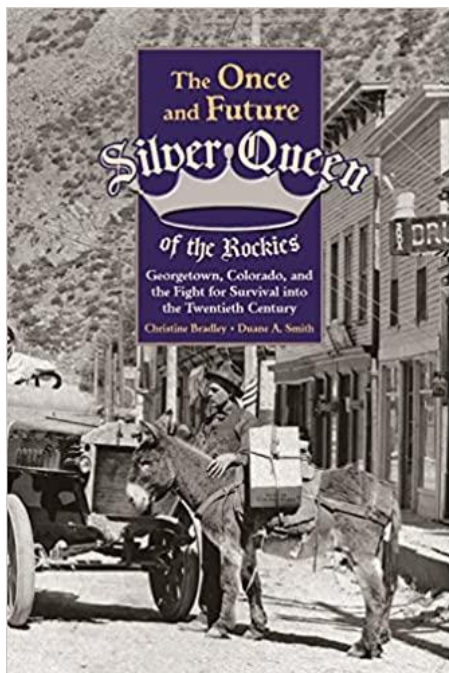


Review of...

The Once and Future Silver Queen of the Rockies:
Georgetown, Colorado, and the Fight for Survival Into
the Twentieth Century / by Christine A. Bradley and
Duane A. Smith
(Mining the American West series)



Reviewed by:

John Stewart

Publishing: Boulder, CO : University of Colorado Press, 2019.
320 pages. Black-and-white illustrations, notes, glossary. 6 x 9
inches (paperback)

Today Georgetown, Colorado, the county seat of Clear Creek County, Colorado, sits alongside busy I-70 about 45 miles west of Denver. Like many a mountain town, it had a colorful past, which began in 1859. In Georgetown's case this was based on silver mining, something which crashed economically in 1893. Other authors have already covered this period in the town's history, but Bradley and Smith begin their tale in 1896. Thus, it is a tale of the town's survival and re-invention, with text aided by eleven photoessay sections.

At first, Georgetown thought its answer lay in more mining, but with a different, non-silver approach. The district held some gold values, as well as copper and zinc. The later discovery of molybdenum in the area brought some hope. Tourists also began to discover Georgetown. Then World War I brought mixed blessings. A nation at war needed the area's minerals. However, it also needed its young men. Ironically, in the year 1917 Georgetown suffered more deaths from mining accidents than the toll of its soldiers fighting in Europe.

After the war, road improvements foretold an increase in tourism. However, the ultimate transportation goal, a completed motor road over Loveland Pass, had been started but would take years to complete. In the meantime, rail traffic ground to a halt, leaving Georgetown a small, isolated mountain town which could not enjoy the "Roaring Twenties" like so much of the nation.

Georgetown, nonetheless, did join the rest of America in suffering through the Great Depression of the 1930s. Banks closed, mining slumped, and the best hopes lay with the civil works projects of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration's New Deal. Road projects came back to life, and the roads led to some newly constructed ski areas. One of these, the future Loveland Basin, brought skiers through

the town in search of new trails. Soon, however, the young skiers were no longer training for intercollegiate competition, but rather for another war at nearby Camp Hale.

Preparation for the war that America had not yet entered brought Georgetown's mines back to life once again, but its citizens feared the inevitable. Once the shock of the December 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor wore off, Georgetown bought war bonds, contributed to the Red Cross, donated blood, sent patriotic "Victory Books" off to the troops, and once again watched its young men march away to join their fellow Americans in arms. Georgetown's women wanted to do their part, but the town lay far from any defense industry which might employ them. They had to be contented with filling out their war stamp books and buying more bonds. Georgetown's gold and silver mines were shut down by federal order because their output was deemed nonessential to the war effort, but those containing ores vital to the war effort, such as lead and zinc, kept on producing.

Post-World War II Georgetown joined the rest of the state in a new era. This time mining was effectively gone. The assets Georgetown could now rely on were those which were already there: location in a beautiful valley, beautiful old buildings, and forward-looking residents. Under the leadership of new citizens such as James Grafton Rogers and Marcellus Merrill, Georgetown capitalized on its location, fixed up its historic buildings, and then received another boost from the construction of Interstate 70 and a link to both Denver and the ski areas.

The book's epilogue takes us to a 1968 meeting where a group of Georgetown citizens convened to work out a comprehensive design review ordinance. At about the same time, the small community created a nonprofit called the Georgetown Society (later changed to Historic Georgetown, Inc.) The Silver Queen's greatest of all assets—it's beautiful, well-preserved buildings—would ensure its survival and growth into the next century.

The authors are eminently qualified to write this book. Christine A. Bradley has served as Clear Creek County archivist and is coauthor of *Guide to the Georgetown Silver Plume Historic District and The Rise of the Silver Queen*. She has served on many boards and commissions in Georgetown, Silver Plume, and Clear Creek County, Colorado.

Duane A. Smith is a retired professor of history at Fort Lewis College in Durango and the author or coauthor of more than sixty books on Colorado. He is the widely acknowledged expert on Colorado mining. He chairs the Durango Parks and Forestry Board and sits on the Anima School House Museum Board.

Smith and Bradley, in a well-written account, provide us with the positive story of the reinvention and ultimate success of a quaint little town. As they note in the book's final two sentences, "Today Georgetown retains a great deal of its historic atmosphere, style, and charm, like an era frozen in time. These great assets beckon you, the reader, to come" (page 293).

About the Reviewer:

John Stewart is a Denver attorney who has also written about Colorado's mining history. He received an MA in history from the University of Colorado Denver in 2002. His thesis became his first book, *Thomas F. Walsh, Progressive Businessman and Colorado Mining Tycoon*, published by the University Press of Colorado in 2007. John is also the president of the Park County Mining Association.