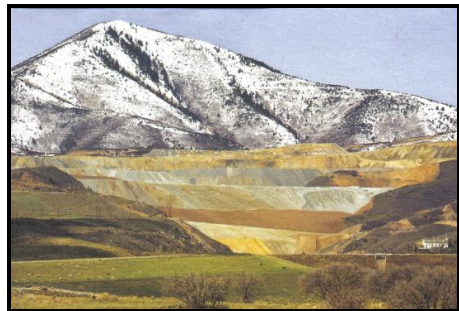


# THE OQUIRRH MOUNTAINS STORY

The Oquirrh Mountains (pronounced /'oʊkər/ "ochre") is a mountain range that runs north-south for approximately 30 miles (50 km) to form the west side of Utah's Salt Lake Valley, separating it from Tooele Valley. The range begins in northwest Utah County and stops at the south shore of the Great Salt Lake. The highest elevation is Lewiston Peak at 10,676 feet and the second highest elevation is Flat Top Mountain at 10,620 ft (3,237 m). Communities located on the eastern slope include Magna, Copperton, and Cedar Fort; and on the west slope Tooele, Stockton, and Ophir.



The name "Oquirrh" is a Ute Indian word translated as "The Shining Mountains" or "Glowing," possibly due in part to the appearance of the range when struck by first light in the winter. It is also taken from the Goshute Indian word meaning "wooded mountain." Early visits to these mountains were undertaken by the Indians, mountain men, government explorers, and Mormon pioneers. They encountered heavily forested canyons with large maple trees, scrub oak, and red pine with trunks as large as three feet in diameter.



The mountains have been mined for gold, silver, lead, and most famously for copper, as home of the porphyry copper deposit at Bingham Canyon Mine, one of the world's largest open pit mines. As seen from Salt Lake City, the view of the mountain range is dominated by the displaced rock material (known as "spoils") dug from the Kennecott mine. At the north end of the range is Kennecott's smelter complex which refines ore concentrates from the mine into useful metals. Dark colored tailings from past metal refining at the complex can be observed from the adjacent freeway, I-80.

The range has many canyons and dense forests, consisting mainly of conifers and aspen. The area is also home to thriving populations of butterflies, deer, mountain lions, and squirrels. Two of the most popular canyons are Yellow Fork Canyon and Butterfield Canyon.



In the winter months, the mountains become home to a small population of bald eagles, which can often be found in the cliffs on the west side of the range down to the reservoir near the town of Stockton.



The north end of the mountain range features a peak known as Farnsworth Peak which houses almost all of the Salt Lake City FM and TV station transmitters. The peak is also used for police, fire, and EMS emergency communications.



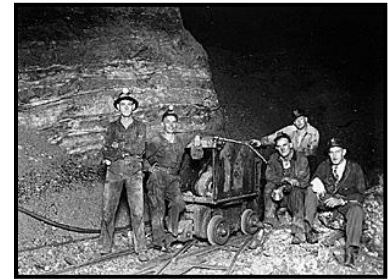
Several local businesses and amateur radio operators have transmitters on Farnsworth Peak.



The Oquirrh Mountains separate the desolate west desert from the fertile land, and heavy development, of the Wasatch Front. This mountain range is not protected by wilderness designation; instead, it is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. This designation allows more extensive development of interior roads and construction. At one time, extensive mining took place in the Oquirrths, but those activities are now restricted to the Kennecott Copper Mine, one of the largest copper mines in the world.

The terrain of the Oquirrths is far more docile than the nearby Wasatch Mountains. The slopes are relaxed, the ridges are wide, and there are few, if any, cliffed-out and exposed routes. These are great mountains for easy hiking and backcountry skiing, though the Oquirrh Mountains can be difficult to access. The base of these mountains is littered with private land and highly protective landowners. Nonetheless, there are a number of trailheads that can be found near the towns of Tooele and Ophir. From these trailheads, the tallest peaks can be climbed and skied.

The first attempt to settle in the Oquirrths occurred in 1848. At that time two Mormon pioneer brothers, Thomas and Sanford Bingham, set up camp at the mouth of Bingham Canyon. For the next year or so, the Bingham brothers spent their time in what became known as Bingham Canyon, herding cattle and, to a limited degree, prospecting for valuable minerals. The ore finds were soon forgotten after 1850 and for the next decade, the Oquirrths continued to be used as a grazing ground as well as a valuable source of timber for the Mormons.



Two stories tell how ore was discovered. In 1863 Bingham Canyon was being logged and a piece of ore was uncovered. In another story, during a picnic to Bingham Canyon by some officers and their wives from Camp Douglas, one of the ladies found a piece of ore on the mountainside. Some contend that the combination of these two stories marked the beginning of the history of mining for precious metals in Utah. Some of the mines yielded rich deposits, but the recoverable ore was soon exhausted.



During the period from 1880 to 1896, lead and silver replaced gold as the main minerals mined in the Oquirrh district. At that time the red mineral copper was considered inferior and unable to be mined. Samuel Newhouse initiated copper mining in 1896 when he shipped out the first copper sulfides from the Highland Boy Mine. The low-grade ore could be financially profitable if it was mined in large quantities, using the open-pit mining process. In 1903, Daniel C. Jackling, a young mining engineer, formed the Utah Copper Company, which later was merged with the Kennecott Copper Corporation. Jackling has rightly been called the "Father of Utah Copper Mining."

Around the turn of the century, mining became a big business which required huge amounts of capital and a large supply of labor. The undertakings of these large Utah mining companies have since helped to make the Oquirrh Mountains world famous for their mineral production. So much wealth has been taken from the Oquirrths that it has been estimated that the value of minerals taken from Bingham Canyon alone exceeds by eight times all of the finds of the California and Klondike gold rushes plus the yields of Nevada's Comstock Lode.

Compiled by Scott Crump and others. See: Vern Abreu, *Bingham to Highland Boy* (1986); Leonard J. Arrington and Gary B. Hansen, "The Richest Hole on Earth--A History of the Bingham Copper Mine," *Utah State University Monograph Series II* (1963); Lynn R. Bailey, *Old Reliable--A History of Bingham Canyon, Utah* (1988); Violet Boyce and Mabel Harmer, *Upstairs to a Mine* (1976); Scott Crump, *Copperton* (1978); Marion Dunn, *Bingham Canyon* (1973).

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- 5); [http://www.naturalvisionsphoto.com/weblog2/blog\\_images/baea8821lg.html](http://www.naturalvisionsphoto.com/weblog2/blog_images/baea8821lg.html); 6) dtvutah.com/images/tower/tower.jpg;
- 7) flickr.com/photos/wickenden/79047224/;
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- 9) [http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah\\_chapters/mining\\_and\\_railroads/images/Jackling.jpg](http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/mining_and_railroads/images/Jackling.jpg).