



INDEPENDENCE MINE

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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.

Tracing a Share of Mining History by Brian Levine, Syzygy Gold Mining Company

Tracing down property represented by a bond or share certificate can be enlightening, and almost as rewarding as discovering a gold lode. Take THE SYLVANITE MINING AND MILLING COMPANY certificate for example. This one came across my desk in a lot of Colorado mining material I'd seen before and was able to easily identify. Not so with the SYLVANITE. I'd never seen it before and had absolutely no idea where the property it represented was located.

That meant I had to do some work. Which was fine. But, as many of you know, research doesn't always fulfill its promise. In the case of the SYLVANITE, though, I uncovered quite a rich strike.

After a few hours of thumbing through Colorado mining directories and Government Printing Office publications, I found the SYLVANITE to be located on Elk Mountain in the Ruby District of Gunnison County. Great! Now the SYLVANITE was no longer one of those lost fragments of history. But that was only the beginning.

I looked over the certificate again, and although it was disappointingly plain, it had on it the signature of William Andrews Clark. What a surprise! I knew Clark was one of the major copper barons of Butte, Montana, but I didn't know much else about him. So, I decided to do some research on him.

What I discovered was Clark was quite the "plunger." A cold, calculating, yet brilliant capitalist who had gambled with enormous sums of money. Clark, though wasn't whimsical. He didn't invest in any venture he hadn't thoroughly studied. But when he finally decided upon a scheme, he plunged into it on a grand scale.

Clark was born into a relatively poor farming family on January 8, 1839 in Fayette County, Pennsylvania. Farming held no interest for Clark, so in 1856 he embarked on a law education at Wesleyan College in Iowa. Shortly thereafter, Clark taught for several years in Missouri. But that, too, didn't suit Clark's ambition. Gold, however, did. He joined the rush to Colorado, and initiated his long mining career.

In the late 1860s, Clark was attracted to the Montana gold camps. He worked a number of placer claims, but soon realized they wouldn't make him rich. He sold these claims and entered into the freighting business. In 1869, he was emersed in a wholesale and retail merchandising business at Deer Lodge, specializing in the buying and selling of gold dust. Profits from this business allowed him to open the First National Bank of Deer Lodge in 1872.

That same year, Clark looked over Butte -- at the time, an almost completely abandoned mining camp. He purchased the Original, Mountain Chief, Gambetta, and Clousa mines. All these produced rich copper ores. But they were highly refractory. Clark searched several years for a process that would make these ores profitable. In 1877, he found that process and the man who had invented it: Colorado's Nathaniel P. Hill. In 1878, Clark and Hill formed the Colorado and Montana Company (later known as the Colorado Smelting and Mining Company), and opened a reduction plan at Silver Bow Creek, near Butte.

The Colorado and Montana Company made fortunes for both Clark and Hill. Clark used his wealth to acquire more mining properties in Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. One such property was the United Verde, around which he built the town of Jerome, Arizona. Another was THE SYLVANITE MINING AND MILLING COMPANY. The Sylvanite proved to be only a moderately productive operation, while the United Verde ultimately employed 1500 and produced an annual profit of \$10 million for Clark.

Clark is said to have bought his way into public office in 1900. While serving in the U. S. Senate, he built a 131-room mansion on Fifth Avenue in New York City. He died in February 1925, leaving most of his \$200 million estate to his family.

Now, that information certainly made THE SYLVANITE MINING AND MILLING COMPANY certificate a much more attractive item. If not decorative, definitely rich in history.

