

Colorado Avalanches February 1899

Silver Plume, Clear Creek County, Colorado

Silver Plume was in Nationwide newspaper reporting in February 1899. A catastrophe from two gigantic snow slides just back of Silver Plume combined into one and swept down Cheyenne Canyon at 8 o'clock AM where there was an Italian community. It carried away a dozen or more mining buildings, cabins and machinery. It took the lives of at least 11 people. The total number of fatalities was not known at time of the publications in the **Los Angeles Herald**, #147 on Feb. 14, the **Daily Telluride Journal** or other national newspapers. It was stated that the number of bodies in the great mass of snow would not be known before spring.

The men who were saved say that it was by a miracle. They were unable to get out of the way of the moving mass of snow. Where the slide finally stopped the drift was 300 feet across and from 50-75 feet in depth. It was a full 1500 feet in length, and full of timbers and boulders. It was almost impossible to dig into the hard mass. The rescuing party was made up of the mining and business men of the area and Georgetown who worked in relays. Ropes were used and sometimes 75 men would be hauling on them to move a big log out of the snow. From ten minutes after the slide until late into the night men continued working to rescue the missing.

The ore houses of the Pelican and Corry City mines were swept away and it was estimated that \$50,000 worth of ore was carried into the basin between the mountains and lost.

Three men who were caught in the slide were taken out with only slight bruises.

The dead known were:

- Domonido Destefeno, his wife, daughter, aged 2 and son Joseph, aged 5
- John and Jos. Tondera
- Jerome Guananzi
- John Bietto
- Enrico Navaira

The Injured were:

- Tony Negretto, Arm broken
- Joseph Cocon, Head cut and body bruised
- Tony Malino, Leg broken

The **Daily Telluride Journal** on February 22, 1899 reported "ANOTHER SLIDE AT SILVER PLUME".

"Four more men buried. Work on all Surrounding Mines Abandoned".

Another terrible avalanche came down the mountain this morning, burying the Seven-thirty mine and totally destroying all its buildings. The avalanche swept under was Ben Wilson, John Anderson and Peter Olson, and moving on the Brown mine entombed Dan Fitzpatrick. The miners quickly gathered and Olson and Fitzpatrick were taken out. There is no hope for Anderson and Nelson. Olson will recover. Two Finlanders were buried at the edge of the avalanche, but managed to dig themselves out. The men are eagerly working to rescue the other victims, but the wind is blowing a hurricane. Several of the rescuers were hurt, notably Chad Sundrum and Albert Erickson. At noon work had to be abandoned, as there was danger of another slide. The weather has moderated and snow slides were frequent all over the hills.