



# INDEPENDENCE MINE

W. S. STRATTON,  
OWNER

*Victor, Colo.*

Brian Levine

## SYZYGY GOLD MINING CO.

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A company for historians and collectors who want a share of America's mining past. Whether that be stock certificates, USGS publications, maps, prospectuses, photos, ore specimens, mining hardware, directories -- whatever history has to offer.

### The Portland: Colorado's Richest Gold Mine by Brian Levine, Syzygy Gold Mining Company

So you're a collector of mining artifacts. Carbide lamps. Assay equipment. Stock certificates. And the like. You've got the date parameters. Manufacturer types and specifications. Condition requirements. Signatures you're absolutely looking for.

That's all fine -- and necessary. But did you know there are collectors out there who are so specialized they only acquire artifacts pertaining to a single mining district, property, or person? Right now, there's quite a group of people getting more and more interested in the Portland Mine, Colorado's richest gold property -- in Colorado's greatest gold camp.

The Portland claim was originally registered on January 22, 1892. A triangular piece of land that took up only one-tenth of an acre of Cripple Creek's renown Battle Mountain. By 1900, the Portland Company had grown to encompass over 183 contiguous acres in Cripple Creek's richest sector. In that year, practically 61,000 tons of gold ore had been raised, milling out to over 118,000 troy ounces with a gross value of more than \$2,350,000 (gold then valued at \$20.65 an ounce). And that wasn't even the Portland's peak year.

It wasn't long after this that the Portland became known as Colorado's greatest gold producer.

Everyone who was anyone in the Cripple Creek District was associated with the Portland in one way or another. James Burns and James Doyle were the original discoverers (and, Burns the company's first president). Winfield Scott Stratton -- Colorado's wealthiest and most benevolent gold baron -- owned one-third of the Portland Company's shares. Irving Howber, El Paso County's first county clerk, became one of the Portland's most influential directors. And the Carltons, through the Golden Cycle Corporation, ultimately gained control of this pinnacle of Colorado gold mining.

In its 40 years of steady activity, the Portland produced close to 3.5 million troy ounces. A long production period for most gold mines. A period full of history not only important to the mining world, but to the entire state of Colorado. The Portland's wealth helped build the Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek Railroad (known as the "Short Line"), made millionaires of at least 5 mining men, got one man elected governor of Colorado, and significantly contributed not only to the longevity of the Cripple Creek District, but to the reputation of Colorado Springs as the financial center of America's "Greatest Gold Camp."

Today, the Portland's legend lives on. Out there in the vast arena of collecting are people who specifically search out Portland related items. Their interest is only that of reconstructing and preserving the history of the great Portland Mine. But what can those items be?

Well, the most obvious is The Portland Gold Mining Company stock certificate. These used to be obtainable, but have, over the years, disappeared, and become rather difficult to acquire. They are attractive certificates, large-size, unique format, but rarely seen with an issue date before 1900.

Then, of course, there are the company's checks and letterheads. These occasionally come on the market, and sometimes have the signatures of James Burns, Irving Howber, Frank Peck, or William Lennox -- all important figures in the development of the company.

Much more scarce are the company's annual reports. Especially those between 1898 and 1903. These are thick publications filled with superb A. J. Harlan photographs, both surface and underground. They also contain detailed maps of the Portland property, vein systems, shafts and driftwork, and reports by the president, superintendent, and engineer. Quite a volume of history.

But not nearly as much as the original meeting minutes of the company's boards of directors. These are extremely rare. Only 10 different ledger books are known to exist. They cover in microscopic detail the inner workings of the Portland Company. The ousting of James Burns as president. The slow change in the company's "open door" employee policy to that of the "card system" invoked by the Mine Owners Association. The crucial financing of the Cripple Creek Deep Drainage Tunnel Project. And a thousand other corporate and political decisions and maneuvers.

Then there are the special one ounce gold ingots put out by the Portland Company. in July 1910 for the dedication of its new 300-ton per day cyanide mill. Fourteen of these ingots were made from the first gold brick produced at the mill, and each individually engraved for directors and officers of the Portland Company. Only one has ever been seen. But that doesn't stop a number of collectors from pursuing the other thirteen.

The Portland Mine definitely has a following. One with a strong historical base. Portland articles in "Mining Investor," "Mining Congress Journal," "Mining Reporter," "Mining Science," "Mining American," "Mining and Metallurgy," American Institute of Mining Engineers, Colorado Scientific Society, and other are regularly being sought. Anything at all written about the Portland is in high demand. The more that's known about the Portland makes the mine all the more intriguing.

Even the B.P.O.E 367 medallion with a piece of high-grade Portland gold ore dangling from its centerpiece is a highly prized item. You talk about specialized! You can't get much more specialized than collecting historical material from just one gold mine -- even if it is Colorado's richest.

(If you would like more information on the Portland Mine, write Syzygy Gold Mining Company, PO Box 465, Victor, CO 80860-0465 to obtain details on the soon to be published book, THE PORTLAND: COLORADO'S RICHEST GOLD MINE.)

