



The Big Bonanza: An Authentic Account of the Discovery, History, and Working of the World-Renowned Comstock Lode of Nevada

Dan de Quille

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The Comstock Lode is a lode of silver ore located under the eastern slope of Mount Davidson, a peak in the Virginia Range in Nevada (then western Utah Territory). It was the first major discovery of silver ore in the United States. After the discovery was made public in 1859, it sparked a silver rush of prospectors to the area, scrambling to stake their claims. The discovery caused considerable excitement in California and throughout the United States, the greatest since the discovery of gold in California eleven years earlier. Mining camps soon thrived in the vicinity, which became bustling centers of fabulous wealth, including Virginia City and Gold Hill. The Comstock Lode is notable not just for the immense fortunes it generated and the large role those fortunes had in the growth of Nevada and San Francisco, but also for the advances in mining technology that it spurred, such as square set timbering and the Washoe process for extracting silver from ore. The mines declined after 1874, though underground mining continued into the 1920s, with sporadic efforts thereafter.

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