

Georgetown— Snake River Wagon Road

Mixed foot trail, biking and motorized route, parallel to Waldorf Road (F.S. Trail No. 248). 7.5 mi. (one way) 4.0 mi. foot and bike, 3.5 mi. improved dirt road. 3,840 ft. elev. change. Hiking trail starts on the old roadbed just past Georgetown Reservoir on Guanella Pass Road at a sign post marked Silver Dale with green trail markers on west side of road. It is about .4 mi. downhill from parking area at the wide switchback at the beginning of the Waldorf Road. Trail leads uphill, crosses Waldorf Rd. (.5 mi.) and follows the old wagon roadbed at water grade up Leavenworth Creek, joining the Waldorf Road (Argentine Central Railroad bed) again at mi. 4.0 (elev. 11,520). From the summit of Argentine Pass the wagon roadbed (undrivable) then descends to the Argentine Pass Trail Head on Peru Creek in Summit County.

Historic notes: **Georgetown/Snake River Wagon Road**—This road originally ran from Georgetown to the mines in East Argentine, then over Argentine Pass to Snake River drainage and the silver mining areas of Chihuahua, Sts. John and Montezuma (east and southeast of today's Keystone resort area). The original road, started in 1867, commenced at the junction of 2nd and Rose streets in Georgetown, making one large sweep to traverse the face of Leavenworth Mt. around to Silver Dale and the present day trailhead, continuing as far as the base of Mt. McClellan. The road was paid for by local businessmen and stockholders. The later continuation, a steep grade down into Chihuahua, on the west side of the divide, would not be completed until 1869. The territorial legislature provided the county with an additional \$1,000 for further improvements the following year. Of note along the way: **Marshall Tunnel**--local mine owners and investors proudly opened this tunnel to the public for a "gala" in October of 1875, entertaining an estimated 800-1,000 people in a sizeable opening, eight hundred feet inside the portal, estimated to be 500 feet below the surface of the mountain at that point. The Colorado Miner (Oct., 1875) noted: "Never before in any country on earth did so many intelligent men and beautiful and accomplished women, meet in the heart of a mountain to celebrate an event so full of significance to the mining industry of the commonwealth." **Huff Gulch campsite**-- The first major silver strike in Colorado came in the fall of 1864, near the top of Mt. McClellan. Robert Steele, a member of the prospecting party and former governor of the extra-legal

Argentine Central Railroad Grade

Hiking and mountain bike trail, 3.25 mi., 820 ft. elev. change. Start at Silver Plume, west end of frontage road south of I-70. Follow old RR grade to Pavilion Point on Leavenworth Mt that is a moderate walk at narrow gauge railroad grades. If you choose to continue around the mountain, you will join the Waldorf Road (4WD), (F.S. Trail No. 248) and may continue on the railroad grade into the Waldorf Basin and up McClellan Mountain. The whole route, although not technically difficult, is over 12 miles long.

Historic notes: **Argentine Central Railroad Grade**—The steady grade of the old railroad bed makes this one of the favorite hikes in the west end of the valley. The tracks were laid in 1906, stretching from Silver Plume to the high reaches of Mt. McClellan. The original starting point lies northwest of today's trailhead, in the flat area south of the Burleigh tunnel. The Argentine Central Railroad became a popular tourist attraction during the summer months; however, the high cost of operation limited profits,

Jefferson Territory (later Colorado Territory), named Mt. McClellan and nearby Pendleton Mountain after the 1864 Democratic candidates for President and Vice President respectively. After having their ore assayed in Central City, the delighted prospectors returned one week later and were soon snowed out for the winter. The group, camped at the base of Huff Gulch, formed the Argentine Mining District. The party of seven, staked their claims, then headed down the mountain into Georgetown as 16" of snow fell, canceling the pack trip and closing off the region until the following spring. **Sidneyville**--Named for turn-of-the-century mine owner, Matt Sidney, this area became known for its mine (the Sidney) and the water tank located along the railroad grade of the Argentine Central (above the Georgetown/Snake River route). The tank appears in many early photographs. **Dibbins Mill**-- Also known as the International Smelter, this early mill was constructed in 1868 by "Prof." Frank Dibbin, first police judge (mayor) of Georgetown, and the Central City Assayer whose assessment of the first mineral sample started the rush for the district. The mill operated for 4 years, hindered by the fact that the local ore often contained more than 50% galena (lead). Mills such as this would smelt or reduce the ore into silver bars, easier to transport than the large quantities of bulky, heavy rock taken from the mine. **East Argentine town site**--The exact location remains unknown, yet the relatively level, open area just above Sidneyville and the Dibbins Mill, protected from the winds sweeping the tundra at higher altitude, would have made a logical location for a mining camp. The mill, and availability of water from two creeks, would be other reasons to set up camp in this spot. **East Argentine (Argentine Mining District)** This area has undergone two distinct periods of growth. The first came in the mid-1860s and resulted in the building of the International Smelter, and digging of numerous prospector holes still visible in the delicate high-altitude tundra. The second came around the turn of the century with construction of the Argentine Central Railroad in 1906. The high quality of the ore made it profitable to mine this silver even after the turn of the century. New names would be given to the region--Waldorf, for the site at the base of Mt. McClellan, and Sidneyville for the area around the now defunct International Smelter. The remaining small mine dumps look like over-sized gopher holes on the tundra landscape. **Waldorf**--The town site of Waldorf grew to service the local mines and tourists traveling on the Argentine Central. The last buildings disappeared in the 1960s with the popularity of barnwood basements and dens. The stone marker once held a brass plaque placed in 1948 at the naming of Mt. Wilcox, in honor of Edward Wilcox, developer of the Argentine Central. Most of the property in this region is now owned and managed by the USFS, Clear Creek Ranger District, Arapaho National Forest.

and the line was discontinued in 1918. Of note along the way: **Pavilion Point**: In 1916 the Georgetown Courier announced: "One of the most beautiful of the many points of interest around Georgetown is the new summer resort in course of construction called Pavilion Point. . . .The resort consists at present of eleven portable cottages, very neatly furnished, and a large building being constructed, which will contain a dancing hall and a dining room on the ground floor, with several rooms on the second floor which have unsurpassed views of the surrounding country. . . .In the dancing hall is a large fireplace, built of mineral specimens gathered from the region. The building will also contain a dark room for the development of photographs." Little remains of the site, although many local residents remember going up to the site for dances years after the railroad ceased operations. **Waldorf**: Construction of the Argentine Central Railroad brought new life to the region formerly known as East Argentine. Mining operations grew, encouraged by the availability of rail transportation. The small town site of Waldorf and a sturdy boarding house developed in the early twentieth century to house miners and railroad workers during the summer months.