

HISTORY

Placer gold was discovered in the Central City area in 1859 near the mouth of Chicago Creek and shortly thereafter the first vein was discovered near the present site of Central City. By 1864 there were 60 stamp mills and 30 arrastras operating in the Central City area between Nederville and Black Hawk.

There have been four stages in the development of the Clay County Mine. The original mine consisted of a central shaft and about 3,000 feet of workings. This main shaft goes down seven levels, but apparently most ore was produced above the third level in this phase of mining, which was all on what is now referred to as the Centre Vein. It is estimated that between 1891 and 1917 precious metals of a total value of \$600,000 - \$700,000 were shipped (with gold near \$20/oz). Cut-off grade was reported to have been about 0.5 oz/ton Au. The mine was closed by the adverse economic climate for gold following World War I.

In 1932 there was a rejuvenation of interest in precious metals and the Gold Ridge tunnel was driven, starting about 200 ft. above and to the southwest of the present decline entrance and millsite. This also drifted on the Centre Vein and appears to have been seeking the free-milling gold of the near-surface zone. Ore was produced sporadically until 1956. Most of this work occurred beyond the area of present interest, except for a shaft sunk from near the tunnel mouth. This shaft connects with the old workings on the third level and also with the new decline. It is open above the decline. Several fine specimens of free gold were taken from the upper parts of this shaft, some now residing in the Smithsonian Institute.

It is not yet known what the old miners found in the lower levels of the Clay County shaft, but they had enough faith in the vein to extend the National Tunnel from Clear Creek Valley (3,500 feet to the north) to connect with the Clay County workings at the sixth level, about 470 feet below the surface. It is this tunnel which drains and keeps dry the present mine. The National Tunnel was driven from the northwest, and it appears that this was the cause of discovery of the West Vein. It is known that ore was stope-mined north of the present workings, either on this vein or on some entirely new vein. When the old Clay County shaft was encountered, development continued on the fourth level where a crosscut was driven to the West Vein. Some ore was removed before 1942, when the government virtually stopped all precious metal mining to free workers for the war effort. National Tunnel was blocked by a stope collapse near its mouth and was never reopened.

The present phase of work has centered on the driving of a trackless decline at approximately a 20% grade from a point between the old Clay County and the Gold ridge shafts. It was planned that the decline would parallel an unmined sector of the Centre Vein, but almost immediately it intersected what is now referred to as the West Vein at a high-grade ore shoot. The real Centre Vein and another East Vein were later intersected also. To date, 2,500 feet of tunnel have been completed, with crosscuts to

In addition, 127,300 tons of ore are categorized as indicated reserves in extending the known ore shoots 250 feet below the National Tunnel.

Possible category ore reserves are much larger. The adjacent Pittsburg Mine was exploited to over a 2,000 foot depth. Furthermore, only 1,000 feet of the vein system is enclosed by the decline and this only incompletely. Old pits and shafts mark the continuation of the vein trace for twice again its distance. Additionally, there are several other known vein systems on the property.

An exploratory mining program carried out in 1985 preceded by a diamond drilling and jack leg drilling program in 1984, indicates that there exists a potential of up to 5,000 tons of high-grade ore capping the West Vein to the depth of 50 feet from the surface. Based on over 40 channel and bulk samples, the grade ranges 2.5 – 9.876 oz/ton in gold and 7.41 - 30.86 oz/ton in silver over a true width of 0.4 - 4 feet.