

HORACE A.W. TABOR

When: 1830–1899

Where: Born in Vermont, moved to Kansas, and then to Colorado.

Why Important: Horace was a hard-working person who rose from a simple stone-cutter to become one of Colorado's wealthiest men.



Tabor, Horace A. W. Studio portrait of Horace Austin Warner Tabor, Colorado prospector, mine owner, and United States Senator. Between 1883 and 1890? Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Call Number: X-22028.

Denver, Tabor Grand, and Curtis St. West. Westward, second-story level view of Curtis Street in downtown Denver, Colorado; Joslins' Dry Goods store at left (southwest corner of 16th & Curtis), the Tabor Grand Opera House at right (built by Horace Tabor and opened in 1881); pedestrian and horse-and-buggy traffic appears on street. Between 1886 and 1901]. Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Call Number: H-575.

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Horace Tabor was born in Holland, Vermont on November 26, 1830. He grew up to become a stone-cutter. He married Augusta Pierce and the two moved to Kansas to live on a farm. In 1850 Augusta, Horace, and their son Maxey moved to Colorado to mine for gold.

Tabor mined at California Gulch. His wife ran a shop, cooked, and took in boarders. They made a good amount of money with the shop, but Tabor wanted more. He moved the family to Leadville. Tabor became postmaster and his wife opened another shop. One day he gave supplies to two miners in exchange for the promise of one third of their profit. The miners struck silver and the Tabors became rich!

In 1879 Tabor moved his family to Denver. He started several mining companies and spent a lot of money. He also donated money to build the Tabor Grand Opera. He became Lieutenant Governor and a senator. Tabor's wife was unhappy with his spending. She believed they should save money. Their marriage fell apart and Augusta divorced Horace in 1883. Tabor then married Elizabeth "Baby Doe" McCourt. They became known as "The Silver King and Queen."

Many people thought Tabor's divorce was scandalous and disapproved of his new family. However, Horace and Baby Doe had a loving marriage and two daughters, Elizabeth Bonduel "Lily" Tabor and Rosemary "Silver Dollar" Echo Tabor. The Tabor mines made millions of dollars. This allowed the Tabors to travel, wear expensive clothing, and attend grand parties.

The Tabor family's wealth disappeared in 1893 with the Silver Crash and economic depression. The value of silver dropped and the Tabor silver mines no longer made money. The family lost their wealth and had to sell their mansion. Tabor died in 1899, wrongly insisting that his mines would be profitable again.

Sources:

"Horace Austin Warner Tabor." Colorado State Archives. Lieutenant Governors. <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/offic/litgov.html#Tabor>

"Rags, Riches and Scandal—The Tabor Triangle." Legends of America. Rocky Mountain Legends. <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/co-tabor.html>

The Matchless Mine. <http://www.matchlessmine.com/>