

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

KLEINSCHMIDT GRADE and SEVEN DEVILS

Number 115

1981

In 1885, Albert Kleinschmidt, a wealthy Helena, Montana, merchant and mining entrepreneur, purchased shares in the Peacock, Helena, and White Monument mines from Levi Allen and Isaac I. Lewis. He immediately began plans and surveys for a road to reach from his mines to Ballard's Ferry on the Snake River, where he was confident boats could be relied upon to transport his ore to the railroad at Olds Ferry, near Weiser. The actual road work was begun in 1890, and that same year the post office of Helena was established almost under the dump of the Peacock Mine. The twenty-two mile grade from Helena to Ballard's Ferry was declared completed on July 31, 1891, at a cost of \$20,000. It was hoped that the mines could be served by a Snake River steamboat, but the Norma, built for that purpose in 1891, failed to meet the need. Meanwhile the price of copper dropped, and the Panic of 1893 set copper mining back for several years. In 1897, new mining developments brought a stampede of miners into the area, and on December 1, a post office was established at the new town of Cuprum (Latin for copper). In 1898, the town of Landore was founded. A railway between Helena and Council was proposed then, but never materialized. However, a half-mile of grade close to the top of the rim near Helena was built by Slavic workers before the project was abandoned. Financial, transportation, and ore processing problems hampered the development of the area. Early production of the district, along with the mines at Heath, has been estimated at about \$1,200,000. But this amount, including a \$200,000 yield at Black Lake, was produced at considerable loss—probably over 400%. Intermittent mining activity has continued in the area to the present date although some of the earlier problems facing the district are still prevalent today.