

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC **Silverton Historic District**

AND/OR COMMON **Silverton Historic District**

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER **on Route 550**

CITY, TOWN

**Silverton**

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

\_\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**3rd**

STATE

**Colorado**

CODE

**08**

COUNTY

**San Juan**

CODE

**111**

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <b>town</b>

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME **San Juan County Commissioner**

STREET & NUMBER **County Courthouse, Green Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Silverton**

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

**Colorado**

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Registry of Deeds; San Juan County Courthouse**

STREET & NUMBER **Green Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Silverton**

STATE

**Colorado**

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE **Colorado State Inventory**

DATE **in progress**

\_\_\_FEDERAL \_\_\_STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS **1880 Gaylord Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Denver**

STATE

**Colorado**

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The town of Silverton is situated in the center of San Juan County, Colorado. It was this location which made the city the center of the rich mining district and brought to the town the prosperity as exemplified by its homes and institution buildings.

Prospecting had been conducted in this region of San Juan County, as early as the 1860's. However, it was not until 1871 that the first profitable vein was located in Arrastra Gulch, just east of the town, and caused the influx of other prospectors. This early find was silver ore. Progress was rapid and Silverton by 1874 was organized into a township. Prosperity continued and by the turn of the century, Silverton became a bustling community of 3,000 people. It was at this point that institutional buildings began to be built. These buildings remain and are the central focus of the town's architecture.

The Imperial Hotel (photo #1) sits at the northwest corner of Green and 12th Streets. One of the oldest of the major structures in the town, the Imperial Hotel was constructed about 1882. It is a three-story building with mansard roof. Dormers are situated around the third floor of the building. This impressive hotel, the largest of the three in Silverton, was billed "the finest hotel on the western slope except the La Veta, at Gunnison" by the builders, the Thompson Brothers. Presently on the first level of the building are a restaurant located in the hotel as well as various shops which occupies rented space. There is a glass facade (storefront in character) which runs the length of the southeast elevation.

The County Courthouse (photo #2) sits at Green and 15th Streets. The county courthouse is one of the more ornate buildings in Silverton. It is a two-story building topped by a clock tower and cupola which has a gold painted dome. There are marble floors throughout the interior of the building. The hallways converge at a fountain under the tower, which stands exposed from first floor to tower. The staircase rises, then circles, one to either side, to the second floor. There are county offices located throughout the building.

The San Juan County Jail (photo #3) sits to the north of the county courthouse on the same block. Apparently built as a one-story structure in 1909, two-stories were added making a three-story building. Fashioned of brick in common bond, the jail has entrances on the south and east side. Small porches are located at each entrance.

City Hall (photo #4) sits on the southwest corner of Green and 15th Streets. A two-story brick building, with a bell tower, the City Hall is not presently occupied. Having fallen into disrepair in recent years, plans have been formulated for its purchase and restoration by the San Juan County Historical Society. The building is not open to the public. City Hall was built in 1908.

(Continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1874-1920

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Silverton, Colorado was the center of an extensive mining district which stretched across the northern half of San Juan County. Established in 1874, by 1879 the population of the town had multiplied to 3,000 people. The town was founded in a rich silver mining district, (from which the town received its name). This region was later found to be rich in other ores including gold, lead and copper. The prosperity of the town continued and numerous buildings, organizations, churches, and other towns were the result of the district's prosperity. Between 1882 and 1918, the district had produced more than 65 million dollars in precious ores.

Today Silverton is a sleepy community in a valley surrounded by mountains. The major industry remains mining. The mining district has not seen massive intrusions though a number of the locations of former prosperous towns have been lost, primarily because of the decline in mining. The district retains much of the rustic character which is so significant to its landmark designation. Access to Silverton is made by U.S. Route 550 from both the north and south.

### HISTORY

Silverton, Colorado and the historic mining district surrounding it is one of the great silver-producing areas of the Trans-Mississippi West. This region between 1882 and 1918 alone produced more than 65 million dollars in precious metals.

Silverton owes its greatest importance in the early years to silver. In the early 1870's, miners searched the region for gold but no one found anything but silver. However, after they became convinced that silver was worthwhile, they started extensive operations in the region which proved to be a virtual treasure house. Before the signing of the Brunot Treaty with the Utes in 1873, a number of miners penetrated the region but many of them were run off, or killed by the Indians. In 1871 and 1872, while the treaty was being negotiated, miners worked their way over Stony Pass and began staking claims. By the end of 1873, nearly 4,000 claims had been recorded and most of the big mines had been discovered.

(Continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 530

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>13</u>	<u>266790</u>	<u>4188540</u>	B	<u>13</u>	<u>264990</u>	<u>4186820</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<u>13</u>	<u>266100</u>	<u>4187660</u>	D	<u>13</u>	<u>265780</u>	<u>4189490</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the landmark is coterminous with the boundary of the city of Silverton as shown on the USGS Map Quadrangle entitled Silverton, Colorado, dated 1955, 7.5 minute series, except that at the south corner of the intersection of 10th and Green Streets the landmark boundary turns northwest and proceeds approximately 700 feet to a point of intersection with the city boundary.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Joseph Scott Mendinghall, Historian; original form prepared by Ray Matteson

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service</u>	<u>12/10/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L Street NW.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C. 20240</u>

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) NATIONAL        STATE       

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

LOCAL	Landmark Designated: <u>      </u> date
DATE	<u>Carolyn Harris</u> 12-22-75 Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys
DATE	Boundary Formed: <u>      </u> date
DATE	Acting Director, OHP <u>      </u> date

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Silverton Historic District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Congregational Church (photo #5) sits on the southeast corner of Reese and 11th Streets. Built around 1878 Congregational Church is one of the oldest of existing buildings in Silverton. Constructed of clapboard the church has small dimensions. On the northeast side, the building faces east, is a spire which is topped by a cross. The entrance which opens into a small foyer is located beside the spire. To the south side is the parsonage also a wooden building. The church has a gabled roofline which runs lengthwise. The church still holds services.

There are a number of other institutional buildings which date back to the early 20th century. Though far less impressive as the above mentioned structures these other buildings aid in the representation and interpretation of Silverton. These buildings include the Carnegie Library, constructed in the first decade of the 20th century with funds donated by Andrew Carnegie, the Avon Hotel, a less important back district hotel on the corner of Empire and 10th Streets. Other churches include the Catholic Church, corner of Reese and 10th Streets and the newer Church of Christ. In a community like Silverton, some distance from other towns over difficult terrain, fraternal orders played an important role in the community. The American Legion Building, located on the corner of Green and 11th Streets, a wooden two-story structure fulfilled the need for fraternal camaraderie.

On the other hand, homes in Silverton were rather modest. These homes, in many cases, retain this pioneer/pro prospector flavor. There are some few examples of the wealth of the community. One splendid example exists in the Hamner House.

The Hamner House (photo #6) sits on Reese Street between 8th and 9th Streets. Constructed by a bank president during the late 19th century, this house best exemplifies the money that was produced in the Silverton Historic District. A two and one half story clapboard building, it is presently under restoration by the owner of a local business. Built in Victorian style, the building has lintels over the windows and there is a bay on the first story. Characteristic gingerbread has been removed but the house is being returned to its original appearance.

Prospector's House (photo #7) sits on the southwest corner of Reese and 11th Streets opposite the Congregational Church. A small clapboard structure of two stories, Prospector's House is one of the more typical houses of mine workers. Built during the 1880's, the house has an entrance on the left (southwest) side, while there is a rear porch side entrance just off the kitchen with a rear chimney. The house is topped by a gabled roof which runs the length of the house.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Silverton Historic District  
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

By 1873, extensive mining had begun in the district and by the subsequent year towns had risen all across the district. With the influx of men, the towns of Howardsville, Eureka, Animas Forks, Mineral Point and Silverton began to prosper.

According to an official plat of the township, Silverton was officially organized as a town in September 1874. The first newspaper was established in July 1875; the second appeared in 1889. A Hook and Ladder County was organized in 1878. By 1879, Silverton had a population of about 3,000 people.

Likewise, in the other towns, signs of prosperity appeared. Schools were built, newspapers organized and shops were opened for business.

One of the most important aspects of life in the Colorado mining community was the church. In 1878, the Congregationalist Church organized and erected its first church. Shortly, thereafter, the Catholics built their church, then the Methodists, and finally the Episcopalians.

Much of the Silverton social life centered around the many fraternal organizations which flourished during the 1880's and 1890's. Among these were the Masons, the Order of the Eastern Star, the Woodmen of the World, Women of Woodcraft, Rathbone Sisters, Fraternal Order of Eagles, and the Silverton Miners Union which had a membership of 1,300 people. In 1889, the Silverton Jockey Club was organized.

Railroad service was first initiated to Silverton in 1881 and service began in July, 1882. The first railroad was the Denver and Rio Grande Narrow Gauge Railroad which extended its tracks from Durango up the Animas Canyon along treacherous mountain ledges and along the to Silverton. It was the Durango-Silverton connection which made possible the construction of other lines. The first line built after the Denver-Rio Grande was the Silverton Railroad. This was to be followed by the Silverton Gladstone, completed in 1889 and the Silverton Northern Railroad, incorporated in September 1895.

Silverton and its surrounding towns continued to prosper well into the 20th century. In 1910, Silverton had a population of 2,153. It was a railroad supply center for the other cities of the district. Annual production of ore exceeded 2 million dollars.

(Continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Silverton Historic District

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

---

Gradually the mines of the district were exhausted and the district began to decline. Silverton, likewise, declined and no major construction, other than minor motels, has occurred.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Silverton Historic District

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Brown, Robert, Empire of Silver, (Caxton Publishers: Caldwell Idaho) 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_, Ghost Towns of Colorado (Caxton Publishers: Caldwell Idaho)  
1967.

Cooper, Raymond, A History of San Juan County (unpublished, n.d.)

Griswald, Don and Jean, Colorado's Century of Cities (Griswald-Mazulla:  
Denter) 1958.

Olsen, Mary Ann, The Silverton Story (Beaber Printing Co.: Cortez, Colorado)  
1962.

Osterwald, Doris B., Cinders and Smoke (Western: Lakewood, Colorado).

Wolle, Muriel S., Stampede to Timberline: The Ghose Towns and Mining Camps  
of Colorado (Wolle: Boulder, Colorado) 1959.