

## *Eine Kulturgeschichte über den Coeur d' Alene Silberbergbau, Idaho, USA*

Bedingt durch die ähnlichen technischen Probleme eines Bergbaus in schwierigem Gebirge sind die mittelalterlichen Bergbaue Europas und die Silberbergwerke von Couer d' Alene, Idaho aus dem 19. und 20. Jh. nahe verwandt, denn die Bewältigung der Probleme erforderte auch in dem jungen amerikanischen Bergbau technische Erfahrung, Gefühl für das Gestein und Erkenntnisse der Geologie wie vor 500 Jahren. Zusätzliche Schwierigkeiten in der unregelmäßigen Erzführung, komplizierte Stollen- und Transportanlagen führten zu immer höher werdenden Kosten und damit sinkender Rentabilität, so dass innerhalb eines Jahrzehnts die Schließung der 120 Jahre alten Bergwerke beschlossen ist. Zahlreiche Dokumente aus Archiven der verschiedenen Betreiber, der Universitätsbibliothek von Idaho, sowie Tausende Fotos dokumentieren dieses traditionsreiche Silberrevier, das auch für den Tourismus erschlossen wurde. Schaubergwerke und ein Museum sowie einschlägige Lektüre erläutern die Kulturgeschichte des Coeur d' Alene Silberbergbaus.

### *Cultural History of the Coeur d' Alene Silver Mines, Idaho*

There are many similarities between the early history of the mines and communities of the Coeur d' Alene district in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the history of the former and much older silver mining districts of central Europe. It is noteworthy that when mining of the rich silver ores in the Coeur d' Alene district started in 1884, the early miners had to overcome difficulties that their European mining ancestors had confronted many centuries earlier. Parallelism exists between the geology and mineralogy of districts such as Coeur d' Alene, Freiberg, the Harz, Pribram, Kuttenberg, Sainte Marie-aux-Mines, St. Joachimsthal and Schwaz. Similar problems of prospecting, mining and transporation in wilderness with steep-sided forested mountains, summer droughts and heavy winter snowfalls and snow slides, relations with miners' unions, strikes and sabotage, destructive mine and town fires. Many years of mining resulted in deep underground mines with water inflows, roof collapses and rock bursts, which resulted in high expenses in timber and water haulage. Relatively narrow and irregular oreveins caused high costs of underground exploration. These expenses and sudden fluctuaciones in the value of silver caused temporary and permanent closures of mines on both continents. However, unlike the centuries of mining of the European mining districts, the high rates of ore extraction in the Coeur d' Alene district have resulted in relatively short lives of many mines and in only four mines producing silver, lead and zinc today

The cultural history of the Coeur d' Alene mines and communities are preserved in a variety of ways. There are mining museums with displays of mining relicts, photographs and books in the principal mining towns of Wallace and Kellogg. Two small underground mines near the towns are open for tourists. The University of Idaho library, 100 miles south of the district, is an important depository of mine documents. These include annual reports and files from the important former Bunker Hill & Sullivan Mining Company and Sunshine Mining Company; annual reports, minutes and files from the mines and smelters that belonged to the Day Mines, Inc. and personal manuscripts from Henry L. Day and Jerome Day. The photographic file of the Barnard-Stockbridge Collection is also housed in the library. This important collection includes over 5.500 negatives which illustrate many aspects of life and historical events in the towns of the Coeur d' Alene district from 1886 through 1964.

The Coeur d' Alene mines after approximately 120 years of district-wide operations appear to be within a decade of closure. Unlike the mines, the towns of Wallace and Kellogg will survive as winter and summer holiday resorts.

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