

Four Stages in Idaho's Mining Development

Number 4

These stages usually form a temporal sequence (although two or three of them often overlap greatly) in the sense that one often led to the next. The fourth generally is quite recent, although the first and the last, or the last three, or two or three may be carried on in the same operation.

1. Placer mining, primarily of gold. Gold discoveries in any district usually commenced with placers; and in a number of areas, not much else of consequence ever was found.
2. Quartz mining of gold and silver. Quartz discoveries in any district usually commenced with placers; and in a number of areas, not much else of consequence ever was found.
3. Base metal mining. Early attempts at quartz mining bridged the gap between the beginnings of mining operation (placers) and the really large-scale lead-silver-zinc operations which constitute the major mining activity in Idaho. The latter had to await railroads and advances in management and technology, many of which were pioneered in early attempts to exploit quartz properties.
4. Mining of metals which lacked a market or did not attract interest until recently: antimony, tungsten, cobalt, columbium, tantalum, and any number of other newly-exploited metals. Some of these developed out of earlier stage operations, others are new.

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