

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

HAILEY GOLD BELT

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Although their location only ten miles from Hailey places them close to a large district of Wood River lead-silver mines, Hailey Gold Belt had a quite different development as an independent district. Eight prospectors from Rocky Bar located two lodes there [Big Camas and Black Cinder] on September 11, 1865. Two of them eventually settled in Broadford and Bellevue, but development of these properties was delayed until after the 1880 rush to Wood River made work more feasible there.

By the summer of 1883, a 450-foot tunnel had been driven to cross cut the Camas lode without actually reaching it. So at that point, mining of the outcrop was chosen as a way to get started. This proved to be relatively simple at first: an 800-foot vein of fifteen-dollar ore projected several feet above ground over a width up to fifty feet. So surface operations began more as a quarry than a mine. Then an investor from Saint Joseph, Missouri, bought a major property there for \$10,000 in the summer of 1884. Milling began June 1, 1885, with a ten-stamp outfit that was soon doubled in capacity. An initial cleanup yielded only \$605 on June 17, but within two years, a twenty-stamp mill was grinding out concentrates of \$40 to \$350 a ton for shipment, in addition to free gold recovered at the site.

To improve shipment facilities for concentrates, a Hailey, Gold Belt, and Western Railway Company was organized June 16, 1887, and a line was surveyed immediately. More than surveys were needed, though, to offer much service to that district. But a new town of Gold Belt was started anyway, complete with a saloon and restaurant, a blacksmith shop, carpenter shop, livery stable, and other modern conveniences. A decade later, recovery from the Hailey Gold Belt was increased by introduction of a cyanide process on October 1, 1897. Jerome B. Frank of Denver succeeded eventually in reworking all the tailings from the Camas concentrator, raising production there to 102,000 ounces of gold.