



## Park County Local Historic Landmark Nomination Form

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**Section:** Historical Background

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**Resource Name:** Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company

Smelting, the act of extracting metal from ore by a process involving heating and melting, played a critical role in the development of a number of Colorado's early mining towns, including Black Hawk, Leadville, and Alma, one of Park County's principal mining centers during the later 1800s. In 1880, the *Rocky Mountain News* published an account tracing the early history of Alma and attributed the motivation for the incorporation of the town to the construction of a branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company, which treated the ore flowing out of the mines on Mounts Lincoln and Bross.<sup>1</sup> The completion of the Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company in 1873 may not have been the only motivation for the establishment of the town, but the opening of the works undeniably played a crucial role in Alma's early economic development. The new smelter provided jobs and attracted new residents—in February 1873 the "town" consisted of just three homes, but by the following May nearly 45 homes proudly stood at the foot of Mount Bross.<sup>2</sup> Mining activity increased, population grew, businesses sprang up, and the community quickly began to take shape. Later in the year, residents petitioned the Park County commissioners for incorporation and on December 2, 1873, their petition was granted. The town's first board of trustees included Henry R. Wolcott, general manager of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company and a major player in the development of the mining industry in Park County and Colorado.

Miners began exploiting the rich ore found near Alma after 1859, when gold was discovered in Buckskin Gulch. Prospectors flocked to the area's first major settlement, Buckskin Joe, a ramshackle collection of log cabins, hotels, shops, and saloons that served as the territorial county seat beginning in 1862. Both placer mining and lode mining operations flourished in the area during the early years of the boom. Placer miners pursued the gold found in stream and river beds through panning, sluicing, and hydraulicking. Lode miners tunneled into the hard rock of the surrounding mountains, removing the mineral-bearing rock via ore cart, then transporting the ore to a processing facility where the precious metals could be extracted.

Early on, ore processing in northern Park County typically involved extracting gold via relatively crude methods that utilized arrastas (primitive circular mills made of stone) and stamp mills to crush the ore and mercury amalgamation to separate the gold from the crushed rock. Ore mills typically used mechanical means such as jaw crushers, stamp batteries, ball mills, and rod mills to crush and grind gold-bearing ore, forming a slurry. Gold was then separated from the slurry using mercury. As the slurry flowed over mercury-coated copper amalgamating tables, free particles of gold adhered to the mercury, creating an amalgam and thus separating the precious metal from the slurry. The heavy mercury/gold amalgam was then scraped from the tables' surface's and heated to separate the mercury from the pure gold.

The mercury amalgamation process recovered only a portion of the gold present in the slurry. The slurry typically underwent additional processing to capture the remaining gold-bearing material, known as concentrates, which were then shipped to a smelter for further processing. Smelters used high temperatures to separate the precious metal from the waste or "slag." Additional material—"flux"—was typically added to the ore to facilitate separation. The final product of the smelting process, the "matte," required further reduction to produce pure gold. The same process was employed to smelt silver-bearing ore.

At the beginning of Colorado's mining boom, concentrates were shipped by wagon and rail to smelters outside Colorado, significantly increasing costs. As Colorado's high-grade gold deposits dwindled in the early 1860s, high shipping costs and lower yields per ton of ore made mining a far less profitable venture. The industry entered a period of decline and by 1867, the once-bustling mining camp of Buckskin Joe was nearly deserted and the county seat was moved to nearby Fairplay. The population of Buckskin Joe continued to wane, but a few determined prospectors persevered, searching the rugged Mosquito Range for precious metals.

In 1868, Colorado's mining industry received a much needed boost when Colorado's first successful smelting operation opened in Black Hawk. Owned and operated by the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company, the facility included a reverberatory furnace as well as crushing and pulverizing equipment.<sup>3</sup> Reverberatory furnaces isolated the fuel from the ore, utilizing hot gases generated by the fuel to melt the ore and separate the precious metal from the slag. The Boston and Colorado's wood-fueled smelter could process 8 to 12 tons of ore daily, with costs ranged from \$20 to \$45 to process one ton of ore.<sup>4</sup> However, the "matte" generated by the Black Hawk smelter could not be refined locally and was shipped by wagon 600 miles to the nearest rail line and then overseas to Swansea, Wales, for final processing.<sup>5</sup>

The Boston and Colorado Smelting Company's plant utilized technology developed by Nathaniel Peter Hill, a chemistry professor at Brown University. During 1864 and 1865, Hill made a number of trips to Colorado to investigate mining opportunities on behalf of Boston investors.<sup>6</sup> On one of these trips, Hill visited the Gilpin County mines and was dismayed by what he considered the wasteful methods of ore processing employed at the time. Hill began researching the smelting process, traveling to Swansea, Wales, and Freiberg, Germany, to gather firsthand knowledge of metallurgy practices. After returning to the United States, Hill convinced investors in Boston and Providence, Rhode Island, to organize the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company and began developing plans for the Black Hawk smelter with metallurgist Hermann Beeger.<sup>7</sup> In January 1868, production at Hill's Boston and Colorado Smelter began. Despite high construction and operating costs, the smelter turned a significant profit within a year.<sup>8</sup>

The success of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company's Black Hawk smelter encouraged the construction of a number of smelter operations throughout Colorado. The new plants significantly reduced the distance that ore from Park County needed to travel for smelting, however high shipping costs continued to cut into miners' profits. The railroad would not arrive in the Alma area until 188 , requiring all ore extracted before that time to be shipped via wagon to the smelters, an expensive method of transportation. As a result, mining activity in the Alma area continued to decline during the late 1860s.

In the early 1870s, major silver discoveries on Mounts Lincoln and Bross spurred renewed interest in the area, resulting in the establishment of the Moose and Dolly Varden mines, two highly productive and successful operations.<sup>9</sup> Seeking to reduce costs, investors in the Moose Mining Company developed plans to erect a smelter near their mine. In 1872, Judson Dudley, Andrew Gill, and John McNab incorporated the Mount Lincoln Smelting Works Company and hired Fairplay assayer Edward Peters to design the smelter works.<sup>10</sup> In 1873, smelting operations began in earnest at Dudley, headquarters of the Moose Mine.<sup>11</sup> The Dudley Smelter employed blast furnace technology as opposed to the reverberatory furnaces used by the Boston and Colorado's Black Hawk works.<sup>12</sup>

The success of the silver mines near Alma did not go unnoticed, and in 1871 the Boston and Colorado's Nathaniel Hill, Hermann Beeger, and Henry Wolcott partnered with Joseph A. Thatcher and William H. Stevens to form the Park Pool Association, which purchased a group of placer and lode claims in the area of Mounts Lincoln and Bross.<sup>13</sup> Shortly afterward, Hill sent Wolcott to evaluate the feasibility of

constructing a smelter in Park County. Wolcott reported favorably on the opportunities in the area and recommended construction of a Boston and Colorado branch in Alma.<sup>14</sup> The company apparently began buying ore from Alma-area mines as early as September 1872.<sup>15</sup>

Born in 1846, Henry Roger Wolcott enjoyed a privileged upbringing in Massachusetts, one of eleven children born to Dr. Samuel Wolcott and his wife, Harriet Pope Wolcott. He arrived in Colorado in 1869 to pursue mining interests and in 1870 joined the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company as Hill's assistant.<sup>16</sup> In addition to his extensive mining interests, Wolcott participated in a number of business ventures during Denver's formative years, serving as vice president of the First National Bank of Denver and president of the Colorado Telephone Company. Active in Republican politics, Wolcott was elected to the state Senate from Gilpin County in 1878, serving four years, and in 1898 ran unsuccessfully for governor of Colorado. Wolcott's brother, Edward O. Wolcott, also a state senator, was later elected to the United States Senate from Colorado. Wolcott invested heavily in Alma-area real estate during the early 1870s and, with William A. Hawkins, William E. Musgrove, and James V. Dexter, formed the Mount Lincoln Improvement Company in 1875.<sup>17</sup> The company held title to many of Alma's town lots and was integral to the early development of the town. After his death in Honolulu, Hawai'i in 1921, Wolcott was described by the *Denver Post* as "...one of the empire builders of Colorado and the west—a pioneer mining man, capitalist, politician, builder, and smelterman..."<sup>18</sup>

Several sources indicate that construction on the Boston and Colorado's Alma branch began in spring 1873.<sup>19</sup> Alma, incorporated in December 1873 and situated two miles east of Buckskin Joe, quickly became a major mining supply and ore-processing center. Wolcott took over management of the branch works with technical assistance from Beeger and Dr. Richard Pearce, an Englishman who received his education at the Mining School at Truro, Cornwall, and the Royal School of Mines in London.<sup>20</sup> In 1871, Pearce traveled to Colorado at the behest of English investors to establish an experimental smelter near Empire. After the Empire smelter was abandoned in 1873, the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company hired Pearce to build a separating works in Black Hawk that could process the matte generated by the smelter. The separating process developed by Pearce at Black Hawk was used by the Boston and Colorado until the company's smelting operations ceased in 1910.<sup>21</sup>

The Alma branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company was constructed on an extensive 250-acre placer claim established by Henry Wolcott along Buckskin Creek in the early 1870s. Wolcott, however, did not receive a patent from the federal government for his placer claim until 1875, after construction of the smelter works. The patent granted Wolcott ownership of the land and the smelter complex as well as the mineral rights to the property.<sup>22</sup> The 1875 survey of Wolcott's claim documented a furnace building, ore house, engine/crushing houses, and a two-story office building in the northeastern section of the claim.<sup>23</sup> In 1877, Wolcott transferred ownership of a portion of the placer claim containing the smelter buildings to the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company.<sup>24</sup>

The Boston and Colorado's Alma Branch and the Mount Lincoln Smelting Works' Dudley Smelter both processed ore from mines owned by their principal investors and ore from other mines, bringing them into direct competition. In the end, the Boston and Colorado's reverberatory furnace at Alma proved more efficient and cost effective than the blast furnace at Dudley and the Mount Lincoln Smelting Works closed its Dudley works in 1874.<sup>25</sup> After the closure, the Boston and Colorado's Alma smelter became the dominant smelting operation in the area.

After 1874, the Moose, Hiawatha, Dolly Varden, and Park Pool Association mines were the primary suppliers of ore to the Boston and Colorado's Alma works.<sup>26</sup> Ore brought to the smelter was sampled to determine the amount of silver content and the price to be paid per ton of ore. Once a price was set, the ore was crushed, roasted, crushed again, and sent through a sieve before entering the furnace.<sup>27</sup> The

resulting mattes were shipped to Black Hawk for final separation.<sup>28</sup> With the additional matte produced by the Alma branch, the Black Hawk plant was expected to produce 110,000 ounces of silver, 25,000 ounces of gold, and 250 tons of copper in 1875.<sup>29</sup>

Established in 1874, the Holland Smelter, owned by the Chicago and New York Mining and Smelting Co. attempted to break the Boston and Colorado's monopoly. Located three miles outside Alma in the town of Holland at the mouth of Pennsylvania Gulch, the Holland Smelter's owners unfortunately chose to construct a blast furnace, essentially ensuring its failure.<sup>30</sup> The doomed works operated for a mere three days before closing.<sup>31</sup>

Retrofitted with a reverberatory furnace, the Dudley Smelter reopened in September 1875 and began processing ore from the Moose Mining Company's holdings. With both smelters operating at capacity, silver production in Park County reached new highs. The county's contributions, worth \$618,000, represented 46 percent of the silver refined in Black Hawk in 1875.<sup>32</sup> That year, Henry Williams, an English metallurgist, arrived in Alma to take over management of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company's Alma branch.<sup>33</sup>

In 1877, silver discoveries in Leadville initiated a boom that would significantly affect the fortunes of Alma-area smelters. As investors, prospectors, and miners flocked to Lake County to take advantage of the new opportunities, Park County mines closed and ore supplies diminished. The big silver mines—the Moose, Dolly Varden, and Russia—continued to produce a healthy amount of ore, but not enough to keep both the Dudley and Alma works operating at full capacity.

In Black Hawk, keeping the smelter works supplied with enough wood to fuel the furnaces became increasingly difficult. Boston and Colorado management sought new fuel sources, eventually finding coal from Trinidad to be a suitable substitute for wood. However, shipping coal from Trinidad to Black Hawk proved economically infeasible, and the company began making plans to relocate closer to a reliable and less expensive fuel source. In 1878, construction began on a new state-of-the-art smelter facility at Argo, two miles north of Denver.

As ore supplies in Park County continued to decline, production at the Alma branch waned and in 1879 the decision was made to shut down the Alma smelter and consolidate the Boston and Colorado's smelting operations in Argo.<sup>34</sup> The company continued to operate a sampling and ore purchasing agency in Alma, maintaining similar offices in Georgetown and Boulder. In 1879, Alma branch manager Henry Williams left for Montana at the behest of Nathaniel Hill, to act as Hill's general agent and explore the possibility of erecting a Boston and Colorado branch in Butte.<sup>35</sup> Ohio native Charles A. Montross Jr. took over as assayer and agent for the Boston and Colorado Sampling Works in Alma after William's departure.<sup>36</sup>

After the Boston and Colorado ceased smelting operations in Alma, a number of outfits attempted to operate small smelters in the area during the early 1880s. Most failed quickly, unable to treat the complex ore arriving from the mines cost effectively. At the mouth of Sacramento Gulch, the Duquesne Smelting Company operated between 1879 and 1881, advertising "the highest market price paid for gold, silver and lead ores."<sup>37</sup> The McFerran smelter, begun in 1879 outside East Leadville in Horseshoe Gulch operated until it was destroyed by fire in 1881.<sup>38</sup> In 1880, the owners of the Fanny Barret mine on Loveland Mountain developed plans for the construction of a smelter near their mine.<sup>39</sup> Constructed in Alma, north of the Boston and Colorado property, it was reported that the Fanny Barret smelter would begin operations in June 1882. It is unclear if the plant ever opened for business, and by 1886 the works were vacant. The Stevens Smelter, owned by the Alma Smelting Company, operated largely on an experimental basis at the mouth of Buckskin Gulch from around 1882 to 1883.<sup>40</sup> After the Denver, South

Park & Pacific railroad reached Alma Junction in 1888, it became more cost effective to ship ore via the new rail line for smelting elsewhere. Smelting activity in Alma essentially ceased until July 1910 when the Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting Company briefly operated a smelter at Alma Junction.<sup>41</sup>

The Silver Panic of 1893 ushered in a period of economic decline defined by plummeting silver prices, business failures, and pervasive unemployment nationwide. Alma's fortunes fell along with the price of silver and many mining ventures ceased operations. In 1895, Henry A. Clark, one of Wolcott's Massachusetts associates, acquired the Boston and Colorado's Alma works and all its equipment as well as the office/residence.<sup>42</sup> The sampling works likely closed soon afterward.<sup>43</sup> Clark promptly transferred the property to Henry Hastings, another Boston-area investor. In 1883, Hastings and his partners had invested, apparently unsuccessfully, in the Kansas mine and mill at Montgomery.<sup>44</sup> In 1897, he would form the London Mining and Reduction Company with R. S. Reynolds and Alvin Phillips.<sup>45</sup> It is unknown how Hastings used the Boston and Colorado site, and it is possible that Charles Montross and his daughter continued to live in the agent's residence as renters before moving to Denver sometime before 1900.<sup>46</sup>

Hastings sold the Boston and Colorado Sampling Works to John J. Shuck in May 1907.<sup>47</sup> Shuck, a resident of Alma since the mid-1880s, was involved in a number of local mines, including the London and Orphan Boy, and served as county commissioner in the early 1900s.<sup>48</sup> He transferred the property, known at the time as the Montross residence, almost immediately to George N. Perkins, son of former New York stock broker and Colorado mining entrepreneur Charles N. Perkins.<sup>49</sup> After the crash of 1869, the elder Perkins traveled west seeking to revive his fortune in the Colorado mines, establishing a number of successful mining ventures in Leadville, Aspen, and Alma.<sup>50</sup> Charles Perkins was actively involved in Alma mining business until his death in 1908. Shortly after the death of his father, George transferred the property to the Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting Company.<sup>51</sup>

The directors of the Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting Company, which was incorporated by Denver and Philadelphia investors in 1902, included Charles Perkins, Charles W. Betts, Cornelius C. Worrall, Frank A. Joslyn, and Frederick W. Lienau.<sup>52</sup> The company invested in a number of Alma-area mines, including the Pacific, Atlantic, Excelsior, and Kentucky Belle, and developed plans to erect a smelter in Alma to process the ore from their holdings.<sup>53</sup> It is at this time that the largest of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company buildings was demolished. In August 1909, the *Flume* reported that, "several teams are engaged in hauling the lumber of the old smelter building to the new plant at the depot," presumably in reference to the Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting Company's dismantling of the large Boston and Colorado smelter building for use in constructing their new smelter near the railroad depot in Alma Junction.<sup>54</sup> In July 1910, the new Alma smelter began operations at Alma Junction on the site of a former London Mining Company mill. Expectations were high, but the owners were not able to supply the smelter with enough ore to keep it running more than a few days at a time and the plant ceased operations that fall.<sup>55</sup>

Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting reopened the old Boston and Colorado Sampling Works and used the former Boston and Colorado office as its headquarters until its offices at the Alma Junction smelter were completed.<sup>56</sup> In February 1910, Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting rented the office building to Wilbur Gormley, a contractor charged with hauling ore from the company's Atlantic and Pacific mines to the smelter.<sup>57</sup> Gormley did not stay long, leaving Alma for Cripple Creek shortly after the closure of the Alma Junction smelter.<sup>58</sup> Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting struggled financially and its holdings, including the Boston and Colorado smelter property, were sold at sheriff's sale in 1916.<sup>59</sup>

The Boston and Colorado office/residential building apparently housed the Alma Hotel for a time after 1911. An ad appearing in the June 30, 1911, edition of the *Fairplay Flume* announced that the Alma

Hotel and Restaurant was now “open for business on upper main street in the Montrose (sic) House, which has been remodeled and refurbished throughout.” Paul Kruger and Mrs. J.F. Adler managed the hotel at the time.

The property owner, Anne Malone, wife of Denver attorney William H. Malone, likely leased the property to Kruger and Adler and subsequent Alma Hotel managers through the 1920s. The Malone family held the property until 1931, when it was bought by Robert Painter. Painter, an auto mechanic by trade, moved to Colorado from Kansas, settling in Alma with his family.<sup>60</sup> The Painters left Alma for Kremmling sometime after 1935, and Harry Burger of Canon City took ownership of the property in 1938.<sup>61</sup> Little is known of the Burger family, who likely treated the property as an investment. In 1954, Charles and Miriam Bilty acquired the property. Born in 1909, Charles Bilty grew up in Iowa and married Miriam Schmidt in 1938.<sup>62</sup> The couple lived for a time in Iowa before moving to Colorado, where Miriam spent her early childhood. Locals remember the Biltos as owners of a grocery store near the corner of Main Street and Buckskin Road in the building currently housing the South Park Saloon. It is not known whether the Biltos lived in the residential section of the building or rented the property. Shortly before Charles Bilty’s death in 1978, Craig Robbins acquired the former smelter office and remaining smelter buildings, holding the property until the mid-1990s. In 1997, the current owners, Edmund Hastain and Diane Blessing, converted the buildings for solely commercial use, establishing The Sheepherder, a retail business offering custom-made sheepskin apparel, in the former office/residence and a veterinary office in what remains of the industrial smelting buildings.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Annals of Alma,” *Rocky Mountain News*, March 2, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, May 29, 1873.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Tonge, “The Evolution of Mining and Ore Treatment in Colorado,” *Engineering Magazine* 18 (1900): 269.

<sup>4</sup> Tonge, 269-71. James H. Baker, ed., *History of Colorado, Volume II* (Denver: Linderman Co, Inc., 1927), 701.

<sup>5</sup> Tonge, 271.

<sup>6</sup> Baker, 697.

<sup>7</sup> *Denver Post*, May 22, 1906; Investors included J. Warren Merrill and James W. Converse.

<sup>8</sup> Baker, 697.

<sup>9</sup> Horace B. Patton, Arthur J. Hoskin, and G. Montague Butler, *Geology and Ore Deposits of the Alma District, Park County, Colorado* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing Co., 1912), 151.

<sup>10</sup> Harvey N. Gardiner, *Mining Among the Clouds* (Denver: The Colorado Historical Society, 2002), 41.

<sup>11</sup> Patton et al., 152; Baker, 705.

<sup>12</sup> Gardiner, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas B. Corbett, *The Colorado Directory of Mines* (Denver: Rocky Mountain News Printing Company, 1879), 338-9; *Denver Post*, Aug. 5, 1901; Front Range Research Associates, Inc., *Park County, Colorado, Historic Contexts* (Denver, 2002), IV-17. Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado, Volume 4* (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1895), 266. Hall includes Richard Pearce as a member of the Pool; James E. Fell, Jr., *Ores to Metals, The Rocky Mountain Smelting Industry* (Boulder: The University Press of Colorado, 2009), 38. Fell states that Hill’s Park Pool Association was originally formed as the Alma Pool Association and later reorganized as the Park Pool Association. However, the 1879 Colorado Directory of Mines states that the Alma Pool Association was formed in 1874 and lists the principals as John T. Brownlow, James V. Dexter, Assyria Hall, George W. Brunk and James F. Flanagan. The Park Pool Co. is also included in the directory, which states that the company was formed by Hill, Thatcher, Wolcott, Stevens, and Bieger (sic) and incorporated on December 17, 1875. The Jan 28, 1871, issue of the *Rocky Mountain News* mentions that the Park Pool Association was organized by Judge Stevens and owned several mines in the Montgomery area, indicating that the men formed the organization in the early 1870s but did not incorporate until 1875.

<sup>14</sup> Gardiner, 43.

<sup>15</sup> *Central City Daily Register*, Sept 6, 1872.

<sup>16</sup> William Columbus Ferril, *Sketches of Colorado, Volume 1* (Denver: Western Press Bureau Company, 1911), 158-9; Fell, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Corbett, 337.

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- <sup>18</sup> *Denver Post*, June 1, 1921.
- <sup>19</sup> *Central City Daily Register*, Sept 6, 1872; *Pueblo Daily Chieftain*, Nov 12, 1872; Gardiner, 43. The November 12, 1872, edition of the *Pueblo Daily Chieftain* notes in a report from Fairplay that “Professor Hill has completed his reduction works,” however it is unclear if this refers to the completion of a portion of the Boston and Colorado Alma branch or, more probably, a mill constructed to crush ore from the Hill’s Park Pool Association mines. All other sources uncovered during research indicate that construction on the Boston and Colorado’s Alma branch began in the spring of 1873.
- <sup>20</sup> Baker, 698; *Denver Post*, Dec. 13, 1903.
- <sup>21</sup> Baker, 701. Fell, 261-2.
- <sup>22</sup> Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Document No. 1587, Accession No. COCOAA 011655, accessed via <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Mineral Survey No. 184, Henry R. Wolcott Placer Claim, DM ID: 199807, [www.glorerecords.blm.gov](http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov).
- <sup>24</sup> Park County Deed Records, Book 10, 32.
- <sup>25</sup> Gardiner, 53. Processing the silver ore generated by the Moose Mine this way required a significant amount of flux, in this case galena (lead ore). Securing enough flux for the smelter proved challenging, contributing to the smelter’s economic difficulties.
- <sup>26</sup> Gardiner, 53.
- <sup>27</sup> *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, Volume 4* (Easton, PA: American Institute of Mining Engineers, 1876), 280-1.
- <sup>28</sup> *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers*, 277.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>30</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Dec. 18, 1879.
- <sup>31</sup> Gardiner, 54.
- <sup>32</sup> Gardiner, 61.
- <sup>33</sup> *Denver Post*, July 10, 1902.
- <sup>34</sup> In 1879, the Alma branch reportedly received 10 to 12 tons of ore per day—about half its capacity. *Fairplay, Flume*, Mar. 13, 1879; Corbett, 69.
- <sup>35</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Mar 13, 1879.
- <sup>36</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Dec. 21, 1882; *Colorado State Business Directory with Colorado Mining Directory Department: 1890* (Denver: J.R. Ives, 1890), 122.
- <sup>37</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, April, 8, 1880; *Rocky Mountain News*, Jan 1, 1880.
- <sup>38</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Jun 12, 1879; Jun 24, 1880; Apr 7, 1881.
- <sup>39</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Feb. 2, 1880.
- <sup>40</sup> *Fariplay Flume*, Apr. 6, 1882.
- <sup>41</sup> Front Range Research Associates, II-21; Patton, 154.
- <sup>42</sup> Park County Deed Records, Book 54, 358.
- <sup>43</sup> The Boston and Colorado Sampling Works is listed in the 1895 Colorado State Business Directory but is not listed in the 1899 or subsequent editions.
- <sup>44</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Dec. 27, 1883; Nov. 12, 1885.
- <sup>45</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Mar. 30, 1897.
- <sup>46</sup> 1900 US Census Records. The Colorado State Business Directory for 1899 does not list any sampling works in Alma at the time. According to the Aug 5, 1898, *Fairplay Flume*, Alvin Phillips left Alma for Denver in 1898.
- <sup>47</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, June 14, 1907; Park County Deed Records, Book 68, 484.
- <sup>48</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Oct 26, 1884; *Fairplay Flume*, June 1, 1900; *Fairplay Flume*, June 7, 1901.
- <sup>49</sup> Park County Deed Records, Book 68, 490; *Rocky Mountain News*, Nov 3, 1908. The July 19, 1907, *Fairplay Flume* reported that Charles Perkins had purchased the Montross residence.
- <sup>50</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Nov 3, 1908.
- <sup>51</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Nov 3, 1908. Park County Deed Records, Book 74, 60.
- <sup>52</sup> *Denver Post*, Sept 27, 1902.
- <sup>53</sup> *Denver Post*, Oct 5, 1902.
- <sup>54</sup> The 1902 Sanborn Map documents the large smelting building to the south of the office works, but the building is not included on the 1910 map. *Fairplay Flume*, Aug 27, 1909.
- <sup>55</sup> Patton, 154.
- <sup>56</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, August 13, 1909.

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<sup>57</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, Aug 7, 1910; *Fairplay Flume*, Feb 18, 1910. It is possible, but not likely, that the Colorado Gold Mining and Smelting Company used some of the equipment left on the Boston and Colorado property at the new smelter.

<sup>58</sup> *Fairplay Flume*, Dec 30, 1910.

<sup>59</sup> Park County Deed Records, Book 85, 192.

<sup>60</sup> 1930 US Census Records.

<sup>61</sup> Park County Deed Records, Book 119, 135. According to Park County Historic Preservation Advisory Commission member Jerry Davis, the Painters returned to Alma sometime before the 1950s.

<sup>62</sup> 1930 U.S. Census Records, 1925 Iowa Census Records.

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#### 4. Statement of Significance

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Please explain the significance of the property in relation to the criteria selected in Section 1.

*The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company is eligible for designation as a Park County Historic Landmark under **Criterion A** for its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of Park County.*

Situated on Main Street in the heart of Alma, the surviving buildings of the Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company, constructed circa 1873, are a highly visual reminder of the critical role mining played in the founding and development of North America's highest incorporated town. The decision made by Colorado's most successful smelting company to locate its branch works in Alma demonstrated to the state and the nation the promise of the area's mines, attracting prospectors, investors, and entrepreneurs to the small mountain community. The town quickly grew in population after the opening of the Boston and Colorado's branch smelter, reportedly prompting the town's incorporation in December 1873. Although the smelting industry faded from Alma during the 1880s, mining remained the life's blood of the community throughout the late 1800s and into the first half of the twentieth-century. The Boston and Colorado's Alma Branch ceased smelting in 1878, but the company continued to maintain an active sampling works at the site until 1895. The company's office/residential building later served as a hotel, private residence, and currently, a retail store. In use for the majority of its 140 years, the Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company provides rare insight into the development of Park County's mining industry and the town of Alma as it adapted to changing economic conditions between 1873 and today.

*The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company is eligible for designation as a Park County Historic Landmark under **Criterion B** for its identification with a person(s) or group(s) who significantly contributed to the culture, history or development of a local community, Park County, State of Colorado, or the United States.*

The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company is associated with Nathaniel P. Hill, principal organizer of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company, and his general manager Henry R. Wolcott, individuals who played significant roles in the development of Colorado's mining industry and the town of Alma. After arriving from Providence, Rhode Island, during the early years of the Colorado gold rush, Hill, a former chemistry professor at Brown University, established a highly successful smelting operation at Black Hawk in 1868 and quickly became the industry's leader. Hill served as Black Hawk's mayor in 1871 and as a member of Colorado's Territorial Council in 1872 and 1873. With a variety of partners, including Henry R. Wolcott, Hill actively invested in Alma area mines during the late 1860s and 1870s. In 1873, with Wolcott's urging, he made the decision to locate the company's first branch operations in Alma, which spurred development of the town. Hill was later elected to the U.S. Senate and during his six-year term from 1879 to 1885 served as chairman of the Committee on Mines and Mining.

Massachusetts native Henry R. Wolcott joined the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company in 1870. In addition to his extensive mining interests, Wolcott participated in a number of business ventures during Denver's formative years, serving as vice-president of the First National Bank of Denver and president of the Colorado Telephone Company. Active in Republican politics, Wolcott was elected state senator from Gilpin County in 1878, serving four years, and in 1898, ran unsuccessfully for governor of Colorado. Wolcott's brother, Edward O. Wolcott, also a state senator, was later elected United States senator from Colorado. Henry R. Wolcott invested heavily in Alma area real estate during the early 1870s and with William A. Hawkins, William E. Musgrove, and James V. Dexter, formed the Mount Lincoln Improvement Company in 1875. The company held title to many of Alma's town lots and was integral to the early development of the town. After his death in Honolulu, Hawai'i in 1921, the Denver Post described Henry Wolcott as "...one of the empire builders of Colorado and the west—a pioneer mining man, capitalist, politician, builder, and smelterman..."



## Park County Local Historic Landmark Nomination Form

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### Section 4: Statement of Significance

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#### Resource: Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company

*The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company is eligible for designation as a Park County Historic Landmark under **Criterion D** for its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of a local community, Park County, State of Colorado, or the United States.*

The rush to extract gold, silver, and other valuable metals from Colorado's mountains that began in 1859 spawned a variety of mining-related industries including smelting, the process of heating ore to separate metals from the waste rock or slag. Prior to the establishment of Nathaniel P. Hill's Boston and Colorado Smelting Company smelter at Black Hawk in 1868, ore was regularly shipped out of state for smelting, significantly reducing profits. Establishment of the Boston and Colorado smelter, the first successful smelting operation in Colorado, had a major impact on Colorado's mining industry, significantly increasing efficiency and profitability. The company remained a leader in Colorado's smelting industry until 1910, when it ceased smelting operations. The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company, constructed in 1873, represents a significant milestone in the company's history—the first expansion of the highly influential company's operations outside of Black Hawk. The company's principal smelter sites in Black Hawk and Argo have been demolished, leaving the stone engine/boiler room in Alma as the only intact remnant of a Boston and Colorado smelter facility in Colorado. The associated two-story office and residential building has changed relatively little in 140 years and is arguably the best-preserved building associated with the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company in Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

*The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company is eligible for designation as a Park County Historic Landmark under **Criterion E** for its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, type, or form valuable for the study of a group of people, period, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials and craftsmanship.*

The Alma Branch of the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company is the best-preserved 1870s era mining building in Park County and more specifically, Alma, one of the county's most active mining communities during the late 1800s. Very few mining-related buildings, especially those from the earliest years of Park County's mining history, survive with the level integrity exhibited by the Boston and Colorado buildings. Typically constructed quickly to meet the utilitarian needs of the mining industry in remote areas of the county, most mining buildings have suffered from abandonment and harsh climate conditions, fallen into disrepair, or been demolished to make way for new construction. Despite the replacement of the building's historic windows and doors, the Boston and Colorado office/residential building retains its essential historic form and continues to convey the architectural characteristics associated with typical wood frame buildings constructed in Park County during the 1870s. The otherwise utilitarian building features a bay window, a common Victorian era feature not often seen in buildings associated with mining in Park County, perhaps indicating the wealth and status of the Boston and Colorado company at the time of the building's construction. The engine/boiler room, the only surviving remnant of the company's industrial buildings, is a rare example of limestone masonry construction in Park County. Park County has very few intact stone masonry buildings and most known examples are constructed of local red sandstone. The engine/boiler building is the earliest and best-preserved stone industrial building surviving building in Park County and exemplifies the masonry construction techniques employed by the mining industry in remote areas of Colorado during the 1870s.

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<sup>1</sup> A Boston and Colorado Sampling Works building in Boulder also remains standing, but has been heavily modified over time and no longer retains its historic integrity.

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**5. Verbal Boundary Description**

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Please describe the boundaries of the property being nominated.

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**6. Bibliography**

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Please cite any books, articles, or other sources used in the preparation of this form.



## Park County Local Historic Landmark Nomination Form

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### Section 6: Bibliography

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Resource Name: Boston & Colorado Smelter Works – Alma Branch

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