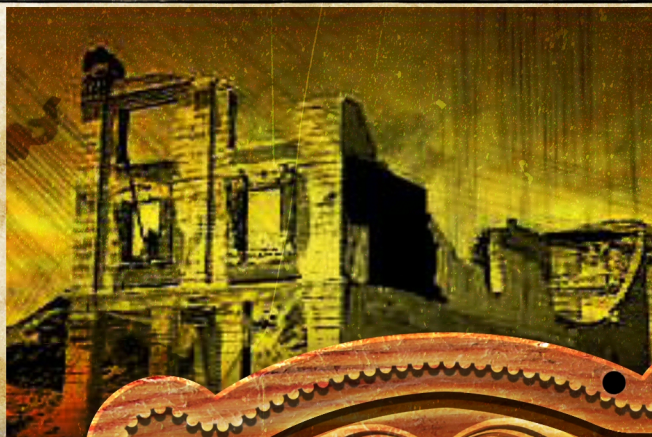




REPORT

RHYOLITE GHOST TOWN

INVESTIGATION



*Rhyolite
Nevada*

NV001

SOUTHWEST GHOST HUNTERS ASSOCIATION

★ SOLVED | 1991 | COMBOLS
1998 | STANARDS

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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

Rhyolite Ghost Town

Nevada

Part 2: Location History:



Rhyolite is a ghost town in Nye County, in the U.S. state of Nevada. It is in the Bullfrog Hills, about 120 miles (190 km) northwest of Las Vegas, near the eastern edge of Death Valley. The town began in early 1905 as one of several mining camps that sprang up after a prospecting discovery in the surrounding hills.

During an ensuing gold rush, thousands of gold-seekers, developers, miners and service providers flocked to the Bullfrog Mining District. Many settled in Rhyolite, which lay in a sheltered desert basin near the region's biggest producer, the Montgomery Shoshone Mine.

Industrialist Charles M. Schwab bought the Montgomery Shoshone Mine in 1906 and invested heavily in infrastructure, including piped water, electric lines and railroad transportation that served the town as well as the mine. By 1907, Rhyolite had electric lights, water mains, telephones, newspapers, a hospital, a school, an opera house, and a stock exchange. Published estimates of the



town's peak population vary widely, but scholarly sources generally place it in a range between 3,500 and 5,000 in 1907–08.

Rhyolite declined almost as rapidly as it rose. After the richest ore was exhausted, production fell. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the financial

panic of 1907 made it more difficult to raise development capital. In 1908, investors in the Montgomery Shoshone Mine, concerned that it was overvalued ordered an independent study. When the study's findings proved unfavorable, the company's stock value crashed, further restricting funding. By the end of 1910, the mine was operating at a loss, and it closed in 1911. By this time, many out-of-work miners had moved elsewhere, and Rhyolite's population dropped well below 1,000. By 1920, it was close to zero.



After 1920, Rhyolite and its ruins became a tourist attraction and a setting for motion pictures. Most of its buildings crumbled, were salvaged for building materials, or were moved to nearby Beatty or other towns, although the railway depot and a house made chiefly of empty bottles were repaired and preserved. From 1988 to 1998, three companies operated a profitable open-pit mine at the base of Ladd Mountain, about 1 mile (1.6 km) south of Rhyolite. The Goldwell Open Air Museum lies on private property just south of the ghost town, which is on property overseen by the Bureau of Land Management.

Although the mine produced more than \$1 million (equivalent to about \$24 million in 2009) in bullion in its first three years, its shares declined from \$23 a share (in historical dollars) to less than \$3. In February 1908, a committee of minority stockholders, suspecting that the mine was overvalued, hired a British mining engineer to conduct an inspection. The engineer's report was unfavorable, and news of this caused a sudden further decline in share value from \$3 to 75 cents. Schwab expressed disappointment when he learned that "the wonderful high-grade [ore] that had brought [the mine] fame was confined to only a few stringers and that what he had actually bought was a large low-grade mine." Although the mine was still profitable, by 1909 no new ore was being discovered, and the value of the remaining ore steadily decreased. In 1910, the mine operated at a loss for most of the year, and on March 14, 1911,

it was closed. By then, the stock, which had fallen to 10 cents a share, slid to 4 cents and was dropped from the exchanges.

A roofless two-story masonry building rests in a setting of low shrubs and gravel



under a cloudless blue sky. The building has many window openings but no glass. A mountain or hill is nearby, and a separate mountain range is visible in the distance.

The remains of Rhyolite's two-story, eight-room school building

Rhyolite began to decline before the final closing of the mine. At roughly the same time that the Bullfrog mines were running out of high-grade ore, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake diverted capital to California while interrupting rail service, and the financial panic of 1907 restricted funding for mine development. As mines in the district reduced production or closed, unemployed miners left Rhyolite to seek work elsewhere, businesses failed, and by 1910, the census reported only 675 residents. All three of the banks in the town had closed by March 1910. The newspapers, including the Rhyolite Herald, the last to go, all shut down by June 1912. The post office closed in November 1913; the last train left Rhyolite Station in July 1914, and the Nevada-California Power Company turned off the electricity and removed



its lines in 1916. Within a year the town was "all but abandoned", and the 1920 census reported a population of only 14. A 1922 motor tour by the Los Angeles Times found only one remaining resident, a 92-year-old man who died in 1924.

Much of Rhyolite's remaining infrastructure became a source of building materials for other towns and mining camps. Whole buildings were

moved to Beatty. The Miners' Union Hall in Rhyolite became the Old Town Hall in Beatty, and two-room cabins were moved and reassembled as multi-room homes. Parts of many buildings were used to build a Beatty school.

The Rhyolite historic town site is now maintained by the Bureau of Land Management. Ruins include the railroad depot and other buildings, and the Bottle House, which the Famous Players Lasky Corporation, the parent of Paramount Pictures, restored in 1925 for the filming of a silent movie, The Air Mail. The ruins of the Cook Bank Building were used in the 1964 film The Reward and again in 2004 for the filming of The Island. Orion Pictures used Rhyolite for its 1987 science-fiction movie Cherry 2000 depicting the collapse of American society. Six-String Samurai (1998) was another movie using Rhyolite as a setting. The Rhyolite-Bullfrog cemetery, with many wooden headboards, is slightly south of Rhyolite. (Source: Wikipedia)

Previous investigations at this location:

We performed three investigations at this location. The first was in 1988 with follow up investigations in 1990 and 1991.

Part 3: Witnesses and Interviews

This section identifies the witnesses to the reported activity and any other additional interviews.

Name	Sex	Connection with reported incident	Interviewed
Jack Dawson	Male	Witness	7/23/1988
Rudy Mendoza	Male	Witness	12/09/1991
Clint Boehringer	Male	BLM Volunteer	12/10/1991

*Witnesses given aliases are noted by a **

Part 4: Reported Phenomena

Jack's Interview (General)

Jack reported sensing an eerie presence of "something" lurking near the deserted bank building. He also claims that he has witnessed moving ghost lights gliding around the ruins from a distance. He told us if we are there at night we could hear disembodied footsteps throughout the town, especially near the bank.

After we finished our first investigation of Rhyolite we wrote back to Jack with our findings and some additional questions. We received additional correspondence from him in 1991 informing us that he had a co-worker that also had an "experience" at the ghost town. This person turned out to be our second witness Rudy.

Rudy's Interview (General)

Rudy was with a group of people that were exploring the ruins at night when they heard footsteps. The group moved back towards the old bank building and saw the apparition of a miner approaching them. He described the ghost as "solid looking, wearing brown pants and a brown hat". The apparition also had a long gray beard. When we asked him why he thought the figure was a ghost he told us of a legend he had heard from his uncle.

"There's a ghost called the brown man. He was a gold prospector who died in the town after he brought huge nuggets in to town to be tested. The legend says he was poisoned by the barber to get the gold."

Because this story was told to him by a trusted source he had no reason to question the sighting. No one in the group had a camera so no photos were taken of the apparition.

We made an attempt to interview the other people in Rudy's group. Most were unwilling to talk about "that night" although two were absolutely certain that they had seen a ghost.

Part 5: Investigation Results

The 1988 and 1990 investigations were primarily focused on searching for alternative explanations for the phenomenon reported by Jack. The first issue we decided to address was the footstep sounds that are heard “all over the town.” The geography of the area may be a contributing factor for this phenomenon. Bordered on three sides by ridges but open to the south, the ghost town is at 3,800 feet (1,200 m) above sea level. The high points of the ridges are Ladd Mountain to the east, Sutherland Mountain to the west, and Busch Peak to the north. Our hypothesis was that any sounds in the area, including the movement of wildlife, could be heard from much greater distance than one may think. We tested this hypothesis at night by sending one of our investigators, Ash, out with a flashlight and radio to walk around the perimeter of the ruins. The rest of the team, stationed back by the ruins of the bank, would listen to see if they could hear the sound of Ash’s footsteps and then guess his position. When one of the team members heard his footsteps we would radio Ash. He would then stop and turn on his flashlight, allowing his position to be revealed.

This hypothesis bears merit. Several times the group could hear his movement and guessed his distance at around 50 feet away. However, when he would reveal his location he was at a distance of 600 feet plus. During this testing Ash also disturbed a herd of antelope which ran off towards the north. We were able to clearly hear their movement at quite a distance as well.

The rest of the evening was spent just observing. Team members were stationed around the town site. Each had a notebook and would record any observations. What kind of noises were there? What they thought those noises may be and observations of anything that seemed unusual. There were many instances of strange sounds, rustling, scratching noise mostly, along with many explainable noises you would expect to find in a ghost town (tin being moved by the wind and wild animals).



The focus of our second investigation was the old bank building. This is where an eerie presence of "something" lurking was reported. From the information from the observations from the first outing, we developed a hypothesis that this sensed presence may be explainable with the cause being the presence of

wildlife, not a ghost. We examined the ruins for signs of animal activity. In and around the old bank building there was plenty of scat as well as many holes dug by burrowing animals. The bank is two stories high, the two openings at the top are where the bank vaults were, the opening at the bottom was the vault for the Post Office. We checked the old vaults and found several bird nests.



To test our hypothesis we took 5 audio recorders and placed them around the bank and in the old vaults. One dusk arrived we started recording and used a watch to announce the start time at each recorder. We then used the same watch to record the times of anything we heard during the evening, along with any impressions the investigators

had. The investigators were stationed in and around the ruins of the bank and each also had an audio recorder. This would enable us to sync up audio from the control recorders that had been placed around the site.

Later analysis of the audio recordings (decibel levels) and timestamps clearly indicated that the unusual noises corresponded to animal movement coming from near one of the control audio recorders. So there was a presence, it just was not a paranormal oriented one.



Our last investigation of this site was launched specifically to look into the claims of the miner apparition. We arrived early to look around the town for anything that might provide a plausible explanation. This is when we ran into Clint Boehringer, an overnight volunteer for the BLM which had just taken

over control of the town site. Not be masters of the obvious but Clint fit the exact description of the apparition Rudy reported (Beard, brown hat and pants). We asked Clint if he had had any unusual experiences at the town and his answer was most revealing.

While he had experienced nothing of a paranormal nature, he did tell us about people being in the town at night. Like most BLM sites, Rhyolite is closed after sundown. He would see flashlights near the ruins and it was part of his job to run people out after dark. Most of the tourists were compliant but he also mentioned one group of teenagers that were “probably up to no good” that ran when he approached them. During our conversation it became apparent that Clint was probably the bearded “miner” that Rudy’s group saw since Rudy’s sighting occurred earlier that year. Additionally, the flashlights of people visiting the ruins after dark are a plausible explanation for the moving ghost lights that Jack had reported.

Part 6: Conclusion

Reasonable explanations were found for all of the claims made by the witnesses. We composed a final report that was mailed to both Jack and Rudy. Jack replied back that he still believes that the town is haunted. We never received any response from Rudy.

Part 7: Addendum

We believe that this location is ripe for myth building. With people still believing that the ghost of a miner haunts the ghost town combined with its spooky

ambiance at night it is highly possible that this location will turn into another urban legend.

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