

Coloma

Mystery camp of the Garnet Range

Coloma is a couple of miles above Garnet at the end of a pocked and rutted trail, speckled with boulders. Mines remain near the site, and a few, including some with possibly profitable deposits, are still occasionally worked.

Many of the buildings of Coloma are not as old as those of Garnet, and newspapers and magazines from the 1920s and 1930s have lain strewn on many cabin floors



An old store at Coloma. Photo courtesy of Carl Hansen.

for decades. These materials, plus pages from mail-order catalogs, were commonly used to paper the cabin walls for insulation.

Mine shafts, rusting ventilation systems, and pumping machines abound, and the town holds the remains of narrow-gauge-railroad tracks, which were used in hauling out the ores. Sounds of logging trucks and present-day mining operations break the silence most visitors expect of a ghost town.

Coloma's early history is shrouded in mystery. US geological survey teams, described abortive attempts to glean information about Coloma in 1917:

During 1896 and the next few years, while the Mammoth and Comet mines were in operation, it was lively. In 1916 there was some activity—mills were installed, but from all that could be learned neither mine yielded profit. . . . Although rich in places, the veins are small, and the work seems to have been planned on a scale out of proportion to them.

The *Bulletin* indicated that no mining records were seen but estimated that about \$200,000 in gold ore were taken from the Mammoth mine. Most of the ore



This now-rotting trunk probably once held precious family treasures. Photo courtesy of Carl Hansen.

reported, was milled, and all but a little of the gold was lost in tailings. The report continued: "None of the old workings were accessible at the time of the visit, and information concerning the ore bodies is rather meager."

Even today it is most difficult to find facts about this obscure mining town. Back in the 1970s the longtime postmistress of nearby Greenough maintained, "There are so many new logging roads in the area, I couldn't

begin to tell you where the town is." When this book was originally published, area residents who knew a bit about the town refused to answer questions about it.

Perhaps mining operations at Coloma were monumental failures that no one wished to admit. Perhaps Coloma is one of those areas where the possibility of wealthy discoveries is still great enough to silence those who might tell of its past, present, and possible future.



The remains of what was probably the blacksmith's shop at Coloma. Photo courtesy of Carl Hansen.