Looking for Mr. Wright: A Tale of Mining Finance from the Late Nineteenth Century

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Whitaker Wright was briefly one of the leading mining financiers of the late nineteenth century. Although best known for his activities on the booming London market in the late 1890s, he had an earlier career in the American West, dabbling in the Leadville boom in 1879–80 and playing a central role in New Mexico's ill-fated mining boom of 1881–82. But I first encountered him in New Zealand.

In 1980 I prepared a report for the New Zealand government on the site of that country's first gold rush. With perhaps two thousand miners at its peak, this 1857 rush to the Collingwood area in the northwest corner of the South Island was a modest affair compared to the later stampedes to Central Otago and to the West Coast. However, like them, it owed a substantial debt to people with experience of the prior Australian rushes. To understand something of this context, I turned to Geoffrey Blainey's classic history of Australian mining, *The Rush That Never Ended*. And there I first met Whitaker Wright: only a few descriptive pages, but enough to lodge in my memory.[1]

It would be another decade before I came to appreciate the extent of Wright's involvement in mining communities around the world. Several years after my stint as a goldfields historian, I returned to Canada to pursue a doctorate at the University of British Columbia. My dissertation topic compared three mining communities, one each in western Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. The Canadian community was Rossland/Trail, in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. I was surprised to discover that Whitaker Wright, that figure from Blainey's book, re-emerged as a significant actor in the Kootenay mines. This seemed an intriguing coincidence, but I had a dissertation to write and carried on.

Then in 1991, I attended the Mining History Association's meeting in Leadville, Colorado. I decided to visit the decaying headframes behind the town, visible reminders of the boom. I stopped at the tourist booth to pick up a map of Fryer's Hill. The map's label for one of the relics immediately caught my eye: "the Wright shaft." Surely, I thought to myself, this could not refer to Whitaker Wright? A day's research in Denver confirmed that the shaft was indeed named after him. Then and there I determined to learn more about Wright's career. It was, as those pages in Blainey's book suggested, a fascinating story.

Although biographers can—and often do—have various motives for pursuing their research into the life of another, one question inevitably arises. How significant was the life of their subject? In Wright's case, the answer to that question begins with a discussion of his background.

Born into a working-class family in the north of England, Wright emigrated to Canada with his mother and siblings when he was twenty-four, following the death of his father in 1870. Wright and his younger brother appear to have moved to the United States several years later. His brother subsequently returned to Toronto, where he would become head of the city's major electrical utility, but Wright remained in the United States for the rest of the 1870s and the 1880s.[2]

A resident of Philadelphia for much of this time, Wright managed to gain the confidence of the affluent Quaker community there. With venture capital drawn from this group, he speculated in mines in Leadville, Colorado, and later in Lake Valley, New Mexico. Despite the survival of the Wright shaft on Fryer's Hill, his Leadville property—the Denver City Consolidated Silver Mining Company—was not particularly successful, at least for its investors.[3] The Lake Valley mines, however, did produce some windfall profits. For a time, Wright rode the crest of a speculative investment wave.

A remarkable group of people were associated with the brief boom in New Mexico's silver mines during the early 1880s: mining men from the Leadville boom—Horace Tabor, George Daly, George Roberts—as well as a handful of leading east coast scientists and other prominent social figures—notably Benjamin Silliman, Jr., Edward D. Cope, Robert Pearsall Smith, and Walt Whitman. But the central actor was Wright. He had met Tabor, Roberts, Daly, and others during his time in Leadville and followed them down to Lake Valley. He acquired the leading Lake Valley properties from Roberts and created several companies that he floated on East Coast stock exchanges. When miners in one of the Lake Valley mines discovered the "Bridal Chamber"—a rich vug containing a quantity of pure silver—the shares rose dramatically in value. The prosperity was short-lived; by the mid–1880s it was clear that these mines were not going to return windfall profits to their shareholders.

Henry B. Clifford later recalled the boom in his book, *Rocks in the Road to Fortune; or, The Unsound Side of Mining*:

> There was great excitement prevailing. The Lake Valley mines of New Mexico were being floated by the late Whitaker Wright, operating from Philadelphia. The stocks were being boomed by inexperienced Eastern brokers. . . . During that craze, the manipulations of value were the bait, misquoted experts' reports, etc. The Leadville boom was on and silver mining was just crossing the line of commercialism. If there were years of dishonor, from 1880 to 1884 we may class that period as the crown of them all. The people were told that the ore bodies were unlimited, that the values increased with depth and that millions would positively result from mines, that, even to this day, are non-commercial.[4]

As this extract suggests, few people received much in return for their investments. Angry investors blamed the companies' directors for the mines' difficulties, and in the summer of 1883 Wright and his associates were voted off the boards of the major Lake Valley companies.[5]

Wright profited considerably from his promotions in Colorado and New Mexico, although his reputation suffered as a consequence of the Lake Valley debacle. "He is a smart fellow and understands this bus[iness]," noted the credit agency, R. G. Dun, in 1884, "but seems to have lost the hold he had on some Capitalists here."[6] Philadelphia's city directories continued to list him as a broker and capitalist until 1891, when he decided to return to England with his American-born wife and their three children.[7] Wright had not completely given up on attracting American investors—he apparently spent the next three summers in California "trying to float some gigantic mining schemes he had in South America"—but his main focus would now be in London.[8]

Wright's twenty years in North America had taught him much about mining and mining speculation. He had worked with some flamboyant and unscrupulous mine operators in Colorado and New Mexico, notably George Roberts, whose dubious mining promotions were legendary on both sides of the Atlantic.[9] It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Wright learned some valuable lessons from Roberts and others. Significantly, he remained in touch with several of his former American associates, employing them at various mines in Australia and British Columbia. Wright could also present himself to British investors as an experienced mining entrepreneur familiar with the rough and tumble of the American mining frontier. The sense that he had an insider's grasp of the industry encouraged many to trust his word and to have confidence in his abilities. Certainly, his timing was impeccable: he arrived in London just as the London Stock Exchange was about to experience a wild period of speculation in mining shares.

At first, Wright was not particularly successful in England. He launched one mining company in 1891 but, as the *Financial Times* later put it, "this enterprise gained little market or public attention, and procured for him neither much profit nor celebrity."[10] However, Wright was ideally placed to profit once the market gained momentum in the early 1890s, an auspicious time for someone with Wright's particular skills and experience.

Wright's success as a London promoter began in 1894, when news reached the city of dramatic gold finds at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. Australia had featured in London's earlier mining boom during the mid- to late 1880s, a boom fuelled in part by speculative interest in Queensland gold and Broken Hill silver properties.[11] The former did not prove as successful as hopeful investors anticipated, while the best Broken Hill properties were never offered for sale in London. The collapse of the '80s boom—made worse by the sharp decline in the price of silver—brought bankruptcies and depression, particularly to South Australia. Formerly prosperous Adelaide brokers decided to take a gamble and grub-staked prospectors to search for gold in Western Australia in 1893. Luck was with these men, who were spectacularly successful in their quest.[12]

News of their discoveries encouraged Wright and others to form a series of companies to acquire and operate mines in Australia's relatively isolated western colony.[13] In September 1894, a little over a year after the first discoveries in Kalgoorlie, Wright launched the West Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation.[14] Others were forming similar companies; "the feature of this week," noted London's *Mining Journal* in late September, "has been the phenomenal boom in West Australian shares, which gives every sign of augmentation in the near future."[15] A number of the new companies were not mining companies, but finance companies that purchased mines and then launched them on the market as subsidiary companies. This was a form of company promotion that Wright developed into a fine art.[16]

One of the first acts of the West Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation was to send an agent to Western Australia, to inspect and report on mining properties that might be available for purchase. This was Charles Kaufman, an American mining engineer who had earlier managed the State Line Mine in Nevada for George Roberts—a connection that no doubt explains his association with Wright in London.[17] English promoters formed more and more mining companies; nearly fifty were launched in the autumn of 1894, compared to eighteen in the first eight months of the year. This activity expanded dramatically in the following year, and by the end of 1896, close to eight hundred West Australian mining companies had been floated in London.[18]

This frenetic activity was not without its critics. Throughout the period, *The Economist* kept up a sceptical commentary on the boom, knowing that few readers would heed its Cassandra-like warnings: "it would be as useless as crying in the wilderness to enlarge upon what we have said over and over again on the question of the probable lives of the mines, and the dividends which holders should reasonably expect to reimburse their capital, and to give them a fair rate of interest, allowing for the risks incidental to mining undertakings generally."[19] Other journals were more direct, openly questioning the honesty of those engaged in company promotion. Thus did the London-based journal, the *West Australian Review*, reprint a scathing assessment from a Perth newspaper:

> Western Australia is being made the innocent victim in London of a set of Company mongers and market riggers, who, if their machinations are not exposed in time, will wreak incalculable mischief. . . . A perfect cataract of prospectuses of West Australian mining properties is just now flooding the London market, and many of these will little bear investigation. . . . The gang of thieves and the coterie of scoundrels, who are taking advantage of the good fortune of Western Australia to ply their nefarious trade, must be broken up and scattered, and a black list should be prepared for reference of the individuals who have associated themselves with the promotion of bad or doubtful West Australian mining ventures.[20]

Wright ignored such criticism. His response to the favourable market conditions was to launch a second company, the London and Globe Finance Corporation, in April 1895. He recruited the Governor of Western Australia, Sir William Robinson, to serve as the chairman of both the West Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation and the London and Globe Finance Corporation.[21]

Wright persuaded a number of prominent individuals to sit on the boards of his companies. Serving with the governor of Western Australia on both boards, for example, was Lieut. General the Hon. Somerset John Gough-Calthorpe, a particular friend of Queen Victoria's, as was Lord Edward William Pelham-Clinton, Master of the Queen's Household, Deputy Governor of Windsor Castle, and younger brother of the Duke of Newcastle.[22] Wright allegedly gave Pelham-Clinton the equivalent of five thousand pounds to persuade another noble, Lord Loch—formerly Governor of Victoria and the Cape Colony—to become a director of the two companies. Later, Loch and Pelham-Clinton evidently received ten thousand pounds for persuading Lord Dufferin to head the London and Globe Finance Corporation. Dufferin, a former Viceroy of India and Governor-General of Canada, epitomised service to Queen and Empire.[23]

In their way, such people provided the late-nineteenth-century equivalent of celebrity endorsements.[24] Wright's aim, no doubt, was to add lustre and respectability to his business activities, but the participation of such men in speculative mining companies attracted a good deal of critical comment. A number of Wright's contemporaries saw the presence of nobles on the boards of speculative companies as illustrative of the country's decline or even its degeneracy. One of his harshest critics would later claim that

> this Whitaker Wright revelation . . . indicates the complete rottenness of our upper classes. They fail in everything. They fail in war, they fail in diplomacy, they fail in administration. The only man who has kept the government alive is a middle class man, who was never at a public school or university, who never learned to hunt or to play ball games, but who acquired a knowledge of life in business. And what is most needed now is that men of business should take an interest in the affairs of government, since our so-called aristocracy are decadent."[25]

In Western Australia, Kaufman purchased a number of Kalgoorlie properties for the West

Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation and the London and Globe Finance Corporation. Although most of the mines that Kaufman purchased had relatively inauspicious careers, two, the Lake View and the Ivanhoe, proved remarkably successful. Originally developed by companies based in eastern Australia, the owners of both properties chose to sell out to Wright's group. The Lake View was the first to appear on the London market, in June 1896, and soon began its career as a substantial gold producer; the Ivanhoe was translated into a London company late the following year. The success of the two mines enhanced Wright's reputation as "a strong man."[26]

Seizing his opportunity, Write combined the West Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation and the London and Globe Finance Corporation into one company in early 1897, retaining the latter's ambitious name for the new company. At £2 million, the reconstituted London and Globe had a much higher capitalization than did the original two companies, both of which had been capitalized at two hundred thousand pounds. Some nine thousand people purchased shares in the new company; its formation enabled Wright to reap huge profits.[27]

Wright was now at the height of his career, with companies operating in New Zealand, Canada, Australia, New Caledonia, and Britain. His wealth was impressive: the *New York Herald* claimed that Wright controlled "forty-one companies, with an aggregate capital of £22,355,000 [$111,775,000;]" a prominent diarist noted that in the opinion of at least one journalist, Wright was the wealthiest person in the world.[28]

Wright's success reflected the buoyant market conditions of the late 1890s. As long as confidence was high and investors free with their money, his holdings were reasonably secure. The London and Globe Finance Corporation could continue to spin off companies, and share prices could be maintained, despite clear evidence of over-capitalization and the fact that Wright's operations were attracting critical comment.[29] Sooner or later, however, market conditions would change, and at that point corporate assets would have to support the value of company shares. When war broke out in South Africa in late 1899, a downturn was inevitable.

Wright and his companies faced several difficulties at the end of the century. The South African war deflated the share values of mining companies generally, but this was not the only problem. The Lake View—the West Australian mine that was the most significant asset in the London and Globe stable of companies—lost value as rumours circulated about its imminent depletion. None of the numerous other mines under Wright's control could produce the dividends that might have compensated for the slumping Lake View. And Wright was also building an underground railway in London, the Baker Street and Waterloo Railway—known today as the Bakerloo line. While this project was perhaps the soundest investment made by the London and Globe, it was also one that called for substantial injections of capital at a time when the company could least afford it. Wright was aware of the enormous pressures that his companies were under and in desperation he tried to maintain their liquidity by moving assets from one to another. That way, they could appear solvent for the purposes of annual reports. But this was simply a stopgap measure, not something that could ensure the companies' survival over the long term.

The crash came on the last day of trading of the nineteenth century. First the Lake View, and then the London and Globe, collapsed. It was all, as the headline in the *Pall Mall Gazette* put it: "A House of Cards." A business column in *The Times* noted somberly that "The last Settlement of the century has certainly terminated in a deplorable manner." The crash also bankrupted thirteen Stock Exchange firms. Over the next year, one after another of Wright's companies went into liquidation.[30]

Lawsuits and investigations followed, although for a time it seemed as if Wright himself was not going to be charged with anything more serious than recklessness. This did not sit well with those who had lost money in the collapse; they were furious when the government refused to lay charges against him. In January 1903 investors formed a "London and Globe (Shareholders) Prosecution Committee," opened a fund to finance a private prosecution of Wright, and held an indignation meeting to vent their frustration. One speaker angrily claimed that he and the other London and Globe shareholders were "victims of one of the most heartless and gigantic swindles that this age had known."[31]

A number of British newspapers, including *The Times*, agreed that Wright should be called to account for his actions in a court of law. Pressure mounted on the British government in February 1903, during a debate in the House of Commons. Members of the opposition moved an amendment to the Address in Reply to the King's Speech, adding an expression of regret that "no prosecution has been instituted against the directors of the London and Globe Finance Corporation."[32]

The government was aware of growing public sentiment against Wright and—while adamantly refusing to reverse its decision—was careful to distance itself from what Prime Minister Balfour described as "the very scandalous and painful case of Mr. Whitaker Wright."[33] In fact, Balfour owned shares in the London and Globe, a fact publicised by Arnold White, one of those demanding Wright's prosecution. White, a well-known public figure and leading proponent of "National Efficiency," also claimed that Wright was being protected by those close to the Royal Family.[34]

Whatever the truth of the matter, time and luck were running out for Whitaker Wright. In March 1903, angry London and Globe shareholders were able to persuade a judge that Wright's prosecution ought to proceed. Wright had

CITY OF LONDON.

82. For fraud WHITAKER WRIGHT, late of 2 Whitehall Court, London, S.W., and Witley,

Surrey, age about 50, height about 5 ft. 10 in., stout build, complexion florid, large head, hair and moustache dark, eyes small, receding forehead, small chin, with large fleshy roll beneath, wears gold pince-nez with gold chain attached, speaks with American accent; dress, usually frock coat suit and silk hat.

Warrant issued.

Information to Supt. McWilliam, 26 Old Jewry, E.C.

"England's Most Wanted." The public notice that a warrant had been issued for Wright's arrest. (From the Police Gazette, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 2004 (13 March 1903), 5.)

slipped out of the country, but the police obtained a warrant for his arrest. Wright went to France briefly, then landed in New York on 15 March 1903. The New York police were waiting and placed him under arrest. His days of glory had come to an end.

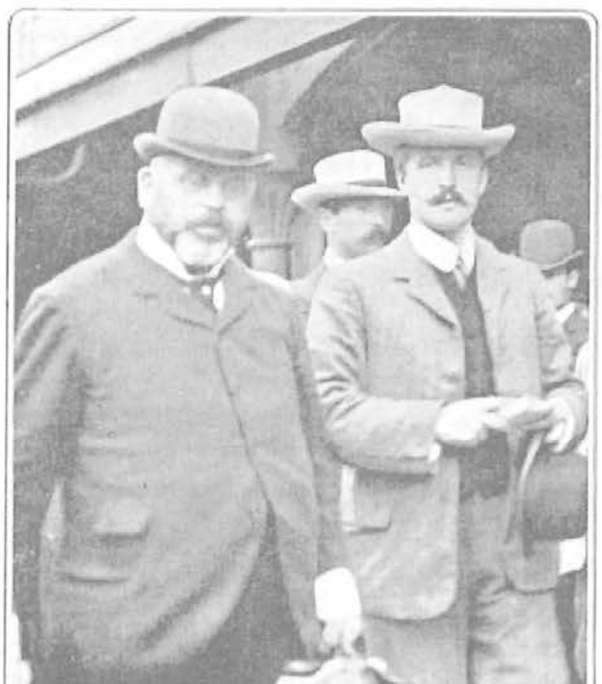
Wright spent the next four months in New York—in Ludlow Street Jail—fighting extradition. His health deteriorated and, after an unsuccessful appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court, he decided to return to Britain. He landed at Liverpool on 4 August and went on to London.

Several days later he was finally free on bail, but his days of freedom were few.

Wright was charged with fraud. The prosecution alleged that he had falsified the balance sheets of the London and Globe Finance Corporation with the intent to defraud shareholders. His lawyer argued that the critical issue was motive or intent; granted, Wright may have been a trifle careless with his accounting, but he had never sought to defraud shareholders. Quite the opposite: he had been trying to protect them, and all of Wright's energies had been devoted to bolstering the share values of his various companies. Such arguments fell on deaf ears; certainly the judge's sympathies were never in question.[35]

The jury took an hour to arrive at a verdict of guilty. In passing sentence, the judge announced that he could not conceive of a worse case than Wright's and handed down the maximum penalty of seven years in prison. A breathless newspaper account recorded what followed:

> Upon the pronouncement of the sentence the deep silence which had been maintained gave place to loud whisperings and subdued murmurs, but silence was at once restored when it was seen that Mr. Whitaker Wright was about to speak. In quiet tones he said: "All I can say is that I am as innocent of any intention to deceive as anyone in this Court." He then disappeared down the steps beneath the Bench for the last time, and the prolonged trial came to a close.[36]



A rare photograph of Wright, arriving back in England in the summer of 1903 and escorted by a detective. (From the Tatler (London), 12 August 1903.)

Wright retired to a consultation room to arrange matters with his solicitor. He excused himself briefly and, upon his return, his appearance was strangely altered. He staggered and then fell to the floor. He had swallowed cyanide and was soon dead.

Newspapers around the world described Wright's death on their front pages. The story in the *New York Times* was typical:

> The career of this man, who was known on three continents for his stupendous financial operations, closed in a startling tragedy. Even in his life, which, with his rise from poverty to enormous wealth, was full of dramatic incidents, there was nothing that could compare with the manner of his death. All London tonight is thrilled with the news of it. No such human tragedy has been enacted in England for many a year.[37]

The *Illustrated London News* carried a full page sketch showing Wright in the crowded court room, receiving his sentence from the judge. The caption described the case as "The Most Dramatic Trial of Modern Times."[38] "One of the gloomiest and most sensational dramas of modern finance," echoed another prominent British periodical.[39] Such was the news-worthiness of Wright's life and death that virtually every English language periodical in the world commented on the case.

* * *

Wright was for a short time famous, widely regarded as one of the shrewdest speculators in what was then the financial centre of the world. Despite his reputation—"this meteor who flashed across the paths of finance,"[40] in the words of one contemporary—Wright has never been the subject of much scholarly interest, although Clark Spence's *British Investments and the American Mining Frontier 1860-1901* provides some excellent commentary on the context of his career.

Wright's career illuminates the changing nature of the mining industry. More than anyone else, Wright personified the late-nineteenth-century mining craze, the frenzied speculation on the London Stock Exchange. He also spanned an important divide in the history of mining. By the turn of the twentieth century, the industry was becoming a bona fide business, gradually moving away from the bonanza discoveries and speculative booms that had characterized so much of mining investment in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The collapse of Wright's companies and his subsequent trial were key moments in discrediting speculative mining investment in Britain.

Changes were inevitable, even without the well-publicised failure of the London and Globe Finance Corporation and Wright's other companies. By the end of the nineteenth century, the days of bonanza discoveries of high grade ore were almost at an end. South Africa was perhaps the best example of the new form of mining, which would rely on low-grade ores whose exploitation was possible only by mobilising new technologies such as the cyanide process. Similarly, the flotation process would allow other low-grade and complex ores to be worked profitably. With the rise of such new processes came a growing reliance on economies of scale and on tech-

The Illustrated London News described it as "The Most Dramatic Trial of Modern Times", adding at the bottom of this trial sketch, "The Last Scene: Whitaker Wright Receiving his Sentence, One Hour Before His Death." (From the Illustrated London News, 30 January 1904.)

nological expertise, hastening mining's transformation from a speculative investment into a less risky business.

Wright became a symbol of past recklessness. No one had objected to investing in speculative mining stocks so long as they returned a profit. But once the market collapsed, Wright's failure attracted a growing chorus of disapproval. One of his fellow financiers summed up the situation nicely:

> I could write a long and very interesting book on the joys and sorrows of a company promoter. If the child of your brain should turn out a success then you are the finest fellow in the world and nothing is too good for you. But should it happen that the company is a rank failure, and that the shares you have sold to your friends should steadily drop down to nothing, then you are an arrant rogue, a common swindler, and a subject for criminal proceedings.[41]

In a rare interview, Wright provided an angrier account:

> Would that I had never left America. If I had [stayed] . . . there never could have been such an action brought against me as this. When Americans speculate and lose, knowing that they very likely will lose when they make the speculation, they never "squeal." In all New York I do not think a speculator could be found like those in London, who made and lost a fortune and cannot take their medicine.[42]

After Wright's failure, his fellow financiers and former colleagues were quick to adopt the new language of fiscal caution, re-inventing themselves as models of probity and conservatism. They were equally quick to forget their own complicity in the great share booms of the 1890s. Herbert Hoover, for example, made his reputation as a mining engineer by resuscitating West Australian mines crippled by Wright's collapse. Yet Hoover and his firm had earlier participated in various doubtful and highly speculative dealings, his public persona of probity notwithstanding.[43] Even the lawyer who had prosecuted Wright—cross examining him with bitter sarcasm and to great effect—was not above dealing in speculative shares, and narrowly managed to avoid being discredited as a result.[44] Wright, on the other hand, had the bad luck to become the target of society's revulsion against the excesses of speculation, condemned not only for his own transgressions, but for those of his age.

Notes:

1. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978, 3rd edition), 203-05.
2. John Joseph Wright's career in Toronto is described in Christopher Armstrong & H. V. Nelles, *Monopoly's Moment: The Organization and Regulation of Canadian Utilities, 1830-1930* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 75-79. Further details may be found in the entry on "John Joseph Wright," in Henry J. Morgan, ed., *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), 1106; in the obituary of John Joseph Wright, in *The Globe* (Toronto), 3 Feb. 1922; and in Mike Filey, "The Way We Were," *The Sunday Sun* (Toronto), 17 Aug. 1975, M23, which has a photograph and brief biography of J. J. Wright. I am grateful to his great-grandson, Derek Wright, for alerting me to the significance of his career.
3. David L. Elson, *A History of the Denver City Consolidated Silver Mining Company During the Period 1880-1890, and the Sulphide Mining Company During the Period 1890-1898, All of Leadville, Colorado. A lament for Yankee Hill*, typescript, 1971, Colorado Historical Society Library and Archive, Denver, Colorado.
4. Henry B. Clifford, *Rocks in the Road to Fortune; or, The Unsound Side of Mining* (New York: Gotham Press,

1908), 233-34. Clifford had written a pamphlet in the early 1880s in an effort to dampen public enthusiasm for speculative mining stocks: Henry B. Clifford, *Years of Dishonor; or, The Cause of the Depression in Mining Stocks, also, the Remedy* (New York: M. B. Brown, 1883), reprinted in *Speculation in Gold and Silver Mining Stocks* (New York: Arno Press, 1974).

5. The best account of the Lake Valley mines is Homer E. Milford's, "History of the Lake Valley Mining District," Santa Fe: New Mexico Abandoned Mine Lands, 2001. There is also some useful detail in Ellis Clark's "The Silver Mines of Lake Valley, New Mexico," *Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers* XXIV (1894): 138-67.
6. Entry on J. Whitaker Wright, R. G. Dun & Company, PA, Vol. 160, p. 45, dated 24 Mar. 1884, in R. G. Dun & Company Collection, the Baker Library, Historical Collections Department, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, Mass.
7. See the entries on Wright in *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory for 1881* (Philadelphia: James Gopsill, 1881), through to *Gopsill's Philadelphia City Directory for 1891* (Philadelphia: James Gopsill, 1891). The 1892 directory has no entry for Wright. A local newspaper would later recall vaguely that "he was mixed up while here [in Philadelphia during the 1880s] with many "get-rich-quick" concerns and speculations of a doubtful sort, but it is understood that he could not make much headway here in these enterprises." ("Wright's Career In This City," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, 16 Mar. 1903, 2).
8. "Whitaker Wright Lived in San Jose Some Time," *San Jose Herald*, 27 Jan. 1904, 4.
9. Roberts's notoriety dated back to the Great Diamond Hoax of 1872, a spectacular fraud involving a non-existent diamond mine. For unflattering descriptions of his career, see: Stanley Dempsey and James E. Fell, Jr., *Mining the Summit: Colorado's Ten Mile District, 1860-1960* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 116-24 and passim; Richard E. Lingenfelter, *The Hardrock Miners: A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863-1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 144-45 and passim; Joseph E. King, *A Mine to Make A Mine: Financing the Colorado Mining Industry, 1859-1902* (College Station & London: Texas A & M University Press, 1977), 91-113; and Duane A. Smith, *Horace Tabor: His Life and the Legend* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1989), 118.
10. "Death of Whitaker Wright: Whitaker Wright's Career," *Financial Times* (London), 27 Jan. 1904, 5.
11. For discussions of the 1880s mining boom on the London market, see: A. R. Hall, *The London Capital Market and Australia 1870-1914* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1963); Albin Joachim Dahl, "British Investment in Californian Mining, 1870-1890," Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1961; and J. W. McCarty, "British Investment in Overseas Mining, 1880-1914," Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1961.
12. See especially: Hall, *The London Capital Market and Australia*; R. M. Gibbs, *Bulls Bears and Wildcats: A Centenary History of the Stock Exchange of Adelaide* (Norwood, S. Australia: Peacock Publications, 1988), 101-26; Gibbs, "The Real Poseidon: South Australians and the Golden Mile in the 1890s," *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia* IV (1978): 3-32; A. R. Hall, *The Stock Exchange of Melbourne and the Victorian Economy 1852-1900* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1968); and Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1971).
13. For accounts of the discovery of Coolgardie & Kalgoorlie see: Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, 177-207; Blainey, *The Golden Mile* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1993); and G. Spencer Compton, "Searching Eastwards for Gold in Western Australia, 1887-1896," *Royal Australian Historical Society, Journal and Proceedings* 43 (1957): 13-44; as well as Gibbs, *Bulls Bears and Wildcats*, 101-26; and Gibbs, "The Real Poseidon." For an overview of the colony's development during the period see R. T. Appleyard, "Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914," in C. T. Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia* (Nedlands, W.A.: University of Western Australia Press, 1981), 211-36.
14. Corporate detail on this and Wright's other mining enterprises is taken from Walter R. Skinner's annual publication, *The Mining Manual* (London, 1887-1912). See also: "West Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation Ltd," *Mining Journal*, 29 Sep. 1894, 1073; and R. T. Appleyard and Mel Davies, "Financiers of Western Australia's Goldfields," in R. T. Appleyard and C. B. Schedvin (eds.), *Australian Financiers: Biographical Essays* (South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1988), 160-89, esp. 169-74.
15. "Our City Article," *Mining Journal*, 29 Sep. 1894, 1072.
16. This was a feature of the period: "in the 1890s there was a rapid growth in the number of joint-stock mining finance companies, usually called exploration or trust companies, which made a business out of the issue of new companies." (Robert Vicat Turrel, with Jean-Jacques van Helten, "The Rothschilds, the Exploration Company and Mining Finance," *Business History* XXVIII, no. 2 (Apr. 1986): 181); cf. the similar comments in Spence, *British Investments and the American Mining Frontier*, 47-48.

17. Evidence of the connection is from a letter, Charles Kaufman to G. D. Roberts, from the State Line Mining Company, Gold Mountain, Nevada, 23 June 1881, in Box 2, file 13 (May–June 1881), Harpending Papers, North Baker Research Library of the California Historical Society, San Francisco. For Roberts's manipulation of the State Line mine, see Richard E. Lingenfelter, *Death Valley & the Amargosa: A Land of Illusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 145-55.
18. The figures for West Australian mining companies floated in 1894 are given in *The Mining Journal and Investor's Review* (Perth) 1, no. 9 (13 Dec. 1895): 213. McCarty gives the figure of 780 West Australia mining companies launched in London by the end of 1896 (in J. W. McCarty, "British Investment in Western Australian Gold Mining, 1894-1914," *University Studies in History* IV, no. 1 (1961-1962): 13), while the list of Western Australian companies for 1894-1896 given in Edward Ashmead's, *Twenty-Five Years of Mining, 1880-1904: A Retrospective Review* (London: The Mining Journal, 1909, 125) totals 789 companies.
19. "Some Phases of the Mining 'Boom,'" *The Economist*, 30 Mar. 1895, 412.
20. "A West Australian Opinion of Dishonest Company Promotion," *West Australian Review*, 11 Apr. 1895, 602.
21. The personnel on the boards of the two companies is included with their entries in Walter R. Skinner, *The Mining Manual for 1896* (London, 1896), 348-49 and 1021 (for the West Australian and the London and Globe companies, respectively). Although Western Australia's governor was an ideal choice as chairman, especially for purposes of public relations, Wright needed a new chairman for the West Australian Exploring and Finance Corporation in any event, as the original chairman, Frederick Thompson, had recently died. Wright's timing was impeccable: a public banquet in London feted Sir William Robinson in May 1895. It was likely no coincidence that Wright was on the banquet committee ("The West Australian Banquet," *West Australian Review*, 9 May 1895, 678).
22. For Gough-Calthorpe, see "Obituary: Lord Calthorpe," *The Times*, 18 Nov. 1912, 9; and the entries in *Who's Who, 1911* (London: A. & C. Black, 1911), 312, and *Who Was Who 1897-1915* (London: A. & C. Black, 1935), 112. For Pelham-Clinton, see the entry in *Who's Who, 1901, An Annual Biographical Dictionary* (London: A. & C. Black, 1901), 274; also *Who Was Who, 1897-1916*, 143, and his obituary, *The Times*, 10 July 1907, 8.
23. This detail is from a cryptic diary entry by George Ernest Morrison, the famous China correspondent of *The Times*: "Arthur Barry at bkfast gave me extraordinarily interesting info of the Whitaker Wright Companies. Colonial swindle. Pelham Clinton given £5000 to nab Loch and the two £10,000 to get Lord Dufferin. Is very rich has a splendid estate Godalming way and is as rich as Hooley who settled his fortune on his wife and then went bankrupt" (entry for 5 Dec. 1902, Diary of George Ernest Morrison, Mitchell Library, Sydney, New South Wales; ML MSS 312). Morrison's informant was presumably Arthur John Barry, a British civil engineer involved in Chinese railways. On Dufferin's involvement with Wright, see: David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), esp. 413-14; more generally, see Cannadine's section on "The City: Figure-heads and Financiers" (406-20), which looks at the gradually increasing involvement of various penurious aristocrats in business, in which context he discusses Dufferin.
24. For an excellent description of the mining financier's "Promotional Methods and Techniques," particularly the use of noble figureheads, see Clark C. Spence, *British Investments and the American Mining Frontier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), 51-56.
25. Arnold White, quoted in "Wright Brought Millions Here," *The Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, WA), 23 Mar. 1903, 7. Note also White's chapter on Wright and the London and Globe in his book, *For Efficiency; Being a series of letters in the "Daily Dispatch" . . . reflecting on the incapacity of the ruling classes, and appealing to men of business to take part in the affairs of state . . .* (Manchester: E. Hulton & Co., 1902). More generally, see: Patrick Brantlinger, *Bread & Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), especially Chapter 4, "Some Nineteenth-Century Themes: Decadence, Masses, Empire, Gothic Revivals," 113-53; also, G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (London: Blackwell, 1971).
26. The quotation in the text is drawn from "The Coming Colony," *The Mining Journal and Investor's Review* 1, no. 19 (29 Feb. 1896), 8. For accounts of the careers of the two mining companies on the London Stock Exchange, see: McCarty, "British Investment in Western Australian Gold Mining, 1894-1914," 19-20; and Alan Lougheed, "The London Stock Exchange boom in Kalgoorlie shares, 1895-1901," *Australian Economic History Review* XXXV, no. 1 (March 1995): 83-102.
27. Lord Loch told a committee of the House of Commons in April 1899 that 8,800 people owned shares in the London and Globe (Evidence to the Commons Committee on Baker Street & Waterloo Railway Bill, 1899, vol. 2, testimony of Lord Loch, 20 Apr. 1899, #1244, held in the House of Lords Record

Office). *The Times* placed the number a little lower, "about 8,000" (in "The Whitaker Wright Companies," *The Times*, 14 Feb. 1903, 12).

28. "Whitaker Wright Trial Is Assured," *New York Herald* (European Edition), 11 Mar. 1903, 1; R. D. Blumenfeld, *R. D. B.'s Diary 1887-1914* (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1930), 87.
29. See, for example, "The Rush of Companies," *The Economist*, 18 Dec. 1897, p. 1782-83, which discusses the emergence of Wright's vehicle for Canadian speculation, the British America Corporation, and criticizes the activities of the London and Globe Finance Corporation.
30. The quotation in the text is from "The Money Market," *The Times*, 31 Dec. 1900, 15. In his memoirs, O'Hagan recalled that Wright's fall "created a panic on the Stock Exchange, and with him down went a little army of brokers who had bought the shares for him. Never did so many firms on the Stock Exchange believed to be strong fail in one day." (H. Osborne O'Hagan, *Leaves from My Life* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1929), II:187.) "Since the Baring crisis, of more than a decade ago," reported *The Investors' Monthly Manual* at the time, "no event has given rise to a greater amount of difficulty" (quoted in Hall, *The London Capital Market and Australia*, 178); cf. "A House of Cards," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 Dec. 1900, 1.
31. "London and Globe Finance Corporation," *The Times*, 17 Jan. 1903, 5.
32. Great Britain, *The Parliamentary Debates* (Authorized Edition), Fourth Series, v. CXVIII (19 Feb. 1903): 354-55.
33. *Parliamentary Debates*, (19 Feb. 1903): 378.
34. White made this claim publicly; see the report of his speech in "London and Globe Finance Corporation," *The Times*, 17 Jan. 1903, 5. See also: "Wright Arrested," *The Globe* (Toronto), 16 Mar. 1903, 1; "Royalty Involved," *The Globe*, 17 Mar. 1903, 2. For White's description of the prime minister's share ownership, see "The Cases of Mr. Hayes Fisher, Mr. Balfour & Lord Hardwicke," *The Sunday Sun* (London), 12 Apr. 1903, 3. The share register of the London and Globe Finance Corporation, Ltd. confirms that Balfour owned one thousand shares in the company (see #11701, in BT 31/7272/51448, Public Record Office, Kew, England). According to one source, it was White who caused the London and Globe issue—and the Government's failure to prosecute Wright—to be raised in the House of Commons (S. Theodore Felstead, *Horatio Bottomley: A Biography of an Outstanding Personality* (London: John Murray, 1936), 58). For White's public role, beyond the affairs of the London and Globe, see: Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*; Searle's Introduction to Arnold White's, *Efficiency and Empire* (1901. Reprint. Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1973), vii-xxix; and Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought 1895-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960).
35. For example, in its retrospective piece on Wright's trial and death, the *Saturday Review* commented: "We wish we could say that Mr. Justice Bigham presided over a trial with that dignity and impartiality which are the noblest traditions of the British Bench. But we cannot. . . . The judge made no secret of his opinion of the prisoner's guilt." ("The Case of Whitaker Wright," *Saturday Review* 97 (30 Jan. 1904), 134.) The *New York Times* also reported the judge's partiality, noting that "Whitaker Wright . . . left the witness box this afternoon after two days' cross-examination, during which the Judge was prominent as well as prosecuting counsel." ("Whitaker Wright's Evidence," *New York Times*, 22 Jan. 1904, 8.)
36. "The Whitaker Wright Trial," *The Financier and Bullionist*, 27 Jan. 1904, 5. The reporter noted: "The interest in the closing stage of the trial of Mr. Whitaker Wright . . . was intense . . . not only every available seat, but the available standing room also was occupied, both in the gallery provided for the public and on the floor of the Court. The Judge's gallery was also fully occupied."
37. "Wright Believed To Have Taken Poison," *New York Times*, 27 Jan. 1904, 1.
38. *Illustrated London News* CXXIV (30 Jan. 1904): 149.
39. "The Case of Whitaker Wright," *Saturday Review* 97 (30 Jan. 1904): 133-34.
40. O'Hagan, *Leaves from My Life*, II:186.
41. Ernest Terah Hooley, *Hooley's Confessions* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1924), 250.
42. Wright was interviewed by a reporter from the *New York Herald* after his arrest in New York (16 Mar. 1903). The interview was reprinted after his death: "Chose Death Rather Than Prison," *The Denver Times*, 26 Jan. 1904, 11.
43. Ian Phimister and myself explore these issues and Hoover's career in ""Minimizing Risk? Mining Engineers and British Overseas Investment, 1894–1914," paper presented at the Mining History Association's annual meeting, Wallace, Idaho, 22 June 2002.
44. This was Rufus Isaacs, later Lord Reading, and I am referring here to his role in the 1913 "Marconi scandal." See the discussion in: Frances Donaldson, *The Marconi Scandal* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962); G. R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics 1895-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); and Peter J. Hugill, *Global Communications Since 1844: Geopolitics and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).