

Way We Were

November 2017

Working above ground in a mining town

By Emily Perdue, Collections Move Coordinator

Park City was a town forged from the mines, but not everybody worked below ground. In order for miners to live and work in Park City, there had to be others cooking, cleaning, building, banking, and even logging. As some miners worked in the damp and dark tunnels, above ground a large number of men cut down trees from Park City's abundant forests to support the mining industry.

According to all accounts, Park City originally was very heavily forested with what might have seemed like an unending and convenient source of fuel. Wood was burned to provide steam power. In the beginning, most mines depended upon wood for their steam powered pumps and engines, particularly a behemoth like the Ontario Mine's famous Cornish pump.

In the early days of mining the mining town, some estimated that there were as many men cutting and hauling wood above ground as working below¹. Some of these men were likely miners who cut wood part time, but others were full-time loggers.

Seeing an opportunity, some loggers began to open their own timber yards just outside of Park City, selling lumber to mines and other businesses. The lumber was carried in by teams from nearby small towns and valleys, including a mill in Snyderville.

It wasn't long, however, before trees became scarce along the mountainsides of Park City. Rapid deforestation also made the slopes prone to dangerous avalanches in the winter. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s entire homes and families, miners, mine buildings, and boarding houses were swept under the frequent and often fatal slides.

When the Utah Eastern Railroad expanded from Echo to Park City in 1881, trains began to bring in coal, replacing the need for wood as fuel. Trees began to grow back by the early 20th century and avalanches became less common.

Although new energy sources were found for the mines, timber was always needed to line and support the weight of mining shafts. Timber carts inside of the mines were made specifically for the purpose of carting wood rather than metal ores, with a flat surface on which to lay planks. Prepared wood was also needed to build the mills, boarding houses, and saloons in which miners worked, slept, and spent their free time. Lumber was instrumental to the mining industry in Park City, and though it may not have been quite as dangerous and life-shortening as work underground, logging was a tough job.

¹ Fraser Buck and George Thompson. *Treasure Mountain Home: A Centennial History of Park City, Utah*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1968,, p. 40.

The Park City Museum is proud to host *The Way We Worked*, part of the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibition program. In conjunction with this exhibit focusing on national labor history, the Museum has developed a local component titled, *The Way Park City Worked*. Come can learn more about the workers who made Park City what it is today starting November 11. The public is invited to attend an opening ceremony on Saturday, November 11, beginning at 10:30am. Join us on November 15 from 5-7pm for a lecture with University of Utah history professor Matthew Basso.



Image ID: 1 (2001.13)

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum

Caption: This photograph, published in the 1891 book *Souvenir of Park City: her mines, mining, and pleasure resorts*, shows a group of men posing as they cut down trees outside of the Mayflower Mine.