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LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY IDAHO MINERAL DISCOVERIES, 1884-1899

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After 1884, a half-dozen promising new Idaho mining areas attracted prospectors or investors from a wide area. Two of them came into production without unreasonable travail. But for one reason or another, awkward obstacles interfered with major production anticipated for three or four later nineteenth-century discoveries. Lack of ore--a deficiency crucial for a mining camp held them back. In one instance, availability of only a limited amount of gold delayed large scale development until cobalt made Blackbird into a major Idaho metal producer. Interest in a zone west of Loon Creek--Seafoam, Greyhound Ridge, and Sheep Mountain--greatly exceeded that area's productive capability. Problems in technology complicated any chance for extensive lead-silver operations there. Idaho's last major gold rush brought thousands of miners to Thunder Mountain, but almost all of that district's wealth came from Pittsburgh investment rather than from mineral resources available for exploitation along Monumental Creek. This slightly unfortunate approach to mineral development characterized Graham even more completely. By 1884, most of Idaho's traditional gold and silver lodes had been located, so most gold rushes after that time were somewhat misdirected. Other metals of great value remained to be found. But truly important undiscovered gold fields no longer turned up to justify an old-fashioned mining excitement.

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