

Site 7: Avalanche

In the 19th century the hillsides north of Silver Plume were almost barren of trees, most of which had been cut down for use in the mines, for fuel or for building cabins. This meant that heavy snows posed an especially serious threat for avalanches. Early in the morning of February 12, 1899 an avalanche roared down this gulch (Cherokee), and the smaller gulch immediately to the west (Willehan). Ten people lost their lives: Dominick DeStafano his wife, son and daughter; Joseph Tondini, Peter Tondini, John Tondini (brothers), Gerondo Guenzi, G. Bietto, and Enrico Novaria. The families, all of Italian descent, had been living in cabins on the hillside, and are now buried together in the Silver Plume cemetery near a monument which reads: "Sacred to the Memory of the Ten Italians, Victims of an Avalanche. February 12, 1899. Erected By the Public."

Three other men, also Italians (Antonio Migretto, Antonio Maleano and Guiseppe Corcunio) were dug from the slides by rescuers from both Silver Plume and Georgetown, who used the piles of scattered lumber as focal points.



Searching for victims of the avalanche. People for Silver Plume collection