

# James Cronin

James Cronin was born about 1845 in Bantry, Cork, Ireland. He immigrated to America and moved west to Nevada, where he learned the mining trade.<sup>1</sup> In 1872, he owned a “new stone store on Main Street” in Pioche, Nevada. He sold groceries, provisions, clothing, liquors, tobacco and general merchandise.<sup>2</sup> He was living in Nevada in 1875<sup>3</sup> and was an assayer in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, in 1880.<sup>4</sup> He returned to Lincoln, Nevada, by 1883<sup>5</sup> and was a well-known mining man in El Dorado canyon in 1885.<sup>6</sup> He mined for a while in Idaho.<sup>7</sup> He married by 1887 and had at least two children.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1890s he was in Alaska and British Columbia. Father Nicholas Coccola of the St Eugene Mission in British Columbia encouraged his Native Indians to join prospectors in the hills to look for gold. It was James Cronin, a mining promoter staying at the mission, who recognized some strange rocks as galena, a mix of silver and lead. He, the Father, and the Indian registered three claims. Father Coccola and the Indian sold their claims two years later and the Father used his proceeds to build a hospital and a new gothic church. James’ Eugene Mine became one of the greatest producers of silver, lead and zinc in the area.<sup>9</sup>

He mined in the Kootenay area until 1896, when he was asked to return and be the new superintendent of the Hale & Norcross mine in Virginia City, Storey, Nevada. The previous superintendent has not been acceptable to the miners’ union and had been run out of town. The board of directors described James as “one of the best known and most skillful mining superintendents on the coast. He has been for ears at the head of the working forces of the largest mines in Idaho, Montana and British Columbia... he has 20 years’ experience as a mining superintendent.” With him in control, no complaint is expected from the miner’s union.<sup>10</sup>

However, it was not a complete solution. There were two groups vying for control of the Hal & Norcross. The case went to the supreme court of Nevada in 1897 to determine which group had legal control of the newly opened mine. In the meantime, no one was dealing in the stock. Eventually James resigned his superintendency and returned to his mining interests in Rossland, British Columbia.<sup>11</sup> In 1899, he was the manager of the consolidated mines at Moyie in East Kootenay and on the board of directors of St Eugene Consolidated.<sup>12</sup>

He was appointed superintendent of the Bodie mine in Ferry County, Washington, in 1902.<sup>13</sup> He resigned from management of the St Eugene mine in 1905<sup>14</sup> and was briefly a director of the

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<sup>1</sup> James Cronin: Mining Pioneer, by Dirk Septer, pp. 27-28.

<sup>2</sup> *Pioche Daily Record*, 22 October 1872; 20 March 1873; *Nevada State Journal*, 7 April 1896, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Nevada State Census, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Director of the Mint upon the Statistics of the Production of the Precious Metals in the US, 1883, p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, 20 August 1885, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Nevada State Journal*, 7 April 1896, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 August 1887, p. 6; California Death Index, 1940-1997.

<sup>9</sup> *East Kootenay Miner*, 16 December 1897, p. 1; *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 1910, Vol 89, p. 420.

<sup>10</sup> *San Francisco Call*, 8 April 1896, p. 13; 11 April 1896, p. 11

<sup>11</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 March 1897, p. 6; 25 April 1897, p. 13; *San Francisco Call*, 14 March 1897, p. 21; 25 March 1897, p. 4.

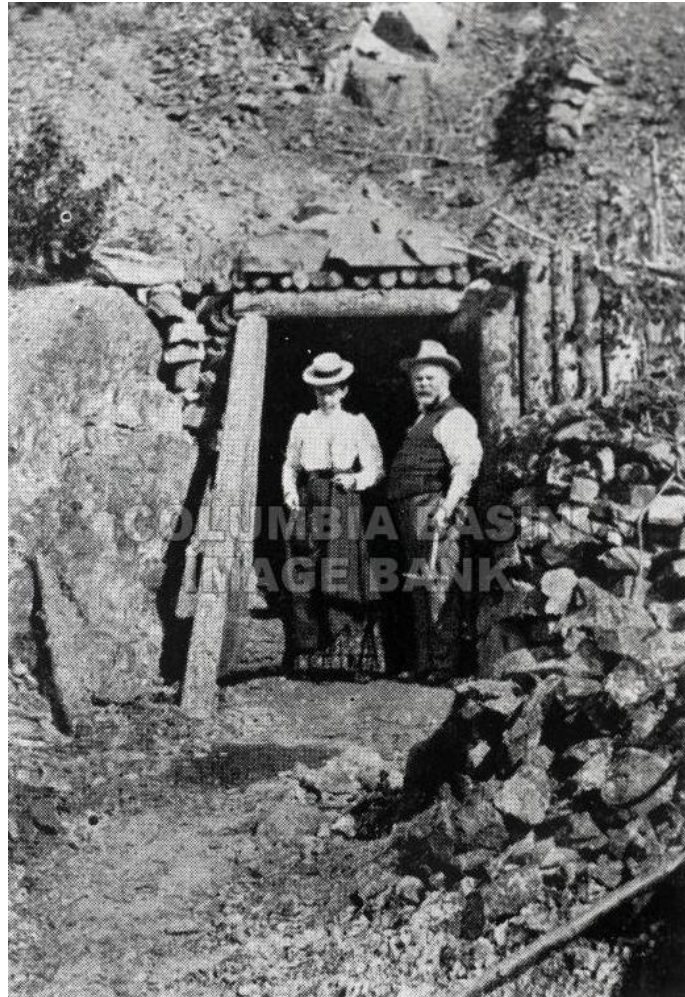
<sup>12</sup> *Pullman Herald*, 9 December 1899, p. 2; 18 October 1902, p. 6; *The Mail and Empire*, 16 November 1899, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Mining and Scientific Press*, Vol 85, 1902, pp. 81, 198.

<sup>14</sup> *Cranbrook Daily Townsman*, 20 July 2016.

Kootenays om 1906.<sup>15</sup> He and his wife then moved to Spokane but he traveled often to the Babine range in the Skeena district in northern British Columbia, where he was prospecting a silver-lead property.<sup>16</sup> In 191, he is listed as a miner living alone in Ely, White Pine, Nevada. This must have been a visit, as his wife was living in their home on South 924 Maple St in Spokane.<sup>17</sup>

One day in 1918, he was returning from his Babine mine and was thrown off his horse. The injury was painful but didn't seem serious. He underwent an operation in 1921 and again in 1924. His health went downhill from then, and he died 3 March 1925. He was a deeply religious man, with high values and a good sense of humor. He spent half his life in tents or cabins and was an expert cook and fisherman. He was well liked by those who worked for him.<sup>18</sup>



Mr and Mrs James Cronin standing in front of the St Eugene mine portal  
(image from [basininstitute.org](http://basininstitute.org))

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<sup>15</sup> Roaring Days: Rossland's Mines and the History of British Columbia, by Jeremy Mouat, 1995, p. 138.

<sup>16</sup> *Spokane Press*, 20 September 1907, p. 1; *British Columbia Mining Record*, 1908, Vol 15, p. 250; *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 1909, Vol 88, No 1, p. 888; *Monthly Bulletin of the Canadian Mining Institute*, 1915, pp. 111, 604.

<sup>17</sup> United States Census, 1910; *Spokane Press*, 7 March 1910, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> James Cronin: Mining Pioneer, by Dirk Septer, pp. 27-28.