Perhaps the most striking feature of the Park City mining district is that it does not look like a great mining district,” geologist M. B. Kildale wrote in 1956. “Despite the fact that several large waste dumps are scattered throughout the twenty square mile area which includes the mining district, it is difficult, even today, when looking down from the higher peaks over the lower beautiful woods and canyons to believe this area is honey-combed beneath the surface by many miles of underground workings.”

Today, with three major ski areas, several golf courses, and hundreds of luxury homes, Park City looks even less like a great mining district. Nevertheless, between the early 1870s and the early 1980s, about 300 area mines produced ores valued at more than $500 million at the time. The mountains surrounding Park City are laced with an estimated 1,000 miles of underground workings.

Present-day Park City is located near the junction of the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains. This conjunction, created centuries ago by plate tectonics, resulted in the formation of a massive bulge called an anticline. Igneous activity thousands of feet below caused a superheated solution to carry concentrated minerals and deposit them in veins, fissures, and limestone beds within the anticline. Early prospectors discovered these ancient deposits in the form of gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc.

The first settlers in this area were not miners but Mormon pioneers. They came under the leadership of Heber C. Kimball, Jedediah M. Grant, and Samuel C. Snyder and in 1853 established a settlement near the present Silver Springs subdivision in Snyderville. Those early settlers operated sawmills, gristmills, and quarries and raised crops and farm animals to ship to the Salt Lake Valley.

**Early Prospectors**

Lacking any governmental agencies or a newspaper to document it, early Park City mining history is fragmentary and obscure. According to geologist J. M. Boutwell, a
group of prospectors, including Ephraim Hanks, Rufus Walker, and Louis Simmons, camped near Snyderville in 1868 while they roamed the nearby mountains prospecting for precious metals, against the wishes of Mormon prophet Brigham Young. They reportedly discovered the Young America, the Yellow Jacket, the Pinyon, and the Green Monster claims on Pinyon or Pioneer Ridge and the Walker-Webster claim in the gulch below. This area is now part of Park City Mountain Resort.

At about the same time, another very different group of men was playing an important part in the discovery effort. These were U.S. Army soldiers stationed at Camp Douglas in Salt Lake City under the command of Colonel Patrick Edward Connor. Three of the soldiers traveled over the high mountain pass from Big Cottonwood Canyon east of Salt Lake City to a place called Bonanza Flat, just south of Park City. Encouraged by Connor, they began prospecting for gold and silver and soon discovered a rich deposit of silver and lead. They named their claim the Flagstaff.
The following year the soldiers sold the claim to James Kennedy for $5,000, and in 1871 it gained the distinction of being the first mine in Park City to ship ore. Several years later Kennedy sold the Flagstaff to Edward P. Ferry for $50,000.

The early mines in Park City were combined with those in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons to become part of the Mountain Lake Mining District. However, there were so many new discoveries that three new mining districts were formed: the Uinta, containing the Park City mines, in 1869, and the Blue Ledge and the Snake Creek, both in Wasatch County, in 1870. The name Park City Mining District was later used to describe the Uinta and parts of the Blue Ledge and Snake Creek Districts.

Word of the new discoveries near Snyderville spread throughout the West. The transcontinental railroad, which was completed in northern Utah in 1869, helped bring a large workforce to the mines. Men from many different countries converged on the area. The 1900 U.S. Census for Park City lists 854 foreign-born residents among a total population of 3,759. Summit County, which includes Park City, lists 2,125 foreign-born residents including 859 from England, 276 from Ireland, 167 from Sweden, 154 from Scotland, 104 from Denmark, 75 from Norway and 71 from China.

Although many Chinese lived and worked outside of town in the boardinghouses near the mines and mills, they were not allowed to work in the mines themselves. Park City’s Chinatown was located east of Main Street on what was then called Grant Street. There the Chinese lived in their small shacks, when they weren’t operating the laundries, the hotels, and the boardinghouses. In the summer they grew vegetables in small gardens and peddled them around town.

Some of the town residents didn’t feel comfortable walking through Chinatown on their way to and from Rossie Hill, east of Main Street. In 1886 a long wooden bridge was built high above Chinatown, connecting Main Street with Rossie Hill. It became known as the China Bridge, a landmark in Park City for many years. After the first bridge was destroyed by fire, a second replaced it; it stood until it was demolished in 1954.

Many of the new mining claims were in the mountains south of Park City’s present location. The McHenry, Lucky Bill, Parley’s Park, Lady of the Lake, and Flagstaff were among them. To live close to their work, many miners settled on the shores of a small lake surrounded by mountains at the head of McHenry’s Canyon. At one time Lake Flat was home to more than 700 people. However, weather at this 8,000-foot elevation was severe, and the little settlement was eventually abandoned. The lake was accidentally emptied when a drain tunnel was constructed below it.

The year 1872 was significant in Park City history for several reasons, not the least being the naming of the town. George and Rhoda Snyder had been living in nearby Wanship when they learned of the discoveries in the mountains south of them. Realizing the potential for financial gain, they moved to the mining area and homesteaded 160 acres. Using a horse-drawn sledge, they cleared the trees and brush on a flat next to a beautiful little stream that Mormon explorer Parley P. Pratt
had christened Silver Creek. The Snyders built the first house at the bottom of what became Main Street. Legend has it that, during the Fourth of July celebration of 1872, George and Rhoda raised a homemade flag and declared that the new town would be known as Parley’s Park City.

The development of local mining was relatively slow until 1872, when one of Park City’s richest mines was discovered in Ontario Gulch. Although four prospectors were involved in the discovery, Rector Steen is generally recognized as the principal one. Soon after, George Hearst, a successful mining man from the goldfields of California and the silver mines of Nevada, arrived, looking for a rich claim to purchase. Hearst also represented two San Francisco friends and partners, James Ben Ali Haggin and Lloyd Tevis. On Bonanza Flat, Hearst met a friend, Marcus Daly, who suggested that he investigate a new discovery in McHenry Canyon at the base of Bald Mountain.

Hearst rode his horse down the canyon to the mine but immediately saw that the claim had large amounts of underground water, which meant high development costs. Daly then recommended the new discovery in Ontario Gulch. Hearst found the four prospectors working the claim and received permission to borrow a sample and have it tested in town. He found that it contained very high grades of silver and lead and made the prospectors an offer. He was told that the claim was already spoken for, but that if it became available, he would have the first chance to buy it. Hearst arranged to have someone, perhaps Marcus Daly, keep an eye on it and returned to San Francisco. Not long after, the claim did become available, and Hearst purchased it for $27,000 and named it the Ontario Mine.

Hearst hired a friend from California, Robert C. Chambers, as mine superintendent. Chambers represented the Hearst interests with great efficiency and success until his sudden death in 1901. During the time the California group owned the Ontario Mine, it produced $14 million of tax-free dividends. The Ontario Mining Company not only produced great wealth for its owners but also contributed significantly to Park City’s economy for many years, employing hundreds of miners.

The Michigan Bunch and the Immigrant Entrepreneurs

In 1873 a group of entrepreneurs from Grand Haven, Michigan, arrived in Park City to be close to their mining investments and develop new ones. Edward P. Ferry, David McLaughlin, James Mason, and Frederick Nims soon became known as the Michigan Bunch. They were later joined by Ferry’s brother, Colonel William M. Ferry. Over the years they would have a great influence on mining and the development of the town.

Soon after his arrival, Edward Ferry purchased the Flagstaff Mine for $50,000; it became the first holding of the Marsac Silver Mining Company. The name Marsac came from a Grand Haven family friend, Sophie de Marsac. Ferry then constructed the Marsac mill (also known as the Daly mill) just east of Main Street to process the ore. It was a local landmark until it was torn down in 1904.
Members of the Michigan Bunch soon learned that very few people occupying land in town held legal title to it—they were in fact squatters—and saw an opportunity to make a great deal of money, perhaps more than in mining. They surveyed and platted the land, prepared legal descriptions, took the documents to the territorial offices in Salt Lake City, and filed for ownership. After paying a nominal fee, they became owners of most of Park City.14

Each member of the Michigan Bunch was allocated a number of lots in the town site to market and sell to the public. They gave the people living on their newly acquired land an ultimatum: purchase the land or get off. Many were outraged, but they had no other choice. In addition to bringing a little order to the growth, the Michigan Bunch made some other positive contributions, such as surveying and planning the side streets, constructing a waterworks, and building boardwalks on Main Street. Having made their fortunes, Nims and Mason returned to Grand Haven. McLaughlin, a trained attorney, married a local woman and became very active in business and mining. However, he died suddenly in 1901 at the age of 46.

Colonel William Ferry was one of the original owners of the Quincy Mine, later merged into the famous Daly-West Mine. He built a fine mansion at the mouth of Thaynes Canyon that was later moved to Monitor Drive in Park City. It is still known by many as the Ferry Mansion. He was a generous philanthropist, donating the land for Westminster College in Salt Lake City and contributing to its financial support. Ferry died in 1905 at the age of 81. His remains were shipped to Grand Haven for burial in the family cemetery.15

In addition to the Flagstaff Mine, Edward Ferry owned an interest in the Woodside Mine, the Anchor Mine, and the American Flag Mine, and he consolidated all of the mines on Pioneer Ridge to form the Crescent Mine Company. He built a fine home in Salt Lake City near his friend Thomas Kearns. He died in 1917 at the age of 80.16 Edward Ferry’s son, William Mont Ferry, was managing director of the Silver King Mine from 1905 to 1919, a member of the Salt Lake City Council, president of the Utah State Senate, and mayor of Salt Lake City. He died in 1938 at the age of 67.17

Meanwhile, R. C. Chambers was developing the Ontario Mine and removing many tons of silver-lead ore. Some of it was so rich it could be shipped directly to Liverpool, England, for smelting and still produce a profit. Chambers later leased the Marsac mill and the nearby McHenry mill to process the Ontario ore. In 1877 the Ontario completed its own mill south of town at the mouth of Ontario Canyon.18

As his miners went deeper into the earth, following rich veins of silver, they encountered more and more underground water. Some of the Park City mines began using steam-operated water pumps. Chambers and Hearst knew it would take a very special pump to dewater the Ontario Mine, so they ordered a large pump modeled after one developed to use in the wet mines of Cornwall, England. In 1881 they contacted an old friend and water-pump expert from the mines of Virginia City, David Keith, to prepare the shaft and supervise the installation.19
Weighing almost 500 tons, the Cornish was one of the largest and most powerful pumping engines ever built. The flywheel alone was 30 feet in diameter and weighed 56 tons. It pumped almost four million gallons of water a day from 1,000 feet underground to the 600-foot level, where it flowed through the newly completed Ontario Number-One Drain Tunnel from the Ontario Shaft Number Three to a point just below the Ontario mill. Water from the tunnel supplied the Marsac mill and generated power. To fuel the boilers for the pumps and provide timbers for the mines, most of the surrounding mountains were soon stripped of their trees. Timber was even shipped from Kamas, Heber, and the Strawberry Valley. The treeless hillsides were prone to avalanches, and a number of Park City residents lost their lives over the years. When wood became scarce, the pump boilers converted to coal.

After supervising the installation of the pump, David Keith left the Ontario to make his fortune on his own. Born in Nova Scotia on 27 May 1847, Keith had gained a lasting interest in mining from working in local mines while growing up. When still a boy, Keith heard about the gold discoveries in California. After a long, grueling journey, he arrived there to find the streets were not paved with gold. Meanwhile, great silver discoveries were occurring in nearby Nevada. Keith went to work as a common miner in the Comstock Mine. He worked his way up to pump man and finally foreman. He was working in the Gold Hill District in Virginia City when he received his call from R. C. Chambers.

Not long after arriving in Park City, Keith met Thomas Kearns, a son of Irish immigrants who had originally settled in Ontario, Canada. Kearns had gotten his early mining experience in the Homestake gold mine in South Dakota and mines around Tombstone, Arizona. Said to have arrived in Park City in 1883 with only 10 cents in his pocket, Kearns was offered a job by Keith as a mucker at the Ontario Mine, removing the debris after the explosives had done their work.

After working at the Ontario for several years, Kearns began exploring the southern end of Treasure Hill west of Park City and in 1889 discovered a vein of silver in Woodside Gulch near the Mayflower Mine. To develop the prospect, he formed a partnership with David Keith that would last as long as they lived. They eventually built and lived in mansions close to one another on South Temple Street (then known as Brigham Street) in Salt Lake City. Keith died in April 1918 and Kearns six months later. Keith is buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery and Kearns in the adjoining Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

In 1881 John J. Daly was a miner at the Ontario Mine, having gained his experience as a prospector and miner in Montana and Nevada. On his days off, he roamed the canyons and mountains around Park City; he developed a theory that the rich Ontario ore body extended west into Empire Canyon and gradually acquired 24 claims. It was later rumored that Daly, to purchase the claims, received money from R. C. Chambers.

Daly left the Ontario Mine and began work on what became known as the Central Tunnel. He soon struck the rich ore fissure he knew he would find. He hired
miners to sink a shaft into the ore body and erected buildings containing the very best hoisting and mining machinery. In a short time, the Daly Mine was producing 800 tons of high-grade ore a month for processing in the Marsac mill. Daly soon quietly deeded a half interest in the mine to R. C. Chambers.

Daly acquired another 40 claims in Empire Canyon and organized the Daly-West Mining Company, which eventually became one of Park City’s three richest, thanks in part to the great, bedded ore deposits which were discovered at the adjoining Quincy and Silver King Mines. Chambers became president of the new company, and Daly was vice president.25

In 1886 Daly was awarded a contract to construct a 6,000-foot tunnel to drain a large amount of underground water in Edward Ferry’s Anchor Mine, just above Daly Mine in Empire Canyon. It was completed three years later; the flume, three feet wide and two feet deep, carried a steady flow from the mine. Known today as the Judge Tunnel, it supplies Park City’s culinary water system. The most respected and well liked of all Park City mining leaders, Daly announced in 1907 that he was retiring from active mining because of ill health. The family soon sold his fine mansion on Brigham Street in Salt Lake City and moved to Los Angeles, where Daly died in 1927. Many in Park City mourned his death.26

Irish immigrant John Judge was known as a hands-on leader who enjoyed nothing more than working underground with his men. Judge was a foreman in the Daly Mine when he was awarded a contract to construct a drain tunnel to the Sampson Mine in Walker-Webster Gulch, just west of Empire Canyon, in 1889. The 4,576-foot tunnel was completed in 1890 and began to drain the Sampson as well as the Rebellion and other nearby claims. Known as the Alliance Tunnel, it provided water to Park City for a few years until a money dispute caused the city to change to Daly’s tunnel.

Judge joined John Daly in acquiring the Anchor Mine (later named the Daly-Judge Mine). He later founded the Judge Mining and Smelting Company. The Judge mill was built in lower Empire Canyon to process ore from the Daly-Judge and Daly-West Mines. However, Judge paid the price for his years underground, dying of miner’s consumption (silicosis) in 1892 at the age of 48. After Judge’s death, his wife, Mary, also built a beautiful mansion on Brigham Street in Salt Lake City. She also helped fund construction of the Cathedral of the Madeleine, Judge Memorial Home for Miners (now Judge Memorial High School), and the Judge Building in Salt Lake City. Mary died in 1909 and was buried beside her husband in Mt. Olivet Cemetery. Rather than see the mansion turned into a boardinghouse, the Judge family had it demolished.27

By 1888 the Cornish pump at the Ontario Mine had outlived its usefulness. The ore had been mined to the 1,000-foot level, and the company wanted to follow the ore body deeper. The Cornish pump was incapable of operating any deeper, so work was started on another drain tunnel at the 1,500-foot level: the Ontario Number-Two Drain Tunnel, also known as the Keetley Drain Tunnel after John Keetley, who supervised its construction. In 1894, after six years of construction, the tunnel was
completed to Ontario Shaft Number Two, and 13,000 gallons of water a minute was flowing out of the mine.\(^\text{28}\) The tunnel was so straight that a miner could stand at the shaft end and see daylight three miles away. The tunnel was later extended to Ontario Shaft Number Three and the Daly-West Mine. In 1904 the Cornish pump was cut up for scrap. The tunnel, with its portal on the edge of the Jordanelle Reservoir, still functions today. A large filtration plant processes the water prior to its journey down the Provo River to towns and cities along the Wasatch Front.

In the early days, ore was hauled by horse-drawn wagons from the mines to the mills at a cost of $1.50 per ton, and much of the ore consisted of waste rock.\(^\text{29}\) One of the main ore-hauling routes was down unpaved Main Street, where deep ruts developed, especially in the winter and spring. The mines also used horses underground; they remained there as long as eight years, pulling ore cars and performing other heavy labor.

The Crescent Mine Company developed a different means of hauling ore. In 1883 the company contracted to construct a narrow-gauge railroad, the Crescent Tramway, from the mine in Thaynes Canyon to the Crescent mill in town.\(^\text{30}\) A small Shay steam engine, christened the “Maud Withey,” hauled 60 tons of ore a day from the mine to the mill. However, because of deep snow, it could operate only in the summer and ceased operation in 1898.

Conventional trains also came to Park City: the Union Pacific and Utah Eastern in 1880 from the transcontinental line at Echo (the Union Pacific soon acquired and closed the smaller railroad) and the Utah Central from Salt Lake City in 1890 (acquired by the Denver and Rio Grande Western in 1897).

The mine owners finally realized that if they separated the good from the worthless near the mines they would save even more in transportation costs. They started building mills in the mountains near the mines and shut down the ones in town. The Ontario, the Marsac, the McHenry, and the Union concentrator on Daly Avenue all closed. Residents of Park City were not sorry to see the end of the mill smokestacks that had once filled the air with highly corrosive acidic smoke.\(^\text{31}\) Most of the mills also dumped their tailings into Silver Creek, which flowed through town and northeast through the Snyderville Basin. The stream, polluted with mill and human wastes, became popularly known as Poison Creek.

In 1892 Thomas Kearns and David Keith joined together to organize one of Park City’s greatest mining companies, the Silver King.\(^\text{32}\) They acquired and merged five mines in Woodside Gulch: the Mayflower, the Woodside, the Northland, the Silver King, and the Tenderfoot. They next constructed a main shaft and connected the five mines on the 700-foot level. The two friends installed the finest in modern technology and equipment. Officers of the Silver King were David Keith, president; Thomas Kearns, vice president; and John Judge, W. V. Rice, W. H. Dodge, and Albion Emery, directors. Judge died soon after, and his wife, Mary, sold his stock to others, including James Ivers. Albion Emery, who had reached his lofty position with the Silver King through the timely purchase of a large number of shares of stock in the Mayflower
Mine, died in 1894 and was replaced on the board of directors by his wife, Susanna Bransford Emery, later known as Utah’s “silver queen.” She eventually had a succession of husbands, including Colonel Edwin Holmes, Dr. Radovan Delitch, and Prince Nicholas Engalitcheff. She died in 1942 at the age of 83, virtually penniless.33

Near the Silver King shaft house, Keith and Kearns built a state-of-the-art concentrator to process the ore. In 1901 they added an aerial tramway to carry the concentrate from the mill to the lower terminal near the tracks of the Denver and Rio Grande Western. Here the concentrate was loaded into mine cars and transported to the smelter in Salt Lake City. The tramway reduced the cost of transporting ore and concentrate from $1.50 to $.22 a ton.34

In addition to the problems caused by rapid growth, many of Park City’s early ups and downs reflected the fluctuation in the national price of metals. An increase in the supply of silver, thanks largely to the production of western mines, coincided with a movement in Washington to adopt the gold standard for backing currency instead of a combination of gold and silver. Silver prices dipped sharply in 1893 and by 1897 had dropped so low that several mines, including the Ontario, suspended operations.

Disasters and Town Development

On 19 June 1898, an entirely different problem almost brought an end to Park City. A fire erupted in the kitchen of the American Hotel on upper Main Street at 4:00 AM, when most residents were in bed. The fire, driven by canyon winds out of the south, quickly flared out of control, raced down Main Street, and spread to Park Avenue and Roskie Hill. At sunrise it ran out of fuel at Heber Avenue at the bottom of Main. The losses were staggering: 200 homes and businesses destroyed, including the city hall and the new opera house. Seventy-five percent of the town was destroyed at a loss of a million dollars. Although 500 people were homeless, there were no deaths from the inferno. With the town still staggering from the impact of depressed silver prices, many said Park City would never rise from the ashes.35

“Aside from the great loss involved in yesterday’s fire, it will have a depressing effect upon those who suffered losses and all others interested in the town directly,” the Salt Lake Herald wrote in an editorial on June 20. “With business so slow as it is now, there will be a disinclination to build again.”36 In spite of the newspaper’s gloomy assessment, Park City merchants wasted no time in going back to work. By 2 July 35 new buildings were under construction. Within 18 months, the city was almost completely rebuilt.37

On 15 July 1902, the worst disaster in Park City mining history occurred at the Daly-West Mine. It was 11:20 PM, and the night shift was hard at work in the mine. Suddenly, workers on the surface heard what sounded like a muffled explosion and felt a sudden tremor. A station tender, who was brought up on the hoist from the 900-foot level, reported that there had been a tremendous explosion below where he had been working. An investigation revealed that the miner operating the powder
The explosion and poison gas killed 25 miners in the Daly-West Mine. Nine others died when poison gas drifted through a connecting tunnel into the adjoining Ontario. Morticians from Salt Lake City traveled to Park City to assist the local one. Funeral processions down Main Street were a common sight. The mine company paid for burials and headstones and gave $2,000 to each family of a victim and $500 for each child. As a result of the disaster, legislation was passed outlawing the storage of explosives underground.

In the early days of mining, holes for explosives were drilled by hand, either by one miner using a drill and a four-pound hammer called a single jack, or by two miners, with one holding the drill and the other using an eight-pound hammer called a double jack. In 1890 mechanical drills operated by compressed air were introduced in the Park City mines. Air drills greatly improved productivity but were deadly for the miners. The drills, which became known as widow makers, created clouds of rock dust that the miners breathed. The sharp particles cut the membranes of the lungs, creating what the miners called “the con” or miners’ consumption (silicosis), for which there was no cure. Many miners made the long hard trip down Parley’s Canyon to Salt Lake City for medical treatment. Later, water hoses were attached to the drills to suppress the rock dust. Miners also risked death from cave-ins and poison gas. If they lived to be 40, it was considered old age.

Until the passage of a state law in 1896 limiting their workday to 8 hours underground, miners worked 10 hours a day, six days a week, with only two holidays a year: the Fourth of July and Christmas. Unskilled muckers were paid an average of $2.75 a day, the miners $3.00, and the timber men a little more. Payday was once a month; in between paydays, miners lived on credit from the local merchants. Their rare time off was often spent in one of Main Street’s many saloons. Each nationality had its favorite bar, where the men could gather and sing the songs of their native countries, tell jokes and stories, gamble, and drink.

Like most mining towns, Park City had its red-light district, which was located on upper Heber Avenue on the road to Deer Valley. In the early 1900s, several houses were operated by Rachel Urban, called Mother Urban by most of her regular customers. She was good to her girls, providing them with food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, and a small salary. In return she required that they stay out of the saloons on Main Street and not date men outside of working hours. Rachel was kind, generous, and one of the first in town to support a worthy cause. She died in 1933 and is buried in the city cemetery.

Until 1901 unmarried miners working for large companies were required by Utah territorial law to live in the company bunkhouses in the mountains near the mines. The legislation was passed at the request of mine owners, who wanted a workforce near the mine in case of emergencies. Miners were charged one dollar a day for room and board, a third of their wages. Married miners could live wherever they wanted,
and most chose to live in town. Not long after Utah became a state in 1896, the law was repealed, prompting the construction of many new boardinghouses in town.

Affordable medical care and burial insurance posed a problem for the unmarried mine workers in town. Some community leaders knew that fraternal organizations could provide both of the services along with a more wholesome social life. Early in 1878 efforts were begun to organize the Park City Order of Freemasons. It prospered and was granted a charter in 1880 to become Uinta Lodge Number 7. Other fraternal organizations followed, including the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias, the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Woodmen of the World, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and the Loyal Order of Moose. In 1885 several of the organizations joined together to acquire five acres of land and establish the Glenwood Cemetery. The fraternal organizations were allocated plots, which they sold to members for $10 or $27 each. About 900 people are buried in the privately owned Glenwood Cemetery.42

Union Organization

Labor historians say the influx of European workers during the nineteenth century helped introduce socialist ideologies to semiskilled and unskilled laborers in America. Among the first labor organizations to have an impact on Park City was the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, which reached a national membership of more than 700,000 in the mid-1880s. Park City sent three delegates to the Knights of Labor convention in Salt Lake City in August 1886. In May 1887 the Loyal League of Park City, which was associated with the Knights of Labor, tried unsuccessfully to pressure mill and mine owners into discriminating against Mormon and Chinese workers.43 However, it wasn’t until the formation of a local of the Western Federation of Miners in 1895 that Park City miners began to have a unified voice. In June 1896, in a show of solidarity, about 450 Park City miners held a Miner’s Day parade.44

In 1903 miners, mine-union officers, city officials, and concerned citizens met to discuss the need for a hospital in Park City to serve the miners. Finally, they reached a consensus, and most of the miners signed subscriptions for one dollar a month, deducted from paychecks, to help pay for construction and later their treatment. Land for the hospital was generously donated by Eliza Nelson, while citizens, businessmen, and mine owners added contributions.45

Located on what was called Nelson Hill, the hospital opened in 1904 and served the miners and the public until 1971, when it became a skier flophouse. It was moved to the center of the city park in 1979 and renovated as the Park City Public Library in 1982. Today it is the Park City Community Center. The Shadow Ridge Hotel now occupies the land where the hospital once stood.

Although much of the early mining activity took place in Ontario Canyon, Empire Canyon, Woodside Gulch, and Walker-Webster Gulch, Thaynes Canyon, although more remote, also saw a great amount of activity. Among the significant
Park City

mines were the Jupiter, the California, the Comstock, the Crescent, and the Keystone. Two mills, the California-Comstock and the Keystone, operated for many years near the mines.

An unnamed gulch between Thaynes Canyon and Treasure Hollow contained the Silver King Consolidated Mine, known in Park City as the King Con, developed by Solon Spiro and Salt Lake City financier Samuel Newhouse. The two men acquired the Bogen Mine claims and then built a large complex, consisting of a shaft house, three boardinghouses, and a machine shop.

Deer Valley, also called Frog Valley, was the location of a number of mines and claims, including the Park City Consolidated and the Queen Esther. Upper Ontario Canyon had the Wabash, the Naildriver, and the New York Mines. At the east end of the mining district, Glenco Canyon contained the Mayflower, the Park Galena, the Glen Allen, and the Star of Utah. McHenry Canyon, at the base of Bald Mountain, had the Wasatch, Hawkeye, McHenry, Parley's Park, and Lady of the Lake Mines. About 300 mines produced ore worth $500 million in the Park City Mining District.

In 1907 the Silver King Mine Company acquired the Odin property, the Keith and Kearns property, the Pinion and Crescent claims, the Creole Mine, and the Alliance Mine and formed the Silver King Coalition Mining Company. Its officers were David Keith, president; Thomas Kearns, vice president; and W. S. McCormick, James Ivers, and William Ferry, directors. Mike Dailey was mine superintendent.

Imperfect milling methods failed to extract all of the silver and lead from the ore before the tailings were dumped into the streams or carried by slurry pipes to the empty land north and east of town. Beginning about 1910, several mills such as the Beggs, the Broadwater, and the Miller-Beggs were constructed to reprocess the tailings. The Big Four mill was built along the Union Pacific spur line near Atkinson, at the head of Silver Creek Canyon.

It was also discovered that zinc, a by-product of silver mining, could be sold for a profit if processed properly. Believing that it might have some value in the future, John Daly had asked his miners to save the zinc, once considered worthless. Daly's vision was rewarded when a method of processing zinc was perfected for use in paint, batteries, and medicine. The Grasselli zinc mill was built on a railroad spur north of town in 1909 to process zinc ore from the Daly-Judge Mine, which was producing 500 tons of the metal a month. In 1916–17 the Judge electrolytic mill was built in Deer Valley to process zinc.

In October 1915 the Silver King Coalition Mine was hit by the first strike in its 30-year history when 400 employees walked out in a dispute over the mine's plan to force them to join its workingman's compensation association. Among other concerns, the strikers believed this move would undermine their union's support of the local Miners Hospital and absolve the mining company from any liability for on-the-job injuries. However, the protest was short lived. After 15 days a majority of the strikers voted to return to work, apparently without having won any major concessions from the company.
By 1917 the United States had become involved in the Great War in Europe, which stripped the mines of many of its skilled workers and drove prices higher, both for the mines and the miners. Labor shortages and high costs collaborated to suppress the output of area mines in 1918 and set the stage for a period of serious labor unrest shortly after the war.

Early in 1919, in an effort to control costs, the mines cut wages by 75 cents a day, a significant amount when the average wage was about five dollars. Sam Raddon, the editor of the Park Record, saw trouble coming. “War prices for food stuffs and pre-war wages is a combination that causes unrest and much dissatisfaction,” he wrote. In May 1919 miners and mill workers walked off the job in Park City, forcing the first complete shutdown of the local mines in 50 years. The Salt Lake Tribune reported that the strike involved 800 or 900 men. Among other demands, they wanted a six-hour workday and a pay raise from $4.50 to $5.50 per day. “Every mine and mill in Park City District is idle, and one property, the famous old Ontario, that since its dewatering more than four years ago, has produced many thousands of pounds of ore every week, and given employment to scores of men, has been put out of commission perhaps for all time, because of the strikers edict to call out the pumpmen and the consequent flooding of the expensive lower workings of the property.”

The mining companies refused to budge, blaming the strike on outside agitators—in particular, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), an offspring of the Western Federation of Miners, which one author described as the “wrecking crew” of the labor movement. IWW members, known as Wobblies, were said to sympathize with communist causes and advocate the overthrow of capitalism. “No doubt exists in the minds of outside observers but that the strike was brought about by I.W.W. agitators and their kinsmen, the Bolshevick, a rotten gang whose presence should not be tolerated for a moment in any American gang or city,” said the Salt Lake Mining Review. Many local residents, including Sam Raddon, shared that dislike of “those flag-hating anarchists.”

The mine owners infiltrated union meetings and carefully monitored the debate between IWW members and less radical miners, many of whom were married and could ill afford to stay out of work for long. After about six weeks, the strike collapsed. In late June the miners voted about two to one to return to work, and the mines gradually resumed operations. However, the strike had forced many miners to look for work elsewhere, aggravating the local labor shortage. In July, in an effort to attract qualified miners and mill workers, the Park City mines raised wages by 75 cents a day (ironically, the amount they had earlier cut).

Shipping and Water Problems
The water problems that plagued the mines in Ontario and Empire Canyons also frustrated the miners on the west side of the Park City Mining District, including the employees of Silver King Consolidated. In the spring of 1916, Solon Spiro, the
company’s president and general manager, launched construction of an ambitious tunnel designed to drain the major portion of the company’s property and, it was hoped, provide access to new ore bodies. At the same time, the company started converting the old Grasselli mill into a new concentrating plant and building a 10,000-foot-long aerial tramway to move ore from the mine to the mill. By October the tramway was running, and the tunnel had penetrated 700 feet into the mountain. “The company [tramway] saves 75 per cent of the original cost of shipping by wagon, and more than 85 per cent on the cost of upfreight, besides the inestimable value of being able to keep its transportation system open both winter and summer,” said the Salt Lake Mining Review in January 1917.58

Although the tramway was a success, Spiro’s drain tunnel was a disappointment. By January 1922 it had reached a depth of more than 15,000 feet without passing through substantial ore deposits. It did drain the company’s largely undeveloped properties, but it also drained the pockets of Spiro and the company’s shareholders.59

In the summer of 1917, the Park Record announced the incorporation of a new company, the Park Utah Mining Company. One of its goals was to develop property on the east side of the Park City Mining District. The company acquired several hundred acres of existing claims and worked out agreements to gain access to some of them using tunnels owned by the Ontario and Daly mining companies. The Park Utah immediately began work inside the Ontario Mine’s Keetley Drain Tunnel. The managing director of the new company was George W. Lambourne, who was already the general manager of Judge Mining and Smelting.60

In 1918 Lambourne added another title, general manager of the Daly-West Mining Company, when a group of dissident stockholders installed a new board of directors and slate of officers, all of whom had ties to Judge Mining and Smelting. Although he shunned the limelight and left his name on no public buildings, Lambourne became almost as familiar in Park City mining circles as David Keith, Thomas Kearns, and John Judge at the turn of the century.

A Salt Lake City native, Lambourne had left his first job with Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institute (ZCMI) to take a job as secretary of Daly-West Mining in Park City. After the retirement of John J. Daly, Lambourne became manager of the Daly-West. “A retiring, unassuming man, Mr. Lambourne was virtually unknown in public life, and yet in the past four decades he held a commanding position in the western mining industry,” the Salt Lake Tribune said in a front-page story at the time of his death in August 1935. “He and his associates pioneered the eastern Park City mining district and from small initial holdings developed the Park Utah Consolidated Mines company, which has paid more than $40,000,000 in dividends.”61

In January 1921 the Silver King Coalition’s concentrator was destroyed by a fire believed to have started in the boiler room. The imposing wooden structure on Treasure Hill west of town had been in almost continuous operation since the turn of the century. With no mill to process the lower-grade ores, the company wasted no time in planning a replacement. By April the board of directors had approved plans
for a new $200,000 steel structure using part of the foundation of the old mill. By December the new plant was almost complete.62

In January 1922 the Salt Lake Mining Review revealed the first details of an impending “gigantic merger of big mines” in the Park City Mining District. According to the writer, L. E. Camomile (a former editor of the Park Record), the merger would involve the Park Utah, Daly, Little Bell, Daly-West, and Judge Mines.63

As it turned out, the merger took several years to consummate. The first step was the formation of the Park City Mining and Smelting Company in February 1922 with George Lambourne as president and general manager. Through an exchange of shares, the holdings of Daly-West Mining were conveyed to the new company, and a letter was sent to the stockholders of Judge Mining and Smelting inviting them to join the new enterprise. “The benefits to be derived by the stockholders of the Judge Mining & Smelting Company and by the stockholders of the other companies concerned, in the judgment of your directors, would be numerous and should result in a greatly enhanced value to their holdings,” said the letter.64 By the end of 1922, the Judge properties were also operating under the umbrella of Park City Mining and Smelting.

Meanwhile, there were glowing reports of a “sensational bonanza” at the Park Utah, which was continuing to develop its holdings through the Keetley Drain Tunnel and had built a camp at its mouth.65 The mine’s prospects looked so promising that in 1923 the Union Pacific Railroad built a six-mile spur to the mouth of the tunnel.

Thanks to the emergence of the Park Utah and renewed development at the Silver King Coalition, the Ontario, and the Park City Mining and Smelting properties, production from the Park City Mining District doubled between 1921 and 1922. “Today the old camp is rolling out a larger tonnage of ore than at any previous time in its history,” the Salt Lake Mining Review reported on 15 January 1923.66

The process of consolidating the ownership of Park City’s major mines continued in 1923 when George Lambourne negotiated the purchase of the venerable Ontario, whose drain tunnel he had been using to reach the properties owned by the Park Utah. “Through the purchase of the Ontario the last gap in the chain of mines extending from the portal of the Ontario drain tunnel on the east, to Brighton, in Big Cottonwood canyon on the west—a distance of about ten miles—has been closed and Mr. Lambourne’s dream of years has become a reality,” said the Salt Lake Mining Review on 30 December 1923.67

In the summer of 1925, shareholders approved the merger of Park City Mining and Smelting and Park Utah Mining. The new company, the Park Utah Consolidated Mines Company, controlled about 4,300 contiguous acres of mining claims. Lambourne’s largest remaining competitor, the Silver King Coalition, made a move of its own in May 1924, acquiring its struggling neighbor, the Silver King Consolidated.

The 1920s were a time of prosperity for the major Park City mines. By 1925 the Park Utah was the largest silver-producing company in Utah and in 1926 was Utah’s largest
producer of silver, gold, and zinc and the second largest of lead. At that time Utah was
leading the country in silver production and was second in producing lead. In 1928 a group of investors acquired about 600 acres of largely undeveloped mining claims at the head of Deer Valley, less than a mile east of Park City, and formed the Park City Consolidated Mines Company. Mining began in October, and the following March the Park Record reported that the mine had made one of the richest strikes in recent history. Investors scrambled to get a piece of the action, sending the price of a share of stock from $1.55 to $3.25 in a single day. In the summer of 1930, the Union Pacific and Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroads joined forces to build a one-mile spur to the new mine. In August more than 1,000 people celebrated the completion of the spur, including Utah Governor George H. Dern, who also happened to be the president of the mining company.

The Great Depression

However, by this time there were signs that the giddy prosperity of the 1920s was losing its momentum. The price of silver, which stood at about 65 cents an ounce in 1925, had slipped to less than 53 cents by 1929. Then on 8 January 1930, it plummeted to 44 cents an ounce. By the end of January 1930, the Park Utah, citing an oversupply of silver, lead, and zinc, had reduced its workforce by about 60 percent in its mines and was operating its mill only one shift a day. As the Depression swept the country and demand for metals continued to drop, the news got worse. In February 1931 the price of silver dropped below 26 cents an ounce, the lowest level on record. Zinc prices also reached historic lows, and lead prices were the lowest in 18 years. In May 1931 underground metal mines statewide cut wages by 25 cents a day. In response to the depressed prices, the Park Utah scaled back production even further and in the spring of 1932 suspended all operations except basic maintenance. The Park City Consolidated closed in June 1931, less than a year after the completion of the railroad spur, reopened in the spring of 1932, then closed again at the end of the year after silver prices dropped to 24¼ cents an ounce.

By January 1933 only one mine, the Silver King Coalition, was reporting ore shipments from the Park City Mining District. Unlike their local counterparts, the mine management had decided it could stay in business by temporarily abandoning the production of lower-grade ore and reducing expenses wherever possible. Through such efforts, the mine managed to keep about 500 men steadily employed.

“But to do so, they had to ask the people to take a pretty heavy reduction in wages,” recalled James Ivers, who was then working in the Silver King Coalition company store. “And, as they [mine managers] explained it, ‘If we close down, you’ve got no choice for a job but to move on. If we can stay open, even though the wages are minimal, you at least have a choice. You can move on, or you can stay and take the minimal wages.’” Ivers said the decision to sell the high-grade ore at depressed
prices ultimately cost the company millions of dollars when prices started to recover a few years later. “They mined out an awful lot of good ore during that period of time. . . . But that ore was taken out expressly to keep the mine vital and to keep the people there that needed jobs.”

In spite of the Silver King’s best efforts, the closing of the other local mines sent the town reeling. The Park Record’s delinquent tax list, published in December 1932, was, according to the newspaper, “the longest, by far, ever published in Summit county.” In June 1933 the newspaper announced the downgrading of the local post office under the headline, “Park City Slips to Third Class.” In November 1933 244 unemployed Park City workers went on the payroll of the new federal Civil Works Administration.

By this time the federal government had also begun taking steps to support the price of silver. And in December 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt announced that the government would buy newly mined silver at a price of 64½ cents an ounce. That news sent silver-mining stocks soaring, prompted the Park City Consolidated to resume operations, and induced the Silver King Coalition to increase wages twice in 1934, in January and again in September. By October 1934 silver was selling for more than 53 cents an ounce, its highest level since 1929. However, the Park Utah properties stood pat. “The policy of ‘no production’ during the period of low metal prices has been continued throughout the year,” the company told its shareholders at the end of 1934. “Your management is convinced of the wisdom of this policy and of the ultimate profit to the stockholders of conserving their ore resources until consumption by industry effects a recovery in the market price of the base metals produced by your company.”

Even another increase in federal supports in the spring of 1935, which drove silver prices up to 81 cents an ounce, wasn’t enough to change the minds of the Park Utah’s management. “Are they waiting for it to reach $1.29 before starting up, or, have the officers sold us old stockholders out in the interest of newer mines in which they are interested?” one shareholder wondered in a letter to the Park Record. The explanation, according to Charles Moore, the owner of another Park City mine, was simple: “The public, generally, thinks that 70 per cent to 80 per cent of all mining profits are made from the production of silver and gold; and as a matter of fact, 70 per cent or 80 per cent of all the mining profits are made from the mining of zinc, lead and copper.”

Typically the deeper the mines went, the lower the grade of silver they found, and the more they relied on other metals to make a profit. The 1934 annual report for the Silver King Coalition shows that lead and zinc together contributed more than 55 percent of total receipts from ore sales, and gold another 3 percent, while silver totaled about 41.5 percent. By 1942 the combined value of lead and zinc had climbed to 67 percent of total receipts, while silver had slipped below 30 percent. And by 1947 lead and zinc together accounted for 74 percent of total receipts, while silver was below 23 percent. After World War II, the local mines paid much more attention to the price of lead and zinc than silver.
By the end of 1935, higher demand for lead and zinc, combined with higher silver prices, were enough to induce Park Utah management to resume production. “Events of the past four years have proved the wisdom of those in charge of the company’s affairs in their policy of not wasting its capital resources by producing and marketing its products during a period when the metals could not be sold except at a great sacrifice,” the company told its shareholders in March 1936.80

In the spring of 1936, the Silver King Coalition announced plans to sink a new shaft east of the old California-Comstock shaft in Thaynes Canyon. At the 1,800-foot level, it would connect with the western end of the Spiro Tunnel. The shaft reached the Spiro Tunnel in May 1939, helping ventilate some of the old workings and providing access to new ore bodies.

As the mines began to recover, the miners, now being represented by the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, began to agitate for better working conditions and a greater share of the profits. Union representatives asked for a 50-cent-per-day increase in pay and rigid enforcement of the “collar-to-collar” law that defined an eight-hour shift as beginning when a miner reported to work at the top of the shaft or the mouth of the tunnel. When they couldn’t reach an agreement with mine management, they called a statewide strike. At midnight on 9 October 1936, about 2,500 mine and smelter workers from Park City, Bingham, Eureka, Tooele, and Lark walked off the job. In Park City management prepared for a long strike.81

Workers in Eureka and Tooele returned to work about a month later after management offered them an increase of 25 cents a day. But others, including those from Park City’s major mines, stood firm. In early December there were charges that a professional strikebreaker was recruiting nonunion workers in the nearby farming communities of Kamas and Heber. And when Park City mine operators announced that they would start accepting applications from new workers, more than 300 union members and sympathizers paraded through the business district carrying signs declaring, “50 cents a day or nothing,” “We don’t want scabs,” “Let’s stand together,” and other slogans.82

Watching these developments with more than casual interest was Ephraim Adamson. During the last major labor disruption in 1919, Adamson had been identified by management moles as a strong union man. But this time he had a different role: he was sheriff of Summit County. When a confrontation seemed inevitable, Adamson met with Utah Governor Henry H. Blood to discuss law-enforcement strategy. The showdown came about 2:00 pm on Saturday, 12 December, when an automobile caravan approached Park City with about 125 nonunion men from Heber City. Sheriff Adamson and his deputies met the caravan and checked for weapons before allowing the men to proceed up Park Avenue toward the bottom of Main Street. Waiting at the corner of Main Street and Heber Avenue were an estimated 400 union men. Unable to pass, the caravan stopped. Among the onlookers was a reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune.
Immediately the mass of pickets closed in from both sides. Nonunion men were snatched from the machines and the two first cars were overturned by the pickets. Other caravan members alighted from the cars, to be met with the flying fists of the union men, and to suffer bruised and bleeding heads and faces.

The battle raged in the street for 10 or 15 minutes, then apparently ceased of its own volition. By this time, Sheriff Adamson had arrived with his deputies, but attempts to stop the struggle were futile. The pitched battle renewed and women, lined along the outskirts, shouted encouragement to the fighting union men, imprecations at the Wasatch county contingent.

Minor encounters were noted along the fringes of the pitched battle, which centered around the caravan. After 40 minutes of fighting, the volunteer workers were beaten and staggered down the hill. According to news reports, about 40 men were injured in the fighting.

Fearing another showdown the following day, Adamson deputized about 100 local men and gave them nightsticks and orders to maintain peace under any circumstances. However, there were no other attempts to defy the union pickets.

Meanwhile, union negotiators and mine operators met with Governor Blood in an attempt to break the impasse. And on Tuesday, 15 December, a new proposal was presented to union members. It included the same 25-cent-a-day raise that they had turned down in November and a promise that the mines would consider basing the future wage scale on the price of metals or some other recognized index. And it also offered to give preference in reemployment to the men who had been working at the time the strike began. The miners voted to accept the proposal, and work resumed the following day.

However, relations between miners and management were never quite the same, according to James Ivers. One of the casualties of the dispute was the company store where he used to work. “When the union came along, though, it was a company store, so they insisted it be closed down,” Ivers said. “The Silver King also had a program at that time to better the living conditions, and they were just getting ready to implement a housing project on the lower end of Park City. And the union said, ‘You can’t have that. That’s company housing. We won’t go for it.’” In March 1937 union miners voted to approve a sliding scale where wages were tied to the price of silver, lead, and copper. By the winter of 1937–38, clouds were once again looming on the horizon in the form of low lead and zinc prices. By March 1938 prices had dropped so low that the Park Utah had to restrict production and run its mines only one shift per day.

In April the news got worse. The Silver King Coalition, which, with the exception of the strike, had run continuously through the depths of the Depression, announced that it was closing for an indefinite period. A week later the Park Utah followed suit. The two closures put almost 1,000 men out of work. Of Park City’s three major mines, only the Park City Consolidated kept producing ore. The closures
Park City

lasted about a year. The two mines reopened in the spring of 1939, bolstered by higher prices for lead and zinc and new federal price guarantees for silver.

By the late 1930s, another company, the New Park Mining Company, had begun making ore shipments from the east side of the Park City Mining District. Organized in May 1932, the New Park was a consolidation of several old companies, including the Park Galena Mining Company, the Star of Utah Mining Company and the Mayflower Mines Corporation. To develop new ore bodies, the New Park began extending the Mayflower tunnel toward the Park Galena. Like some of the other mines on the east side of the district, the Mayflower tunnel started to uncover ore with an unusually high gold content. “The gold content has risen until now its value is greater than that of the silver,” the New Park told its shareholders in the spring of 1940. In the summer of 1941, the Union Pacific Railroad extended service, building a two-mile spur from the line already serving the Park Utah’s Ontario Tunnel to the north. By the early 1940s, production from the New Park rivaled that of the Park Utah and the Silver King Coalition. By the end of World War II, the New Park was regularly shipping more ore than all the other major local mines combined.88

World War II created an unusual dilemma for Park City mines. While the war opened up new markets for their metals, the War Production Administration and other government agencies set the price they could command. War industries and the armed services also took away many experienced miners, creating a serious labor shortage. “At one period employment was down to 55 percent of maximum employment,” the Silver King Coalition told its shareholders in March 1943. In the fall of 1943, soldiers were assigned to work at the Silver King Coalition, the Park Utah, and the New Park. Nevertheless, by the end of 1944, Utah lead production had dropped to 65 percent of prewar levels.89

World War II and the Late Twentieth Century

While some segments of the Utah economy flourished in the years following World War II, metal mining was not one of them. According to one report, the labor shortage was more acute at the end of 1946 than at any time during the war. Conditions in the mines and mining camps apparently were driving away would-be miners. It took another year before the Park City mines began to report an adequate supply of workers.80

In April 1948 five Utah mining companies, including all of Park City’s major mines, announced they were terminating contracts with the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers because the union had not filed affidavits stating its officers were not members of the Communist Party. Two months later the 700-member Park City Local Number 99 voted to withdraw from the union and negotiate its own contracts. According to the Park Record, both owners and miners remarked on the “unusual harmony” during subsequent negotiations for a new contract. In April 1949 the Park City local voted to join the Progressive Metalworkers’ Council.91
If, with the benefit of hindsight, you picked a year when Park City began its steady slide from prosperous mining camp to potential ghost town, you might well choose 1949. Certainly the town struggled in the 1930s, but so did the rest of the country. However, in 1949 when the rest of the country was feeling the euphoria of a postwar economic boom, Park City started to slip behind.

The first hint came in early March, when prices for lead and zinc started to drop in national markets. With lead and zinc ores now generating 75 to 80 percent of the income at the Silver King Coalition and Park Utah, it was an ominous sign. By the third week of June, both mines had started to curtail production, putting about 160 men out of work. By the end of the month, the Silver King Coalition, Park Utah, and New Park had suspended operations entirely, bringing total layoffs at area mines to 875. Many of these men would never collect another paycheck from Park City mines.

Mine spokesmen blamed the layoffs on the disparity between wages and metal prices. “Employees, because of declining values for lead and zinc, were asked to take a $2.50 a day basic wage cut,” the Salt Lake Tribune reported. “They declined to accept the proposal, contending living costs would not permit pay cuts.”

By September metal prices had recovered enough to convince management at the New Park to resume production, but the Silver King and Park Utah retained only a skeleton crew for maintenance work. It was another year before both the Silver King and Park Utah were producing ore again, and even then with only a fraction of their former workforce. The Silver King, which had employed about 400 people in 1949, hired back fewer than 200.

Production at the Park Utah and Silver King was interrupted in the summer of 1951 by labor troubles. And in the summer of 1952, a wage dispute and low metal prices combined to close both mines yet again. Mining officials blamed the low prices on unfair competition from foreign imports. Though local residents had no way of knowing it, after August 1952 the Silver King aerial tramway would never deliver another bucket of ore to the turn-of-the-century tipple on Park Avenue.

That December, according to the Employment Security Office, employment in Park City reached its lowest ebb in eight years. “However, dropping employment was not reflected in increasing unemployment due to the fact that many people were leaving the area as fast as jobs were terminated,” said a story in the Summit County Bee.

The Park Utah and Silver King were still closed in May 1953 when shareholders of the two companies approved a proposal to merge them into a new corporation, United Park City Mines Company. Combining the two properties gave United Park 8,700 acres of contiguous mining claims. “United Park City Mines Co. also has another asset, the good will and the buoyant hopes of the former employees of both Park Utah and Silver King Coalition,” said the Salt Lake Tribune.

Unfortunately, neither the merger nor the buoyant hopes of former employees could overcome the impact of depressed metal prices. As 1953 became 1954, the properties of United Park City Mines stayed closed. Only the New Park managed to keep producing ore.
In March 1954, with Park City showing no signs of righting itself, the Summit County Commission appealed for help in an open letter to Utah’s congressional delegation. The letter painted a grim picture of life in the old mining camp. Since the 1941–42 school year, it said, the enrollment in the local schools had dropped from 1,052 to 449. More than 200 properties had been sold to the county for taxes in 1953, and another 48 were due to be sold in 1954. “Many of these properties are homes on which, because of the closing of the mines and no income, the owners have been unable to pay taxes. Many of these homes are vacant and rapidly going to ruin. Others are being lived in but the occupants pay no rent.” The commissioners blamed the situation on the national government’s willingness to “permit the influx of low cost foreign metals practically duty free.” They called for a revamping of the tariff structure to protect domestic industries “rather than to enrich foreign producers.”

That refrain would be repeated many times in the 1950s and early 1960s. Every president from Harry Truman to Lyndon Johnson was asked to support the lead-zinc industry, either by imposing tariffs on imports, supporting domestic production, or both. But nothing they did could satisfy their critics or turn the domestic industry around.

United Park City Mines resumed production on a limited basis in September 1954. About 200 men were put to work at the Keetley unit, producing ore through the mouth of the Ontario Number-Two Drain Tunnel. This meant that the two largest surviving mining companies in the Park City District, United Park and New Park, were shipping most of their production from the east side of the district in Wasatch County. It also meant that the mine portals were just as accessible to workers from the nearby towns of Kamas and Heber City as those from Park City. And, in fact, the mines were attracting a growing proportion of their workers from nearby communities in Summit and Wasatch Counties. According to a 1956 newspaper story, about two-thirds of the New Park’s 290-man workforce lived in Wasatch County and the Kamas Valley.

After suffering several consecutive years of losses in the late 1950s, officials of United Park City Mines began to look for creative ways to pump money into their mining operation. The new bonanza, they decided, was recreation. What if they could turn their spectacular mountain property into a year-round playground for skiers, golfers, and horseback riders? Encouraged by the results of a feasibility study, they applied for a low-interest loan from the federal Area Redevelopment Administration. In August 1962 they were notified that their loan application had been approved. Within days men with chain saws and bulldozers were at work on the mountains west of town, clearing trails and lift lines for the new recreation area. On 21 December 1963, Park City Mayor William P. Sullivan cut a ribbon officially opening Treasure Mountains Resort. “Park City Dead? Not Yet, Podner,” said a headline in the Salt Lake Tribune as the resort prepared to open.

Meanwhile, the management of the New Park had signed a contract leasing its Mayflower Mine to the Hecla Mining Company of Wallace, Idaho. In the spring of 1962, Hecla began construction of a semiautomated $650,000 mill to process ore.
from the mine. Thanks to the discovery of new ore deposits that yielded substantial quantities of gold and silver, Hecla managed to keep the Mayflower running for another decade, employing as many as 200 people. However, the ore eventually dwindled, and Hecla terminated its lease at the end of 1972. The mine’s surface rights were sold as a potential recreational development in the spring of 1973.

On the other side of the mountain, United Park City Mines was having problems with cash flow at its new recreation area. As the 1960s came to a close, it still hadn’t made money. “Salt Lake [skiers] took to Park City’s ski resort great,” said Jim Ivers, who was named president of United Park City Mines in 1965. “So on Saturdays the hill would be quite crowded. Sundays, it would drop off to about half that. And the other five days there was nobody up here.”

To bring midweek skiers to the mountain, Ivers said, Park City needed to become a destination resort. Unfortunately, the mining company was unable to develop lodging on its own. Under the terms of the 1962 financing package used to create the resort, 75 percent of the proceeds of any property sales had to go toward paying off the federal loan and two large investors. So the mining company started looking for someone to buy the resort, someone who could develop the mountain and build overnight accommodations. That “someone” turned out to be Royal Street Land Company of New Orleans.

In a meeting in April 1970, the mining company’s board of directors granted Royal Street an option to purchase the recreational facilities for about $6 million. Another significant piece of news came out of that same meeting: The board agreed to lease all its mining properties and facilities to a partnership composed of two large shareholders, Anaconda Company and American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO), which together owned about 31 percent of the mining company’s stock. Shareholders approved both transactions at the company’s annual meeting in July.

During the next five years, the partnership, under the name Park City Ventures, spent almost $20 million on the project, upgrading the underground workings and building a new 750-ton-a-day mill at the site of the Ontario Number-Three Shaft. After the opening of the mill in the spring of 1975, the mine increased its workforce to about 350 people.

But the prosperity was short lived. On Friday, 13 January 1978, the mine announced it was suspending operations. Bill Norem, general manager of Park City Ventures, told the Park Record that severe problems with groundwater and soft rock had caused production costs to skyrocket. For the first time in more than a century, the Park City Mining District was completely shut down. Hardest hit by the closure were the communities of Kamas and Heber City, home to most of the 350 workers. Also reeling were the partners in Park City Ventures, who had lost more than $26 million on the project since 1970.

A Canadian company, Noranda Mines Limited, took over the lease from Park City Ventures in August 1979. However, Noranda had no more success than its predecessor. In May 1981 it stopped producing ore and laid off 155 workers because of
**Park City**

“insufficient production levels and inadequate metal prices.” Two months later the abandoned Silver King Coalition tipple on Park Avenue burned in a spectacular fire. Exploration and development at the Ontario continued until April 1982, when Noranda terminated its lease with United Park City Mines. After a spectacular run of more than 110 years, mining had apparently run its course in the Park City Mining District.

**Park City Today**

In December 1995 the Ontario Mine opened to tourists, with interpretive displays on the surface and guided tours underground. Although the exhibits attracted almost 500,000 visitors in four years, company officials announced their closure in November 1999, citing poor attendance during the winter months.

Today a skeleton crew still performs routine maintenance in the mines, particularly in the Judge and Spiro Drain Tunnels that provide drinking water for the residents of Park City. In town there are few clues to the industry that was its lifeblood for so many years. Skiing, not mining, now drives Park City’s economy. United Park City Mines is now working to cover or remove many waste dumps and tailing piles so the land can be developed for luxury homes. But venture into the mountains west of town, and you can still find reminders of the industry that brought so much wealth: the timber skeleton of the California Comstock, the tattered hulk of the Silver King mill, the rusting steel towers that once carried ore to the tipple on Park Avenue. For that matter, just walk down Main Street in Salt Lake City and look for the names of Park City’s mining magnates on the stately old buildings.