: "Colonel, just look at that. It runs \$1,200 to the ton, and is free milling." At intervals, old white-haired miners, whose lives have been spent in placer mines and prospecting, and in the alcoholic lair of the Rocky Mountain tiger, walk stiffly up the street. They halt at the groups of talking men, and seeing the stranger and the play that is being made at him they soberly inspect the pocket specimens for the fifty-second time, and, with the air of a mining expert, pronounce them good. And, without a smile, they ask where they were found, and on hearing they clinch their wrinkled hands and lift them high above their white heads and bring them down with a swing and an oath, which prefaces the remark that the vein which carries that ore is worth millions. The old miner, who is bankrupted in health and pocket, has earned a drink of whisky, and he gets it.





*Last Chance Miners - Wardner*

As twilight rises out of the valley and climbs up the brush covered mountain flanks women who know how to ride appear on the streets on horseback, and they ride briskly up and down the narrow street, and the groups of men make remarks about them. Presently these women, most of whom are respectable, disappear. It is a little darker, twilight has passed away, and it is early night in the camp. Then a swarm of hard-faced and old women parade the streets for a short time, and then they too disappear. By 9 o'clock night is fully established in Wardner. Drunken men stagger along the streets, or lean against posts and vainly endeavor to light cigarettes. Rocky Mountain miners smoking cigarettes is a spectacle I never saw before! A swarm of laboring men are engaged in cheaply imitating the wickedness and profligacy of the old-time mining camps. Men play billiards for cigars. Others try to play whist for drinks. And more reckless men, who have heard tales relative to the old placer mining days when men wasted fortunes in a night, rush into gambling rooms and lose as much as a dollar. By 11 o'clock these roisterers

become beer-laden and then they indulge in noisy, wordy rows. I lay awake in my bed one night at 12 o'clock and heard a row in a saloon directly opposite my open window. I judged from the savage talk that pistols would presently crack, and I tried to curl up in a corner of the bed, knowing that a heavy 44-calibre pistol ball would tear clear through the frail house. I waited patiently for the pistol shot, and waiting, fell asleep to wake at 3 o'clock to hear the row still in progress. Then I was easy in my mind and turned over and slept soundly.

When I was in Wardner word came into town that a new mineral region had been discovered in the Bitter Root Mountains, about 25 miles from Thompson's Falls, on Clark's Fork of the Columbia. This intelligence excited the more energetic of the young miners, and presently a score of them left town on horseback, driving a few pack horses before them. The prompt movement of these men was the only thing I saw while on this trip which reminded me of the days when the glories of placer mining had not passed away.



## Trout Are Always More Amusing

Returning from the mines I stopped at Coeur d'Alene City. The Lakeside Hotel at this town was a shade worse than the Grand Central at Wardner. I arrived late and got up early the next morning to see the lake, and to see the sun rise from behind the mountains. I stood on the wharf close to where the steamboat was moored and saw trout swimming toward the boat. So I went on the boat and to the kitchen. Looking out of the open door and into the water I saw over a hundred trout swimming slowly to and fro. They were waiting to be fed with the refuse from the kitchen. As our black bass used to come o'mornings to the water which rippled below the porch of the Mohonk House and wait for Morris Davis to feed them, the graceful trout come to the boat and wait for the Chinese cook to feed them.

A biscuit had been tossed overboard. It floated, water-soaked, on the surface of the water. A school of minnows swarmed around it getting their breakfast. Suddenly a trout that was over a foot long struck the water impatiently with his forked tail as though to say, "That Chinaman will never feed us!" and he darted through the school of minnows with open jaws. Passed through, he turned quickly and cut through them again, and again, and again. The minnows disappeared and the trout, now stuffed with breakfast, swam out into the deep waters of the lake. Presently the minnows arose from the weeds, which grow on the bottom of the lake, and among which they had sought refuge, and resumed their feeble attacks on water-soaked biscuit. I returned to the hotel and to at 6 o'clock breakfast and tried to enjoy mackerel which was parboiled and exceedingly salt.

*~Michael Wilkeson, September 11, 1887*

**In 1887 the writer, Michael Wilkeson**, from The New York Times could not imagine the wealth that would be taken from the mountains surrounding the mining town of Wardner, which he described as "a nasty, squalid, pretentious village", and the miners inhabiting it as "foreign-born blackguards" that are "poorly dressed with red faces and swollen noses." Earlier the same year, on July 29, 1887, Simon Reed purchased the Bunker Hill Mine and incorporated the Bunker Hill and Sullivan Mining and Company.

**The Shoshone County Mining and Smelting Museum** invites you to explore our newest exhibit, The Tale of Twin Cities, which brings to life the rich history of Wardner and Kellogg through a captivating collection of photographs and historical narratives spanning from 1885 to the 1950s.

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