



# REPORT

## COLFAX GHOST TOWN

INVESTIGATION



*Colfax  
New Mexico*

**NM071**

### SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION



**SOLVED**

**1999**

COMPLAINTS  
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## Forward

The word “investigation” is defined as  
“a searching inquiry for ascertaining facts; detailed or careful examination.”

The key word here is “facts”. Do ghosts exist? No, it has not been proven.  
Therefore are no facts to investigate.

What we do have is the testimony of the witnesses and this is where an investigational process will work. Investigations are often viewed as a skeptical activity because the main goal is trying to determine what the witness actually saw. Is it explainable or not? This is done through critical thinking and an event replication process developed by SGHA. This is an important concept because what defines a haunting or ghost sighting is “Multiple witnesses reporting unusual phenomena over a period of time”. If these phenomena can be explained, the witness reports are no longer validating paranormal activity as a cause and thus there is no ghost or haunting. Additionally historical research may be done in an attempt to validate facts.

It is important to understand that the goal of an investigation is not to find evidence of the paranormal but to attempt to identify any natural or manmade causes of the reported phenomena

### Definition of Terms

**Investigation Status:** Unsolved investigations will have either an open or closed status. An investigation is given an “Open” status if:

The investigators were unable to replicate all of the witness events. Something significant remains that is still unsolved.

It is important to understand that an “open” investigation does not mean that the unsolved facts are paranormal in nature. It simply means that we have exhausted our resources and cannot solve the “open” items/events.

A “Closed” status indicates that there is insufficient data or confounding variables that prevents replication or identifying possible explanations. This often occurs when investigators do not have direct access to witnesses or some other environmental change have occurred that creates confounding variables.

## Confidentiality Notice

Many of the witnesses interviewed have wished to remain anonymous in exchange for presenting their accounts of paranormal experiences. We honor that request and thus witnesses will often be identified by aliases. Any coincidence between aliases and actual persons is unintentional.

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## Part 1: Location Information

Colfax Ghost Town

New Mexico

## Part 2: Location History



The town of Colfax was promoted by developers of the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Railroad near the turn of the century.

Colfax was advertised as a good farming opportunity that was close to Cimarron and near the , coal operations at Dawson. A post office opened in 1908. It was a small

community with a school, that doubled as a church, a hotel, general merchandise, and a gas station. The town site was eventually abandoned by the late thirties, the post office closed in 1921.

## Part 3: Witnesses

This section identifies the witnesses to the reported activity.

Name	Sex	Connection with reported incident	Interviewed
John *	M	3rd hand account of story	14 Aug 1989

*Witnesses given aliases are noted by a \**

John is a local resident of Cimarron who told us the stories of ghostly activity occurring in the old town of Colfax (See Section 4)

## Part 4: Reported Phenomenon

The Weeping Lady of Colfax is the apparition of a woman who appears in the back row of the combination church and schoolhouse here. Her spirit still grieves for her young son, who died of an unknown illness in the late 1800's.

Inconsolable grief killed the mother within a few months of her son's death. Reported phenomena include sounds of sobbing, the cries of a young boy and unseen footsteps are heard in the church/schoolhouse. On occasion, the mother appears as a ball of light that floats and wanders through the abandoned town.

The apparition of the same woman has also been spotted around the ruins of the town. She has also been by motorists driving north along the freeway, appearing in the middle of the road which has caused several accidents



A smell that is "similar to roses" and feelings of profound sadness are often associated with the ghost. She is described as haggard in appearance wearing a long grey dress. She appears solid and is often mistaken as a hitchhiker by passing motorists. When the curious pull over to offer assistance, she has already vanished. One variant of the story identifies the ghost's name as Maria. Her spirit was seen so frequently that people

began to move away from the town and eventually the place became a ghost town.

There are also two reports of "glowing balls of light" that have been seen moving about the ruins when the moon is full.

## **Part 5: Investigation**

With no witnesses to interview, we searched the area around the town site for alternative explanations and searched through historical records to locate anything that might shed some light on this story.

Many parts of the story simply sound like a combination of the other nearby myths. For example, the "glowing balls of light" highly resembles the phenomena that is reported at Dawson, just 4 miles away. The weeping lady of Colfax also bears an uncanny resemblance to the local legends of La Llorona. We were not able to locate any legitimate historical accounts that referenced a young boy's death occurring in the town. In the late 1880's the town was not even in existence yet. Records show that the town did not really "grow" until 1901.

We were able to locate a good historical account of Colfax in the [Sangre De Cristo Chronicle](#) (Nov. 25 1999). The article contains an interview with some prior residents of Colfax who lived in the town for much of its existence. If such a odd thing as a haunting was taking place, wouldn't they had mentioned it? Especially if a "ghost" was the reason the town was abandoned? The evidence simply is not there.

The one fact that we could check into is the "accidents" that were supposedly caused by the ghost. After searching through several newspaper archives, we were only able to find one reported incident of a car crash near the town of Colfax. It was reported in the Cimarron News on May 21st, 1914. However the cause of the crash is clearly due to heavy rains in the area, not a ghost.

The "smell similar to roses" is also a component of another nearby ghost story, that of the ghost of Mary at the St. James Hotel, 12 miles to the west.

This location is included in the book "Haunted Places: The National Directory" written by Dennis William Hauck. Reviews of that book indicate that it was poorly researched and inaccurate. However, the book may be

the propagator of the modern version of the story and why the legend is still told.

## **Part 6: Hypotheses**

By analyzing the position of where we were told to stand to see the "ghost lights" we were able to determine that the mostly likely explanation for the phenomenon are the headlights from cars. Automobile lights, traveling on US 64, could easily be mistaken for paranormal phenomena. The effect is enhanced by heat rising up from the earth as it cools in the evening. This makes headlights flicker and also produces the illusion of movement.



## **Part 7: Conclusion**

This appears to be an urban legend. Colfax was eventually doomed because of its proximity to Cimarron and Dawson. The ghost stories of Colfax appear to be comprised of elements of the ghost stories from its neighboring towns. There is no evidence to suggest that anything paranormal is occurring here or that any parts of the ghost stories are valid.

## Car Turns Turtle Near Colfax Town

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Heavy rains were responsible for numerous automobile accidents the past week, and while none were seriously injured there were several who had narrow escapes.

The most serious accident occurred a little west of Colfax, 12 miles east of Cimarron, when a car driven by Mr. Rohr, a representative of the Singer Sewing Machine company with headquarters in Trinidad, turned turtle just as the machine was rounding a curve and going down hill. Mr. Rohr who had another man with him were pinned beneath the car, but fortunately for both parties, they were not injured badly, and after turning the car right side up, started on their journey in the machine with its own power. The machine was slightly damaged.

Cimarron News May 12, 1914





#### References:

Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of New Mexico, James E. Sherman, 1975  
New Mexico's Best Ghost Towns, Philip Varney, 1999