

IDAHO HOTEL

Silver City, Idaho

After rich gold and silver deposits were discovered in the Owyhee Mountains of southwestern Idaho, dozens of mining camps sprang into existence; one being Ruby City, where the Idaho Hotel was originally established in 1863. In July of 1866 a large three-story wing was added. However, that same year Ruby City lost the county seat to its two-year-old rival, Silver City, a mile up Jordan Creek. Soon, many homes and store buildings were moved from Ruby City to Silver City in order to capitalize on the business generated in the new county seat. Later that year, the hotel's new wing was dismantled, loaded piece-by-piece onto sleds and skids, and pulled up the snow and ice covered road by oxen to its new site in Silver City. It was reassembled, and a three-story addition was built, the frozen-fingered carpenters finishing in time for the owners to host a "first-class" Christmas Eve Ball.

Spring water was piped to the hotel by 1868. A bar room and "piazza" were added in 1871. A commodious new kitchen was built in the basement "containing all the modern improvements and conveniences", and a "new set of bathrooms were built so that hot or cold baths could be had at all hours everyday". The bar room was "ornamented with the costliest and handsomest mirror ever brought to Silver City" in 1874, all of the interior woodwork was hand-grained in 1882, and a billiards parlor-gambling room was added in 1889. In front of the icehouse, "A fine stone cellar" for storage of food and drink was completed in 1890. A five-story addition containing a new dining room with two stories of bedrooms above was finished in 1898, and a storage tunnel connecting the cellar with a mine tunnel beneath the street in front of the hotel was excavated in 1901.

Numerous businesses had offices in the hotel through the years: stagecoach lines, telegraph and telephone companies, doctors, dentists, lawyers and a jeweler. A "sample room" provided display space for the wares of visiting salesmen called "drummers".

A great many functions were held in the hotel, including balls, weddings, funerals, musicals, literary club meetings, socials and banquets. Functions of an

"unsocial nature" also occurred, mostly in the form of verbal altercations, fistfights and shootings, the most famous of which was the fatal J. Marion Moore - Samuel Lockhart shooting that occurred in front of the hotel in 1868.

The hotel was closed around 1942, then fell into disrepair. In the spring of 1972, Edward Jagels purchased the building and the creaking old front doors once more swung open for business. The Idaho Hotel became Ed's personal crusade and he dedicated the rest of his life, nearly 30 years, to restoring this grand hotel and preserving its place in history. The hotel was sold again to its current owners in 2001. Their dream is to continue Ed's legacy and preserve the old hotel as he had intended for future generations to enjoy. Many sections are still closed to the public though, as they have yet to be restored.



Empire Room

Snacks, short orders, soft drinks, beer, wine, and the like are served in the dining room, and family-style meals are available with reservations of a week in advance. Please call to request family style dinner menu choices and prices.

Overnight guests should make reservations several days to a week in advance. Silver City has been without electricity since the 1940's. 12-volt lights, three showers, hand-washing sinks and several flush toilets have been added for overnight guests. The bedrooms are furnished with vintage furniture and most are unheated. Several rooms have propane

heaters. Staying in the hotel is a first hand experience of life in the nineteenth century.

Room rates vary from \$45.00 to \$125.00 per room; the standard is \$55. There is absolutely **NO SMOKING** allowed inside the hotel.



Room 10

Rugged and picturesque, the 8,000 feet-high Owyhee Mountains surround Silver City, elevation 6,200'. The history-filled town contains about seventy-five structures that date from the 1860's the early 1900's. During its "heydays", Silver City had about a dozen streets, seventy-five businesses, three hundred homes, a population of around 2,500, twelve ore-processing mills, and was the Owyhee County seat from 1866 to 1934. Some of the largest stage lines in the West operated in the area, and Silver City had the first telegraph and the first daily newspaper in the territory in 1874. Telephones were in use here at least by 1880, and the town was "electrified" in the 1890's. There were four separate burial areas nearby, with a few very interesting stones remaining; some quite large and elaborately carved. All are well worth the hike to see and photograph.

More than two dozen camps provided shelter, supplies and amusement for the thousands of people who came to the mountains seeking their fortunes in one way or another. The ruins of some of these can still be found though nature is reclaiming most of them at an accelerated rate. Almost a dozen cemeteries and many more remote burial sites attest to the hard and sometimes dangerous and violent lives led by many. Hundreds of mines pock-mark and honeycomb the mountains; one had upwards of seventy miles of tunnels laboriously hand-dug through it. Between 1863 and 1865, more than two hundred and fifty mines were in operation and hundreds more were developed thereafter. Through the seventy-odd years of mining, more than twelve ore-processing mills gleaned rich rewards in tons of gold and silver. Large stacks of gold and silver ingots were photographed for posterity. At the very least, sixty million dollars worth of precious metals were taken from the area. At today's prices, that amount would be even more impressive. At the present time, there are no major mines operating in the area. The DeLamar Silver Mine began operation in 1977, shut down in 2000, and is one of the largest open pit gold and silver mines in the U.S.

Directions to Silver City

To reach Silver City from the east, Exit State Highway 78 to the west, five miles south of Murphy, the present Owyhee County Seat. (If your route takes you through Murphy, be sure to visit the Owyhee County Historical Society Museum there.) Upon turning off the highway, you will encounter a few miles of paved road, then graveled road (rough in places) that winds twenty miles through desert, foothills, spectacular canyon lands and forest-covered mountains, before reaching Silver City. If you are coming from the west, exit U.S. 95 to the east through Jordan Valley, Oregon. Twenty-five miles of travel include a few miles of paved narrow county road, a few miles of improved oiled gravel road, and then a narrow, rougher dirt road that for about the last half of the trip follows Jordan Creek through canyons and mountains to Silver City.

Check locally, preferably by calling into Silver City: **IDAHO HOTEL (208) 583-4104** for road and weather conditions. The roads are closed by heavy snowfall from about November until May. Make certain that your vehicle is in good running condition,

since there are no repair shops or towing services in Silver City. There are no gas stations in town, so fill your tank in Jordan Valley, OR. Dan's Ferry Service, Murphy or in Grandview, ID. Properly prepared, you will have a safe and very enjoyable visit to Silver City.

Special Dates of Interest

Opening weekend: Memorial Day weekend.

July 4th: Town celebration, horseshoe tournament, old-fashioned games. A great family get together.

Owyhee Cattlemen's Association: The last weekend in July. Not a good family weekend.

Labor Day Weekend: A local tradition to be stopped by the traffic light by the local self appointed law. A judge is on hand for any disputes, fines are donation. The annual poker and Pinochle tournament – all proceeds help fund the water system.

Silver City Open House: Ten or more private buildings open to the public for tours the second weekend after Labor Day.

The Hotel closes mid October, except for weekends to the first of November, depending on the weather conditions. We are open occasionally in the winter.



Silver City Winter Scene, March, 2004

The roads are not maintained in the winter, so traffic is snowmobiles and cross country skiers only. Please call and check our schedule.

We now rent 4 wheelers. Reservations required with a credit card deposit. Please call for availability.



Idaho Hotel circa 1890

Idaho Hotel In Historic Silver City, Idaho "Queen of the Old Mining Towns"

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 75, Murphy, Idaho 83650

Telephone: (208) 583-4104

We accept VISA and Master Card.

Idaho Hotel Interior-Bar

