

Boston Hill Mining History Overview

By Joseph Gendron

Boston Hill is a series of three hills that lay at the southeastern extremity of the Silver City range immediately southwest of Silver City. The first mining in the area occurred in the early 1870's after considerable prospecting for silver. The silver ore, however, did not occur in significant quantities as compared to the neighboring districts at Chloride Flats and Fleming Camp.

The hills came to be called Boston Hill around 1880 after the Massachusetts and New Mexico Mining Company (also known as the "Boston Company") purchased the Legal Tender claim. By 1883, the Company was in financial trouble and the mine changed hands once again, but not before adding an eastern name to this western town.

The principal ore mined on Boston Hill was manganiferous iron ore. A considerable quantity of fluxing ore (an ore containing an appreciable amount of valuable metal, but smelted mainly because it contains fluxing agents required in the reduction of richer ores) was shipped to smelters at El Paso and Socorro after the arrival of the railroad in 1893. The ores also supplied the local Silver City smelters until they finally closed in 1907.

A narrow gauge (24") railroad was built around the south and west side of Boston Hill in 1906 on a route to the mines at Pinos Altos. The railroad was plagued with problems and ceased operations around 1908. The track was removed in 1913 but remnants of the rail bed remain.

In 1916, mining of manganiferous iron ore for use in the steel industry took place at the Legal Tender and Silver Spot mines and numerous surface pits on Boston Hill. Beginning in 1937, the ores were shipped to the Pueblo, Colorado smelter of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Mining activity on Boston Hill ceased in the early 1970's and soon after the railroad company pulled up its tracks and left town.

The principal ore minerals were hematite and pyrolusite. These are often closely mingled. Specularite, the micaceous variety of hematite, occurs throughout the Boston Hill area. Gangue minerals are quartz, calcite, dolomite and barite.

The Town of Silver City purchased a majority of the claims associated with Boston Hill in 1999 as the Town's first open space acquisition thanks to a bequeath from Lennie Merle Forward. In 2001, the Town obtained a grant to develop a non-motorized trail system and today the area is used by citizens for hiking, bicycling, appreciation of the area's history and natural history and the vast vistas that can be viewed from elevated areas.