

How White Pine County Got Its Name

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A group of Reese River miners found evidence of silver on the western slopes of White Pine Mountain as early as the autumn of 1865 and organized the White Pine Mining District. Ironically, White Pine was named for the heavy stands of trees in the District, thought to be White Pines. There are no White Pines in White Pine County. Engelmann Spruce, common in the county, has sometimes been called “White Pine,” though it is not a true Pine. According to the United States Forest Service, the trees covering the White Pine Range and other ranges of the county and thought to be White Pines, were probably Limber Pines, or White Fir. Nevertheless, the name White Pine, technically right or wrong, became a rallying call for adventurers from all over “Going to White Pine.” There were fortunes to be made!

It is not until 1868, on Treasure Hill, over nine thousand feet above the sea, that a rich discovery of silver ore led to the rush to White Pine. News of the discovery spread rapidly and the cry “going to White Pine” was heard throughout the state. So great was the excitement during the year 1868, that every man who could get there visited the White Pine District to examine the vast wealth of the district.

White Pine Mining District was located in Lander County, with Austin the County Seat. The distance to Austin was 120 miles and citizens of the District did not want to travel that far to the county seat. Citizen groups met in Silver Springs (Sherman town), Treasure City and Hamilton to petition the state for a separate county organization. Committees were chosen from each city to prepare the bill for the new county. It was assumed that the Legislature would be governed by the wishes of the citizens of the three principal towns in the proposed new county. Although all

were in favor of the organization of the new county, the name of the county and the location of the county seat created much dissension. Some felt the name “White Pine” was well known abroad. Other favored the name Ruby, because that was the name of the oldest settled valley in the proposed new county and was located along the route of the Pacific Railroad. The name White Pine was chosen for the name of the new county, and Hamilton was appointed the county seat.

White Pine News, March 6, 1869 wrote, “The bill creating the county of White Pine has become law without the approval of the Governor, he having retained it over the five days limited by the Constitution.” The governor appointed the first county officers April 1, 1869.

Hamilton & Treasure Hill Tour Notes.

Silver was discovered in the area early 1865 on the other side of Mt. Hamilton along Pogonip ridge, and in the fall of 1865 the first mill in the area was built at Monte Cristo, it formed a small town of 150 people. The mill closed in 1869 and was reopened in 1870 and closed again in 1872.

Goshuite Indian named Jim, later Napias Jim broke in to the small cabin of three miners working the area. A.J. Leathers, Thomas Murphy & Eddie Marchand. Took some of their food beans and bacon. The Indian came back 2 days later with a piece of pure silver ore on Jan 4th 1868. May of 1868 start of the Cave city later re-named after W.H. Hamilton the promoter. And by mid-winter of that year, the population of 600 people, followed by a post office in August 1868. White Pine mining district was formed and by 1870 there were 13,000 claims filed over 3000 on Treasure Hill alone that varies from 1 to 2 miles wide, 3 to 5 miles long of silver ore.

People came even though the climate was described as 10 months winter and 2 months of damn cold weather. White Pine County organized and approved by the state legislature March 1869 and Hamilton became the county seat. Wagon or sleigh rides to Treasure Hill from Hamilton cost \$2.00 up and \$1.00 down in 1868. Hamilton built a two story brick court house and jail. The courts were very busy as claims overlapped, there were 22 lawyers. 101 saloons had billiards & cigar stores they had doctors, several churches, theaters, skating rink, gunsmith, Miners union, fraternal org. two banks, two newspapers. Water was .25c a bucket. Anticipating a population of 50,000, a water system was put in, the

population reached between 20,000 & 22,000 at its peak. There was 192 stamps in 15 mills in the area, there was also 16 saw mills in the area. The average wage in the area was \$4.00 per day. There were 10 stage lines servicing Hamilton to railroad in Elko 120 miles to the north, the 24 hour run was cut to 17.5 hours through competing the companies, coaches built to carry 9 usually carried 12.

The fire of 1873 cigar store, 1885 another fire destroyed the court house with all the records and in 1887, the county seat was moved to Ely. Although people lived here until 1941, the post office closed in March 1931.