

THE WOLCOTT

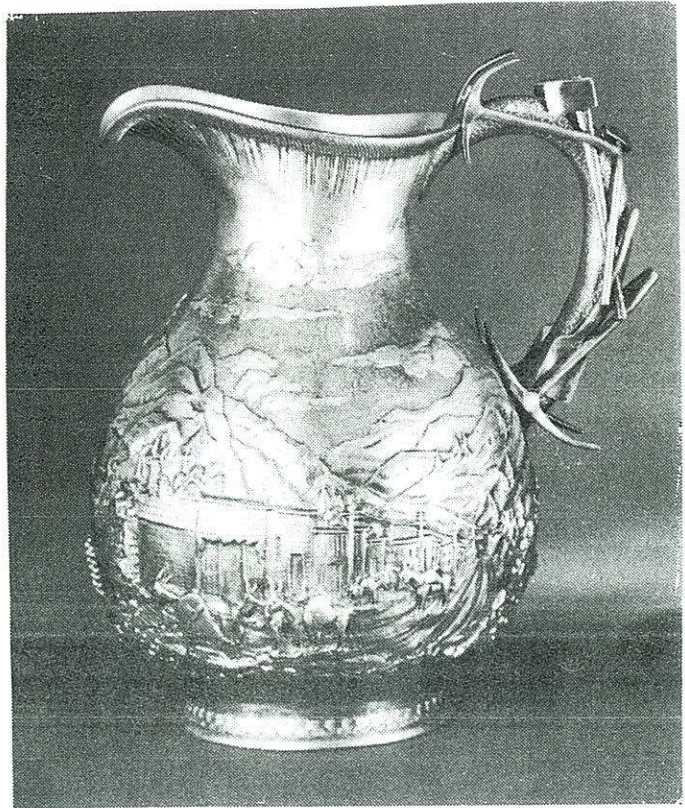
PITCHER AND TRAY

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Few mining artifacts are more attractive and precious than those made of solid silver, especially if the silver metal itself was taken from a known mine. The Wolcott Pitcher and Tray (shown here) are among the most beautiful and fascinating of such objects. Although these two items can't exactly be called "collectibles"--the Colorado School of Mines, which owns them, is not likely to put them on the market--they still cause collectors to salivate uncontrollably when gazing into the exhibit case at the School of Mines Geology Museum in Golden.

The story of these extraordinary artifacts goes back to the famous mining district of Creede, Colorado. It was there that Colorado's last big silver boom began in 1889, when N.C. Creede staked his claim on the Holy Moses mine. The Last Chance mine was found two years later, in August of 1891, by two impoverished prospectors from Salida. They sold the claim for a few thousand dollars three months later and moved on. The new owners included Jacob F. Sanders of Leadville.

Sanders was a good friend of Edward Oliver Wolcott (1848-1905), who had been elected a U.S. senator from Colorado in 1888. Wolcott had been born in Massachusetts, and moved to Colorado in 1871 to practice law in Georgetown. In 1879 he entered politics and moved to Denver, continuing his activities in the mining business. Between his law practice and his mining and smelting properties he eventually became a millionaire, and lived with his brother, Henry, in a Victorian Denver mansion called "Wolhurst."



Sanders invited Wolcott to share his interest in the Last Chance mine, an opportunity which Wolcott seized and never regretted. The Last Chance soon became the second largest producer of silver in Creede, yielding over \$1,600,000 in its first year.

Wolcott was understandably grateful to Sanders for this good fortune, and decided to show his gratitude by having two presentation pieces created from silver bullion from the Last Chance mine. The bullion was shipped to the factory of S. Kirk & Son, Baltimore, Maryland, where it was melted down and alloyed with copper (11 parts silver to 1 part copper, or .917 fine, just a little under the .925 fine of "Sterling" silver). The tray was worked from a single cast sheet weighing 85.7 troy ounces. Hand-chased repoussé around the rim depicts Colorado mining and mountain scenes, most of them probably showing the Last Chance mine. The pitcher was hand-raised (by hammering) from two flat cast sheets weighing a total of 75.2 troy ounces, the two finished halves then being soldered together. The decorations, as on the tray, are all hand-chased, depicting mining scenes at Creede. The mining tools on the handle were probably made separately and soldered on. The inscription on the tray reads:



MADE OF
SILVER from the LAST CHANCE MINE
CREEDE CAMP COLORADO
AND PRESENTED TO
JACOB F. SANDERS

With grateful appreciation of the generosity
which prompted him to divide his interest in the Mine
with his friend
Edw'd O. Wolcott

The Wolcott pitcher and tray, together weighing over 13 troy *pounds* of solid silver, were eventually acquired by Robert E. and Wilma E. Nye, who presented them to the Colorado School of Mines. The Geology Museum (Berthoud Hall) is open 9:00 to 4:00 Monday through Saturday and 1:00 to 4:00 on Sunday. An exhibit of mining artifacts, safety lamps, ore cars and so on is included within the museum and is worth seeing as well (not to mention a fine mineral collection). The photographs of the Wolcott pitcher and tray are courtesy of the Colorado School of Mines.