

White Swan Mine
Site 5ST663

The White Swan Mine was an operation that was marginally productive at best, and most likely a failure. Miners sank a shaft into the floor of the Middle Fork of the Swan River valley, near the valley's head, at Sheep Mountain's north base. The site lies in the Swandyke Mining District at around 11,400 feet elevation where a fir and spruce forest grades into alpine tundra. A road descends the valley from the site to the townsite of Swandyke and ascends to an area that features prospects.

White Swan Mine History

Little information could be found pertaining to the White Swan Mine. The discovery of an ore vein was probably a result of either the early 1890s or late 1890s rush to the Middle Fork of the Swan River, which created the town of Swandyke. If this is the case, a lack of archival information suggests that the property remained undeveloped for years. At some point, prospectors staked a group of claims, which an unknown mining company acquired. According to scant, secondary documentation, a company engaged in some development and built a mill powered by a waterwheel. The settlement that grew around the mine came to be known as Upper Swandyke, and while the mine's crew lived there, the settlement may have served as a base of operations for prospectors.¹

The lack of archival information pertaining to the White Swan Mine during the 1890s and 1900s suggests that the operation was a failure. By 1908, the Dunkin Mining Company acquired the property, which by this time included the Wolftone, Bolivia, Windsor, Dunkin No.3, and other claims. Dunkin would not have acquired the land if it did not offer some potential since the company had success with other properties. In particular, the company owned and operated the Dunkin Mine, a rich producer in Illinois Gulch near Breckenridge. The Dunkin company hired Warren F. Page to oversee exploration and development. Like the Dunkin company, Page also had experience with mining. He managed the Little Pittsburgh Mine at Leadville for Horace Tabor then came to Breckenridge to work at the Dunkin Mine. The White Swan failed to develop into a substantial producer and was abandoned.²

White Swan Mine Site Summary and Description

The White Swan Mine retains no physical integrity and barely can be discerned as a mine site. Historic and current topographic maps depict at least three structures on site, including a cabin on a regional road, another frame building where the mine's shaft was located, and a building between the shaft and the main road. A structure that was apparently a concentration mill may have also stood between the road and shaft. Within recent decades, someone bulldozed all building platforms, reclaimed the area where the mill may have stood, excavated settling ponds downslope, and spread out the waste rock dump associated with the shaft. The Division of Minerals and Geology then graded the

¹ Brown, 1993:268; Southworth, 1999:191.

² Colorado Mine Inspectors' Reports: White Swan Mine; Colorado Mine Managers' Reports: Dunkin Mine; Griswold and Griswold, 1996:2224.

shaft, which is flooded. In sum, the shaft is the site's only recognizable feature, and few historic artifacts remain.