

eight-hour shift, and so a second (and sometimes a third) shift was added to meet the contract of 500 tons per day. By comparison, in the 1960s, any one of the five crushing plants in the district could produce 500 tons per hour.

From 1924 to 1936, Utah Iron mined 2.4 million net tons of iron ore, with 1.5 million tons supplied to Columbia Steel, 778,350 tons sent to the CF&I furnace at Pueblo, and 134,000 tons sold for flux to various foundries and smelters. Desert Mound Mine went out of production in 1936.

Iron Springs was at its height between 1924 and 1936. A post office was located in the branch store of the Cedar Mercantile Company and the school board moved a schoolhouse from Yale. Iron Springs School operated from 1924 to 1930. About forty men were employed at the Pioche mine. Community baseball was a favorite pastime, and the team from Iron Springs played teams from other communities and the CCC camps during the 1930s.

The purchase of Columbia Steel by United States Steel Corporation (USS, later USX) in 1929 significantly impacted iron mining in southern Utah. USS set up its own mining operations under a subsidiary, Columbia Iron Mining Company, which operated in Iron County from 1935 to 1985. Due to the depletion of suitable grades of ore at Desert Mound, Columbia moved its mining operations to Iron Mountain. Twelve miles of track was laid to extend the railroad from Desert Mound to the south side of Iron Mountain. Open-pit mining began at the Black Hawk outcrop. Black Hawk ore, higher in iron content than other available ores, improved furnace performance and demand increased. Ore shipments to Ironton rose from 175,000 tons per year in 1936 to nearly 300,000 tons in 1941.

Prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, United States defense plans included locating an inland steel mill somewhere in the West. A site at Orem, Utah, was selected because it was away from possible air attack, was an equal distance from major naval bases, had good transportation facilities, and was near plentiful sources of coal, iron ore, and water. The Geneva mill required four times the quantity of iron ore as the Ironton plan. Between 1940 and Geneva's opening in 1944, the number of mine workers in Iron County increased from twenty-one to more than 300. Shifts and work hours multiplied

to provide iron ore for Geneva, Ironton, and other plants supplying steel for the all-out war effort.

In addition to Columbia Steel, CF&I contracted in 1943 with Utah Construction Company (UCC) to build a loading plant and to open CF&I's mine on the Duncan Claim. Beginning with just a six-month contract, UCC began a forty-year operation in Iron County. Iron ore mined by UCC on land it leased was sold on the open market, primarily to Kaiser Steel Company at Fontana, California.

No labor union represented iron miners of the county until 1943 when United Steelworkers of America representatives met with Columbia Steel miners to organize a local in the mining district. This union was a member of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) labor group. When Utah Construction began its mining activities in the county, its workers were members of the Construction Trade Unions, a member of the rival labor organization, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and received higher wages than did Columbia Steel workers. As a result, there was contention over wages and contracts at the Columbia Steel mines for a number of years.

Geneva Mill operated for twenty-one months as a defense plant, stopping production on 3 September 1945, just weeks after the surrender of Japan. When the Geneva plant and its war-time facilities were first offered for sale in 1946, companies were not interested. Political pressure by President Truman and Utah's congressional delegation finally elicited six bids, US Steel's being the most favorable. The plant, which cost about \$200 million to build, was purchased by USS for \$47.5 million. USS spent \$17 million converting the plant to a peace-time operation. The purchase of Geneva was of tremendous importance to Iron County. The local newspaper editor commented:

Completion of the sale assures the peace-time operation of this great war developed plant and brings to the west its greatest chance of industrial development. . . . And since the Geneva plant is dependent upon the ore from Iron County mines to feed its blast furnaces, Cedar City immediately takes its place as an important cog in the industrial development of the West, and will benefit tremendously.<sup>22</sup>



Lindsay Hill pit near Iron Springs. (Special Collections, Gerald R. Sherratt Library, SUU; photo by York Jones)

Ore requirements for Geneva's blast furnaces needed an increase in mining production as well as a more even chemically blended furnace feed. Geneva Steel and Columbia Mining Company decided to blend low-grade ores of 40 percent iron content with higher-grade ores. A blending facility was built at Geneva to allow use of the lower-grade ores, a step in conserving available resources and fully using the iron as it was mined.<sup>23</sup>

In 1949 Columbia Mining reopened the Desert Mound ore body and the Short Line deposit next to it. Columbia built its own power plant with three diesel generators at Iron Mountain. Company-owned power transmission lines were strung from the power plant to Desert Mound.

During the 1940s, over 17.4 million net tons of ore was mined in Iron County, five times more than had been mined in the previous eighty-seven years. The 1950s proved to be the largest production decade in history. Combined shipments of the Utah Construction

and Columbia Mining companies exceeded 41.85 million tons. Over 600 people were employed in mining, and the county benefited from high wages and a mine-oriented tax base.

During the 1950s, the unions were strong and strikes every three or four years by the United Steelworkers of America hurt the local economy. In 1949, as part of a national strike, 165 local workers struck for six weeks. In 1952, 220 local workers were on strike for ten weeks, extending their strike past the national settlement to resolve a local pay issue. In 1956, 241 members of the local union struck from July to November. By a domino effect, some Utah Construction workers and railroad workers also were laid off during these times. On occasion, separate railroad union strikes resulted in curtailed production and lay offs of mine employees. Local businesses felt the consequences, which sometimes persisted for months after the strike settlement as families recovered from the loss of income. Some businessmen resented the high wages paid miners because it caused employee discontent among their own workers. Hourly wages in the steel industry were the highest in the country in the 1950s and 1960s. However, by the 1960s, Japan, operating the most modern steel plants in the world, could ship iron ore from Utah to Japan, fabricate steel products, ship them back to San Francisco, and still undersell US Steel.<sup>24</sup>

Two other issues affected US Steel's long-range plans in Iron County. Development of the 100-million-ton Rex ore body was held up by contested mining claims requiring years of litigation and extensive royalty payments. The other issue was additional local taxation, deemed unfair by USS. Some county residents were concerned that ore reserves were being exhausted without sufficient return to the county. In 1949 Iron County Attorney Durham Morris drafted legislation introduced by State Senator L.N. Marsden and Representative E. Ray Lyman in the state legislature designed to bring additional tax revenues from mining. The state in 1950 passed the "net proceeds tax," levied on all iron ore shipments. Mining companies' protests resulted in some modification, but the companies still faced a large tax increase after 1951. The value of the iron mines of the state, all located in Iron County, was set at \$24,177,127 for 1951 tax purposes, which accounted for 67 percent of the total county tax