

# RECONNOITERING IN THE EASTERN SIERRA NEVADA & GREAT BASIN BY 4-WHEEL-DRIVE

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## Exploration Trips

### The Greenwater Region of Eastern Death Valley National Park

Furnace ghost town site, Kunze (original Greenwater) ghost town site, Ramsey (new Greenwater) ghost town site, Gold Valley, Gold Valley ghost town site, Willow Spring, Willow Creek ghost town site.

Day 2: November 23, 2002



Furnace to Kunze



Ramsey

Dawn arrived early after a windy night. Though comfortable, I awoke in the middle of the night and laid awake for a long while; which made for a groggy awakening just before the sun arose over the distant Spring Mountain Range to the east.



Sunrise from our Furnace camp.



My campsite with John's in the background.

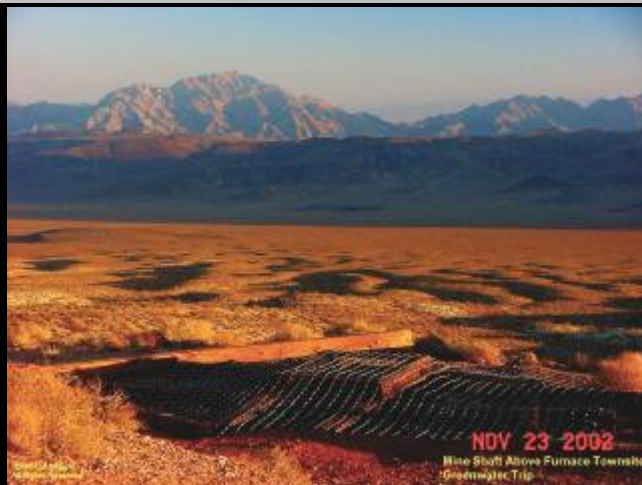


John's campsite and sleeping setup for his short bed.



Morning before coffee.

I crawled from the back of the truck and set up my digital and video cameras to record the sunrise. The wind, which had blown hard during the night from the southwest had now turned to blow cold and equally hard from the north. Then the primary task was to set up the Coleman stove and heat water for coffee. Isn't camp coffee made with an old jar of instant coffee wonderful? Yuck! But it sure wakes you up. Breakfast consisted of some Cheerios, milk and a banana.



Mine shaft near my camp.



Coffee with a view.

John was getting up about the time I began cleaning up my camp and he busied himself with getting ready to start his day. To clean up and take care of morning business, I pulled out on the tailings pile, where the end dipped enough to give me some privacy; whereupon I stripped and took a sponge bath in the cold morning air. What remaining sleepiness not taken care of by the coffee, I was thoroughly woke up standing wet and naked in the morning breeze high in the Black Mountains overlooking Greenwater Valley!





Our perch atop the Black Mountains above Furnace.



John and I finished our morning business and were ready to roll. Our topo maps indicated the road above the tailings ran a short distance to the crest of the Black Mountains and afforded a looksee over the other side into Death Valley. We drove up the mountainside and the last hop up to the crest was some fun with a steep and loose climb along with some whoop-de-dooos to add to the fun. I've had experience with these in the past, but it was John's first steep climb. The view from the top of the range was superb to the east with a 180° view. The view into Death Valley was blocked a bit by a peak higher than the point we were on jutting up from the western slope of the Black Mountains, but we could see southwest into the lower reaches of Death Valley, as well as Telescope Peak across from us a bit northwest. A cold wind knocked us around a bit as John and I videotaped and photographed the landscape from our perch.



Mine above Furnace.



Furnace townsite.





Peering down a mineshaft above Furnace.



Furnace townsite.



Furnace townsite.



Furnace townsite.



After leaving our high perch, John and I returned to Furnace townsite. There, we found scattered lumber and plenty of tin cans of all shapes and sizes. John had obtained GPS coordinates for Furnace townsite from the USGS website and we followed his Garmin eTrex GPS to those coordinates, which required a half mile cross country scramble. But, we found nothing except some tin cans about half way. Returning to our trucks, however, we found



Furnace townsite.

what just may be the main street of Furnace, it being a short distance off the current road running through. We based this upon what appears to be a leveled terrace just off the bottom of a wash, and comparing the landscape with that in a 1906 photo of Furnace we had along.

Leaving Furnace, John and I continued south to the Kunze townsite, which was the original Greenwater. A stone cabin still stands here, as well as several other stone ruins. We spent a while at Kunze, spending our time exploring, having lunch and even myself taking a nap.



Our rigs arriving at Kunze townsite.



Stone ruins at Kunze.



Inside stone cabin at Kunze.



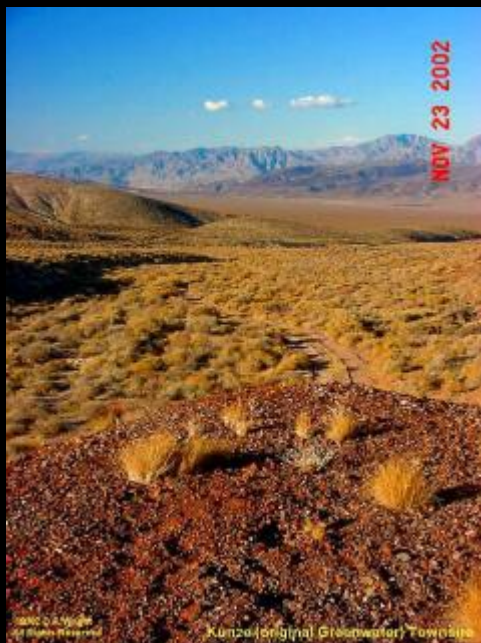
John found this old dinner knife at Kunze. We then hid it well.



Kunze.



Mine shaft at Kunze.



View from another mine shaft above Kunze.

### *Inyo Independent*, October 12, 1906 "HIGH PRICES OF GREENWATER LOTS"

*Reports have been received from Greenwater, that offers for inside lots in the Kunze townsite have been as high as \$1,500. Johnnie Siding is practically swamped with building material and the 40 or 50 mule teams do not seem to make any appreciable difference in the accumulation. -- Bonanza*



Compare these two scenes: Kunze 1906 and the same scene in 2002.

The Kunze site was located in a shallow and narrow canyon. High hopes were entertained



for Greenwater and the cramped canyon was no place for a big city with all the amenities that comes with it. Greenwater needed room to grow to the big city it was destined to come, so Greenwater held a moving day.

**Inyo Register**, January 17, 1907

**"GREENWATER HAS MOVED."**

*The town of Greenwater is now completely moved from the Kunze townsite to that of Ramsey, though the town retains the name of Greenwater, and has a population of about 700. The Greenwater Mercantile company and Brim & Bernstein have large stocks of general merchandise. Murphy & Murphy have a large frame building and carry a stock of clothing and furnishing goods. The Greenwater bank is housed in the Ramsey building moved to Greenwater from Rhyolite last summer. There are at present about twenty good frame buildings erected and in the course of erection.*

*The well drilling outfit below town is down over 300 feet and is still in the wash. They expect to continue sinking until they find water. The present supply of water for the camp comes from a spring eight miles in the direction of Furnace creek and from Allen's Well, in the Amargosa valley. Furnace City, the Clark townsite in the western part of the district, is said to be rapidly building up.*

*The Furnace Creek Copper company is sinking two shafts with gasoline hoists; one is down 400 feet and the intention is to continue down to 600 or 700 feet before crosscutting the vein which has opened on the 50 foot level. The other companies in that section are all working and the complaint of lack of laborers is frequently heard.*

*The big merger interests, details of which were mentioned last week, now employ about fifty men and has two of its three hoists down over 100 feet and the showing with depth is said to be very satisfactory.*

*Roger Knox, operating the Hank Knight group, has the Lookout shaft down 60 feet and is now excavating for a gasoline hoist. The showing is reported to be excellent. Nash & Wallace are working a large force on their numerous holdings.*

*The Fairbanks-Morse company has delivered, or have orders for, at least twenty hoists. In the eastern part, the East Greenwater Mining company is developing a property with excellent showings. The Pittsburg and Greenwater Copper company is the most southeasterly property working, being twenty-five miles from Greenwater. They have lately opened some high gold values. The numerous other properties working should make the total population of the district between 1500 and 2000 people.*

*Both railroads have made surveys into the district and Greenwater now has stage connection with each. -- **Bullfrog Herald***

**Death Valley Chuck-Walla**, January 1, 1907

**"A TOWN ON WHEELS"**

*Greenwater is on the move. This may be thought a peculiar state of affairs for a town to be in, but such is the case. The man who procured the drug which resulted in this extraordinary condition of affairs is known to the mining world as Harry Ramsey. The physician who administered the tablet is known as the Greenwater Townsite Company. Now both druggist and physician are busily employed in administering to the needs of the*



patient, which is on the run as a result of their efforts. As yet no effort has been made to stop the peculiar condition of affairs, and it is probable that the result will be what was originally intended, namely, the transfer of the townsite from its original location on the slopes in the heart of the copper mines to the less valuable lands two miles away, near the open plain.

At present, however, the move is on, and the Townsite Company which arranged the affair is busily employed in transferring the dwellings and belongings of the original settlers at Greenwater, through the crooked canyons and over the ridges to the new location.

Meanwhile pandemonium reigns. Saloons and boarding houses, stores and brokerage firms are doing business on the run and trying to be on both sides of the mountain at one time. A barkeep puts down his case of bottles on a knoll en route from the old camp to the new and serves the passing throng laden with bedding and store fixtures. A shot of skee or a glass of lager lightens the load, and the burden is taken up to the next station. The butcher kills a cow en route and deals out steaks and roasts to the hungry multitude hurrying back to the old camp to get the necessities for the new. The grocer opens a case of coffee and a can of cream and catches the business going both ways. Those who remain in the old camp are walking two miles to the new to get the eggs for breakfast. Those who have journeyed to the new are walking two miles to the old to get their mail, and a pair of socks, which the travel has made necessary, but which the new town does now yet afford.

Through it all Jack Salsberry, Harry Ramsey and the Townsite Company smile. In the main, things are coming their way. Among other things the cuss words of the moving populace are making in their general direction, but through it all they smile blandly. Questions as to the cause of the change are referred to the anti-publicity committee, and picturesque and forceful language as to the advisability of the change is noted and filed for reference. It is costing the promoters money, but everything is costing money in Greenwater, and that is expected. Many cuss, but few are sore. There are legitimate objections to the move, and there are also arguments in its favor. There is also a story attached.

**Death Valley Chuck-Walla, January 1, 1907**

### **"SQUATTERS AT GREENWATER"**

The squatter in a mining camp is about as welcome as a flea in Milady's chamber. In Goldfield the squatter has earned a reputation. In Bullfrog and Rhyolite this peculiar composition of nerve and callous found temporary fame. Now he has come to Greenwater, the city of many sites, the town on wheels -- Greenwater, the restless virgin of the Funeral range. The first specimens of this parasite appeared in the copper city on Sunday, December 16, and he abides still much to the disquietude of those holding vacant town lots and to the disgust of the Townsite Company.

In Goldfield the squatter claimed an excuse for taking lots that had been purchased by others on the ground that the titles were not valid. In that case he argued that someone else would claim the lot if he did not. He reasoned facetiously that the lots were sure to be stolen and therefore he was the proper person to do this little distasteful duty. In this he was, in a measure, upheld by the courts of the state of Nevada, so what the 'ell was

anyone else going to do. If a man had a lot he was compelled to put a padlock on it, fence it 'round with barbed wire or keep a chained bull pup where the intruder was likely to step.

In Greenwater the squatter has been lured by the restlessness of the town and its propensity to move. When it was finally decided upon by the powers that the town should be on the Ramsey site instead of the Kunze site, it necessitated the approval of the new Board of County Commissioners that meets at Independence in the middle of January. In the meantime the title of the lots which the townsite company had ordered surveyed and staked out were in statu quo. No one owned them. The townsite company claimed them but would not sell because no deeds could be given with the sale. In this state of affairs the squatters saw their opportunity.

One fine Sunday afternoon, while the townsite people were quietly planning their plans and counting their grains which would accrue from the sale of lots in the new Greenwater, two men with a burro sauntered along the main street of the town until they came to a choice corner in the heart of the business section. This corner was held at a fancy figure. It was bid for at sums ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,000, but this was all Greek to the two men with the burro. The corner looked good to the men, and even the burro evinced some intelligence by stopping of his own volition and nibbling the greasewood. On his back was a grub outfit and a tent. The men took a calm survey of the street ahead of them and of the part which they had already left behind. There seemed apparent no reason why they should go any further or drive their animal another step. There was no such reason. The lot on which they had inadvertently stopped was as good a one as they were likely to find. Without any particular show of interest or concern, they forthwith unpacked the burro and began to pitch their tent.

Squatters have an abundance of stubbornness in their makeup. It's one of the characteristics of their stock in trade. Dr. H.G. Ford, townsite agent, and H.B. Gee, cashier of the bank, paid the two men a call before the tent was well up, and there followed a colloquy which resulted in nothing of interest. The squatters stayed. They announced that they would stay until some court of the great state of California ordered them to move.

Courts are a slow medium for redress, and the squatters' game is extremely harmful to a community like Greenwater. People who come with money to invest in real estate become frightened. A squatter is not particular whose lot he takes. Any vacant lot is likely to become his spoil. All this makes it evident that some other remedy must be found, and the remedy must come through the people in whose community the crime is being committed. Being parasites, squatters should be treated as such. The best way is to remove them gently from their usurped lot and send them from the town. It's the only way that real estate can be made secure from the molestations.



After our time at Kunze, we continued west on the road through the townsite up and into the Black Mountains. Greenwater had moved during its heyday, so was it time for us to move on.

The road west from Kunze passed through some interesting country with superb lighting of the late afternoon, but the land was barren of ruins or prospects. Our road then suddenly changed directions and dropped us back down into the Ramsey townsite of Greenwater, which was the second or new Greenwater. Central in the townsite is an old Auto Club sign which was placed there during a 1906-10 campaign by the Auto Club to sign the desert for early travelers. The sign was still legible until the early 1970s, but today is unrecognizable and festooned with all manner of junk found nearby.



Coming back down from high in the Black Mountains and into the Ramsey townsite.



Mine above Ramsey.



John and Shadow at the Auto Club sign at Ramsey.



Yours Truly at the Auto Club sign at Ramsey.  
John McCulloch photo taken with my camera. Or  
did Shadow take it?



Auto Club sign at Ramsey.

John and I were thinking of Greenwater Spring up the mountainside for our camp for the night, but upon taking the road to the spring a Park Service barrier identified that the road was closed and the area now being reclaimed for wilderness. So we went south to see if we could find the cemetery marked on the topo map. With the sun down and dusk advancing, we decided to go back around to the Ramsey townsite to find suitable places to park and camp for the night.

I found a nice, level building site in the upper part of Ramsey, but John couldn't find anything to his liking. We had passed by a nice spot that John had brought to my attention on the radio south of the Auto Club sign, so he went down that way. He was about a half mile from me, but we were well within radio and visual range. I also chose my spot because there I was able to receive a good cell phone signal, better than I did down at John's campsite, and was able to call my wife to let her know that I didn't fall down one of Greenwater's numerous mine shafts.



My camp spot at Ramsey.



John and I both set up our respective camps, cooked and ate our meager bacon and beans and turned in. Again I enjoyed reading snug inside my camper. John bade me goodnight via the FRS frequencies and soon after I crawled inside my warm bag and slept the night through.



Eating a supper of canned beef stew.



My simple camp setup.



John and Shadow preparing for bed.

## On to Day 3: Sunday, November 24, 2002

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