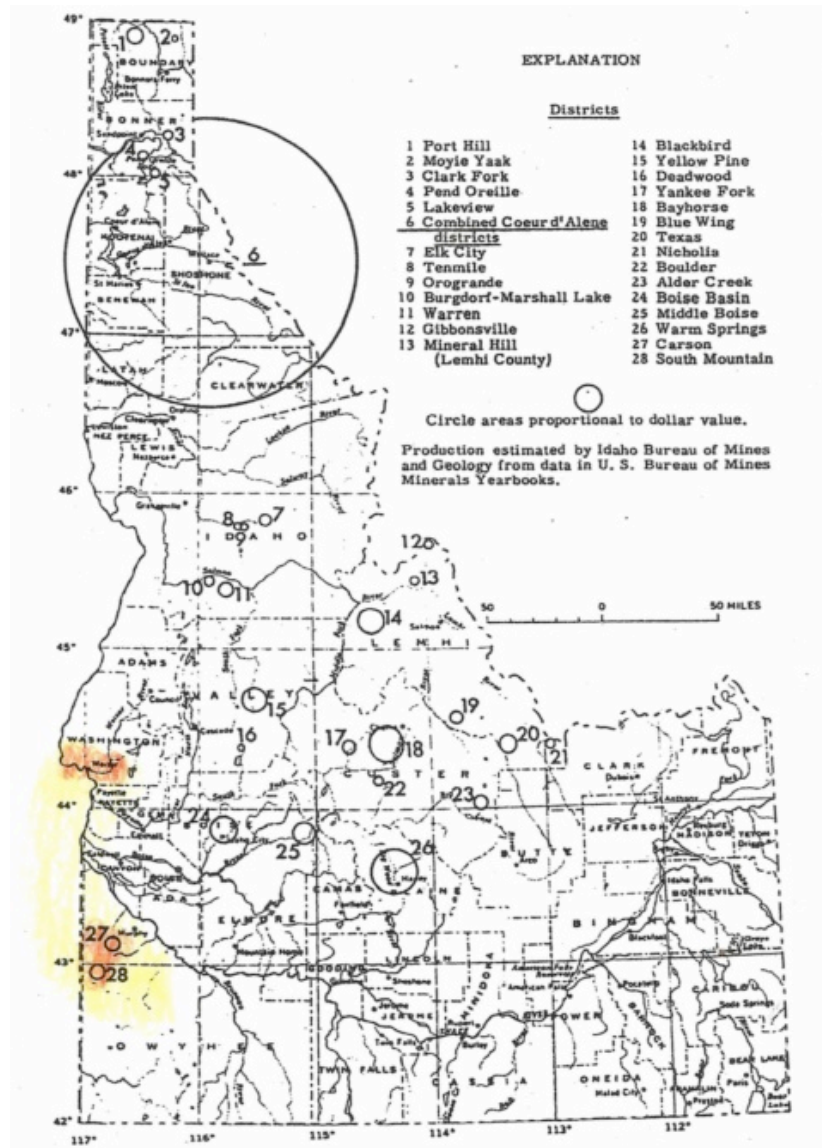


Southwestern Idaho



Minerals & Ores in the case are from Mining Districts:

Silver City ● Delamar ● Flint ● Castle Creek
 South Mountain ● Opaline ● Weiser Districts and Vicinity

There are two very different mining district areas in this region. The most productive of these has been the Owyhee Mountain group that includes the Silver City and Delamar subdistricts. The other area is at South Mountain, where copper, lead, zinc, and silver occur at or near the contact of a granitic mass in metamorphosed sedimentary rocks of possible accreted island arc affinity. The dark specimens of Hedenbergite in this case are rocks associated with some of the base metal ores at South Mountain.

Silver City was one of the important 1863 discoveries that followed the discovery of gold in Boise Basin. In 1865 the fabulously rich Poorman silver-bearing vein in the granite of War Eagle Mountain was discovered and led to a struggle for control of that property. Most of the production from this district came from lode mines on veins, unlike most of the production from Boise Basin, which was mostly from placer mines in deposits of gravel. Several open pit silver-gold mines have operated in the Delamar and Silver City area in recent years and there is occasional talk of renewed activity.

The geology of the Owyhee Mountains is dominated by Tertiary volcanic rocks which overly a large granitic mass. The granite is considered to be related to the Idaho Batholith of central Idaho. The granite is overlain by basalt, rhyolite, and other volcanic and occasional sedimentary rocks. Petrified wood and other fossils occur in some of the sedimentary units.

Mineral deposits in the Silver City and Delamar area belong to a group of deposits classified by geologists as epithermal – those formed from ancient hot springs near the earth's surface. Along with the valuable minerals in these deposits there is commonly an abundance of cryptocrystalline silica (chalcedony and sometimes opal). A specimen of bladed silica replacing calcite that appears in this cabinet is a particularly promising indicator of nearby ore. Many similar but less productive occurrences of epithermal gold appear in a variety of localities in nearby eastern Oregon as far north as Vale and Farewell Bend. A few also are found near Weiser. Some of these have been associated with mercury sulfide (red cinnabar) mineralization directly above the gold.

Southwestern Mining Districts