

Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program



Abandoned Mines are Everywhere!

Utah's Mining Heritage

"With great energy my officers and men...[have] prospected the country, and succeeded in discovering rich gold and silver-bearing rock. It is now a settled fact that the mines of Utah are equal to any west of the Missouri, and only await the advent of capital to develop them."

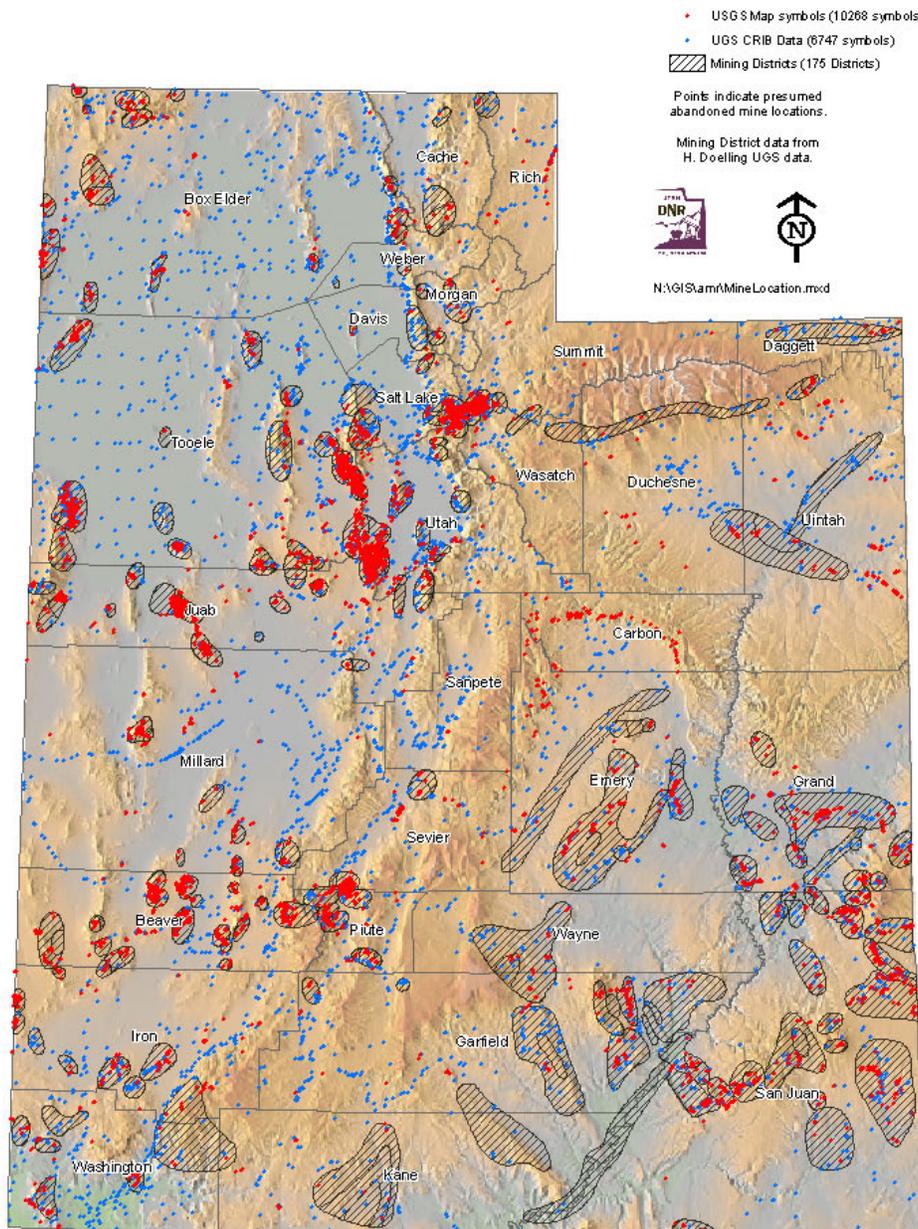
-Colonel Patrick E. Conner, the "father of mining" in Utah.

The driving of the last spike at Promontory in 1869 joined the Central Pacific Railroad with the Union Pacific Railroad, making Salt Lake City the mining center of the West. This led to the formation of the Salt Lake Stock and Mining Exchange in 1908, the center of Utah's fast-growing mining industry. Today, Kennecott Utah Copper's Bingham Pit reminds us that mining is still an important industry for Utah.

State of Utah

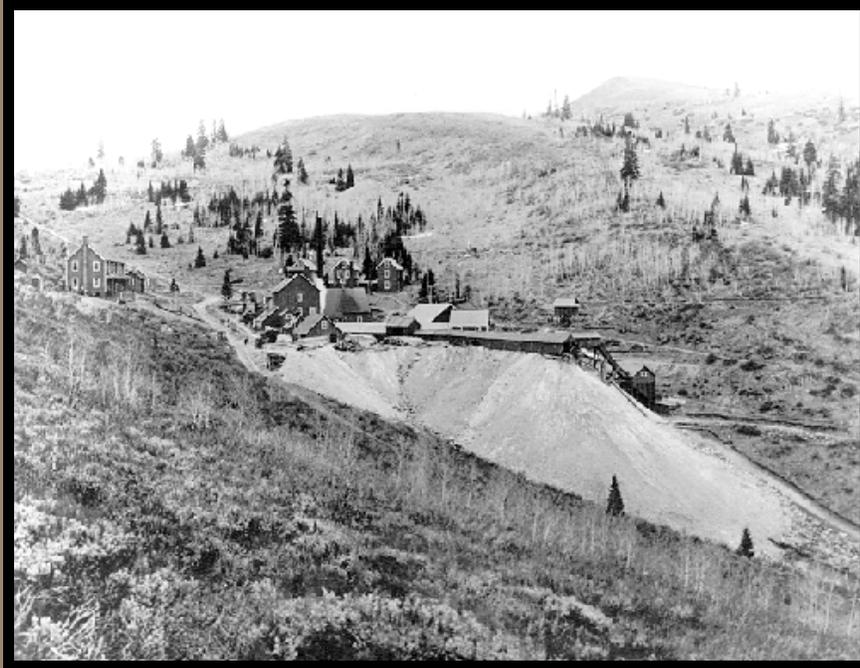
MINING DISTRICT AREAS, UMOs MINE SITE LOCATIONS AND USGS MAP SYMBOLS

2/6/2008



A remnant of this mining heritage is an estimated 20,000 mine openings scattered across Utah — each containing many hazards for unsuspecting explorers. Don't be fooled! Mine shafts, old buildings, and underground workings may seem to invite exploration; but in reality they pose a multitude of dangers. Cave-ins, toxic mine air, falls, and undetonated explosives can cost you your health or even your life!

(Utah Mineral Occurrence System data used in locating presumed abandoned mines.)



The Transcontinental railroad and development of ore-extracting technologies fueled the spread of silver mining in Utah. Park City was one of Utah's greatest bonanza towns. The Ontario, Silver King, Daly-West, Daly-Judge, and the Silver King Coalition are some of the best known mines. Between 1867 and 1960, these mines produced over \$400 million dollars worth of precious metals. More than half of Utah's mineral production was silver before 1900. This accounted for 20% of the silver production in the United States.

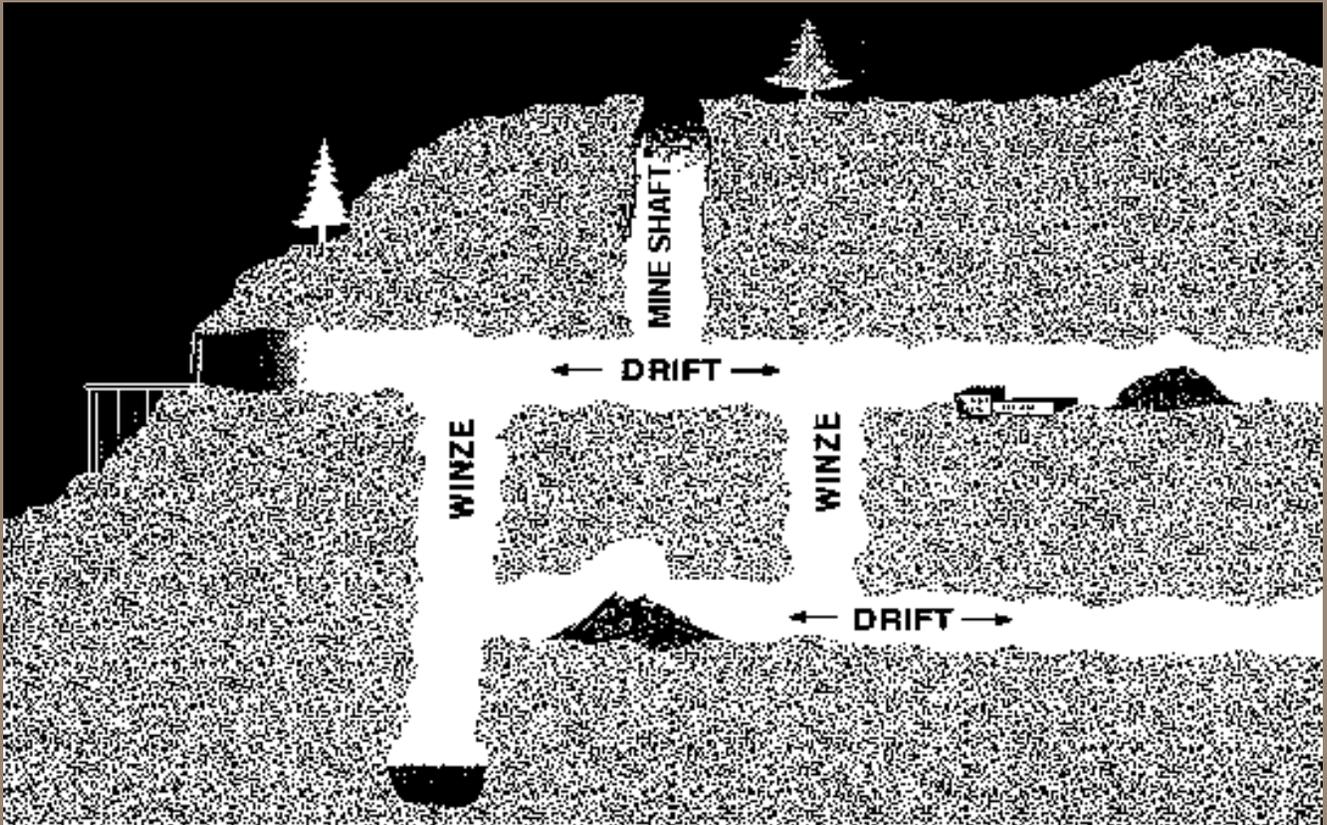


Often when all of the minerals were mined out of an area, a mine was simply abandoned. Equipment and buildings were left standing, waste rock was left in piles, shafts and tunnels were left open, and roads and hillside cuts were left in place. Mining activity was not regulated until 1975 and 1981 by the State of Utah and the BLM, respectively. Today, Federal and State laws require all active mining disturbance to be reclaimed.

Abandoned Mine Dangers



Mines are not caves. Caves are formed naturally over thousands or even millions of years. Mines are man-made by blasting, which fractures and weakens the surrounding rocks. Vibrations from thunder storms, extremely heavy spring runoff or even road vibrations can cause a mine to cave in.



Winzes are like elevator shafts without the elevator. They are steeply inclined shafts that connect one mine level with a lower level. Typically, winzes were used to gravity-feed ore out of the mine. Winzes may be covered by rotten timbers or water which hides their presence. They may also descend to lower, water-filled levels. Even trained professionals like Bob Gloyn, who was trapped in a mine for 6 days, cannot always predict what will happen next.

“In that little black spot where it was in the shadow, some rotten son-of-a-gun had dug a 70-foot winze that covered the width of the drift. I stepped off and fell 70-feet.”



Animals live in abandoned mines. Snakes, Spiders, bats, bears, mountain lions, and other wild animals can den or escape the heat in the dark recesses of a mine. Underground mines can be critical habitat for such species. You should not disturb them.



Mine shafts are vertical mine openings. They represent the number one cause of death and injury in abandoned mines. Because no light enters a mine shaft, the depth is difficult to assess. The shaft collar may be loose and unconsolidated. This material can break away, causing individuals to fall into the shaft. Darkness, loose debris, false floors, rotten timbers, and water can hide vertical openings.



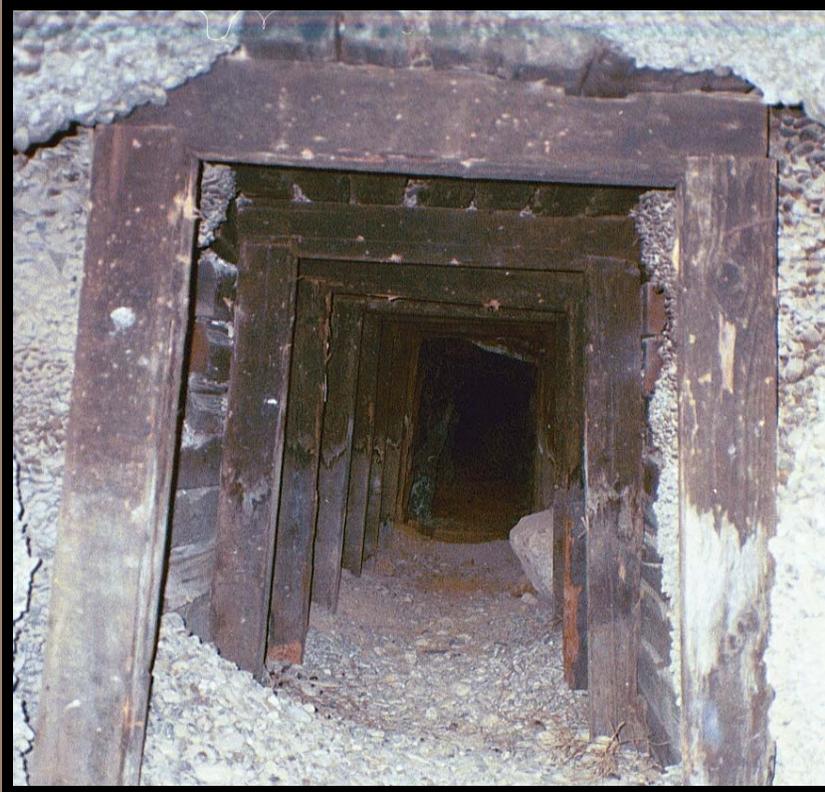
Explosives become highly unstable with time and when exposed to the elements. Old dynamite often contains nitroglycerine, which can explode with the slightest disturbance. Perhaps the most dangerous explosives are blasting caps. Rodents can scatter blasting caps on the mine floor. If stepped on, they will explode. A blasting cap resembles a firecracker with wires.



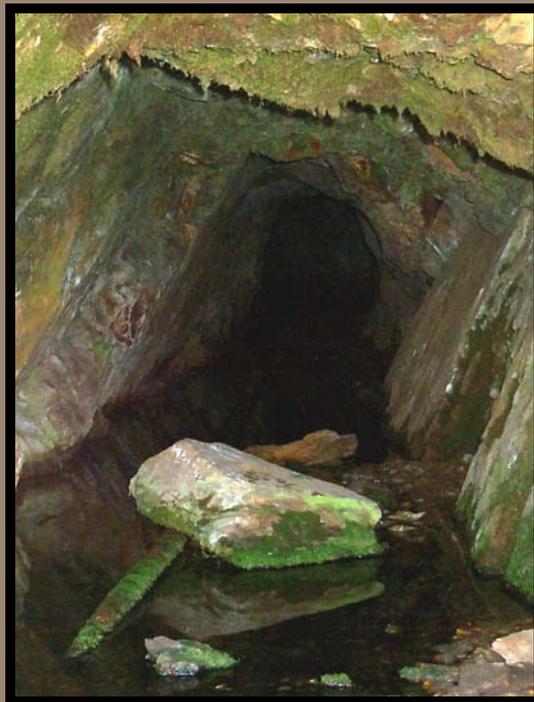
Radioactivity is the result of the natural decay process of radioactive mineral (uranium, vanadium, etc.). The effects of radiation exposure are cumulative through a lifetime. Excessive exposure can be harmful or eventually fatal. Many abandoned uranium mines in southern Utah are potential sources of radiation.



Abandoned mines are not ventilated. Consequently, pockets of deadly air and gases can be present. Even experienced cavers can die exploring mines, due to lack of oxygen. Bad air is oxygen-deficient or toxic air that can build up in abandoned mines, causing dizziness or even unconsciousness. Bad air is odorless and tasteless. Carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide often collect in low areas or along the floor in horizontal workings. The motion of walking can cause bad air to mix with good air.



Structures are dilapidated. Support timbers, headframes, ladders, pump jacks, tanks, and other related structures may seem safe and solid; but rotted wood will easily crumble under a person's weight. Don't be fooled by appearances. Do not climb on, around, or under structures.



Water hazards occur in flooded abandoned mines. Shallow water can conceal drop-offs (winzes), sharp objects, and other hazards. You can drown in a water filled shaft or get hypothermia.

We need your help!

Abandoned mines are hazardous and should be left alone. For your own safety and the safety of others, do not try to enter abandoned mines. Vandalism of closures endangers innocent people and wastes tax dollars.

Please report the location of any abandoned mine which poses a hazard to the public or the environment. Contact Lucia Malin with the State of Utah Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program office at (801) 538-5323, Terry Snyder with Utah Bureau of Land Management office at (801) 539-4026 or Sharon Andrews (801) 539-4080.

STAY OUT and STAY ALIVE

