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The Silverton Hostelry, the Grand Imperial hotel

Edna Frecker
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This is one of many related papers that were included in the 1957 NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebook.

Annual NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebooks

Every fall since 1950, the New Mexico Geological Society (NMGS) has held an annual Fall Field Conference that explores some region of New Mexico (or surrounding states). Always well attended, these conferences provide a guidebook to participants. Besides detailed road logs, the guidebooks contain many well written, edited, and peer-reviewed geoscience papers. These books have set the national standard for geologic guidebooks and are an essential geologic reference for anyone working in or around New Mexico.

Free Downloads

NMGS has decided to make peer-reviewed papers from our Fall Field Conference guidebooks available for free download. This is in keeping with our mission of promoting interest, research, and cooperation regarding geology in New Mexico. However, guidebook sales represent a significant proportion of our operating budget. Therefore, only *research papers* are available for download. *Road logs*, *mini-papers*, and other selected content are available only in print for recent guidebooks.

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There was often a severe penalty for zinc. Zinc was a noxious, deleterious substance difficult to handle, and when payment was finally agreed upon about the turn of the century, it was only under certain conditions of content in relation to the concentrates as a whole. Payments on gold were often not reported unless it ran an ounce or more per ton. The hidden charge of the early smelter was in the unreported gold content. To avoid penalties, a great deal of zinc went over the dump in the early days.

Production figures in the table show that the region we are traversing is one of the great mineralized areas of the West. Total production of gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc, inclusive to 1953, amounted to $485, 305, 584. While great production involving the rich surficial deposits has been achieved, the San Juan region has produced only a fraction of the potentially available base-metals. Large unexploited deposits are known and many remain to be proved. As economic conditions change there will be continued development both for individual deposits and the region as a whole, and once again this area should become a thriving mining country.

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THE SILVERTON HOSTELRY, THE GRAND IMPERIAL HOTEL

By
Edna M. Frecker

The seat of San Juan County, the center of the once booming San Juan mining district, and now a favorite of summer tourists, location for movie making, and outfitting point for sportsman – this is Silverton, nestled in a park on the Animas River, 9,302 feet above sea level but more than 4,000 feet below the encompassing peaks. Storm Peak to the north, Galena Mountain to the east, Kendall Peak to the southeast, and Sultan Mountain to the southwest all exceed 13,000 feet in altitude; these frosty sentinels are reflected in the gold-domed courthouse, itself a reflection of former golden days. Called Baker's Park in the 1860's, for the indomitable Captain Charles Baker who was a pioneer prospector in the region, the town was rechristened Silverton (per local tradition) by a miner who said, "We may not have gold hereabouts, but we have silver by the ton."

Silver by the ton is true. Over 1,400 tons of silver have been recovered from the white-metal ores of San Juan County, as well as more than 60 tons of gold, 39,000 tons of copper, 250,000 tons of lead, and 115,000 tons of zinc. The value of the ores has exceeded 120 million dollars and has attracted thousands of prospectors and miners to the steep slopes surrounding Silverton. To accomodate the early fortune seekers, the Grand Hotel was built in 1882 by W. S. Thompson, a native of London, England. Thompson (royal perfumer to Queen Victoria) had made a fortune selling perfumes in England and Europe and invested part of these moneys in properties in the Silverton area. Convinced that Silverton would be the largest town in southwestern Colorado, Thompson spent $60,000 building a business block facing Greene Street. Originally the first floor was occupied by stores and only part of the second and third floors were rented for living quarters. On July 1, 1883, the Grand Hotel officially opened as the "finest and most elegantly furnished hotel in Colorado outside of Denver." Numerous handsome paintings and pictures adorned the walls and the plush carpets were set off by marbletop sideboards.

The hotel was owned by the Thompson family until 1921 and sometime during 1905 or 1906 was titled the Imperial Hotel or Grand Imperial Hotel. Henry Frecker acquired the hotel in 1921 and ownership passed to the writer, Mr. Frecker's daughter, after his death in 1944. In 1951, after 30 years proprietorship by the Freckers, a wealthy Dallas resident, Winfield Morten, bought the

hotel. Mr. Morten originally visited Silverton with General Charles H. Corlett while looking over mining properties; he was impressed with Silverton as an ideal vacation area, and by the sound structure of the 75-year-old hotel as well as the Hotel Museum which had been accumulated by the writer from the numerous curios and momentos of Silveton's exciting past.

The hotel was remodeled during the winter of 1951-1952 despite some of the coldest weather and hardest snows Silverton has recorded. Trucks bringing materials in over the Million Dollar Highway were at times snowed in for weeks; one truck went off the road and required a week's work by the Highway Department for its rescue. So, although September is early, I hope you brought warm clothes and maybe snowshoes! Perhaps as much as $100,000 was spent on the face-lifting work; compare this with the original $60,000 to build the entire hotel in 1882 and reflect on the change in prices of materials and wages. The south part of the basement was divided in 18 small rooms equipped with bunk beds for sportsmen, mountain-climbers, etc. (the etc. must include geologists) and served by 6 baths. On the north side of the basement is the Silver Dollar Ballroom complete with stage and a fine floor for dancing. The first floor houses the Museum, the dining room, a smaller private dining room, the bar, the Chief Ouray Lounge, the kitchen, and the office lobby. Between the bar and the Lounge are the legendary swinging doors. The lounge is carpeted by beautiful Navajo rugs, and on the walls are paintings and murals by artist Joseph Imhof. The most striking painting is that of Chief Ouray, the peaceful chief of the Utes. And (notes to geologists on a cold September evening) the large fireplace is in the Lounge. The dining room, made luxurious by heavy-piled wall-to-wall broadloom rugs and solid oak furniture, can accommodate 125 guests. The second floor has 18 rooms with baths, including suites, and every window is a "picture window" from which there are views of the most magnificent mountain scenery. The third floor has twenty rooms with baths, surrounding a center lounge which is beneath two huge skylights – the gabled windows and numerous thin chimneys are reminiscent of brownstone hotels and apartment houses in older exclusive parts of New York and Boston.

So roam while amid these stout walls that were old before you were born; that nick in the arm of your solid oak chair was cut by the butt of a pistol swinging low from the gunbelt of a miner or desperado; warm yourself by the fireplace as others have for three-quarters of a century – prospectors, miners, promoters, mining kings, soldiers, Indian chiefs, mountain-climbers, fishermen, tourists, and geologists. There is always a warm welcome at the Grand Imperial Hotel, Silverton's finest hostelry.

GEOLOGIC ROAD LOGS FOR ROUTES IN NEW MEXICO

By
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There are numerous road logs for routes in New Mexico; as a service to the newcomer, the old-timer, the visitor, and the student, the road log routes have been compiled on the accompanying map, and a few notes are herewith given describing the routes and guidebooks. Available published guidebooks from 1950 to 1957 are emphasized as most of the earlier road logs have been superseded or the highway routes have been changed by recent road-building.

There is little that is new under the sun, as back in the days when railroads were faster and favorite over the horse, Darton (1916) compiled a guidebook of the Santa Fe Railroad route, published as U. S. Geological Survey Bulletin 613; this was followed in 1933 by Bulletin 845, by N. H. Darton, C. J. Sarle, and G. B. Richardson, a guidebook on the Southern Pacific Railroad route. The real pioneer of published automobile field trips in New Mexico was that by the Kansas Geological Society in 1930 as recorded in the Proceedings of their Fourth Annual Field Conference. The conferees entered the State at Raton Pass and the road log describes a circuitous route that passed through Raton, Cimarron, Taos, Espanola, Santa Fe, Moriarty, Albuquerque, Isleta, Abo Pass, Mountainair, Negra, Palma, Las Vegas, Mora, Dilia, Santa Rosa, and Tucumcari before leaving for western Oklahoma. Headquarters during the evenings were at the Swastika Hotel in Raton, the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, the Franciscan Hotel in Albuquerque, and the Castaneda Hotel in Las Vegas. No motels mentioned! The recent flood of published guidebooks and road logs began in about 1949 when the West Texas Geological Society, assisted in part by the New Mexico Geological Society, prepared 5 guidebooks for field trips in the New Mexico-West Texas area, all of which terminated at El Paso where the 1949 National Meeting of the Geological Society of America was held. In 1950 the first annual field conference of the New Mexico Geological Society was held; the guidebooks of the Society constitute an unbroken yearly string from