

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

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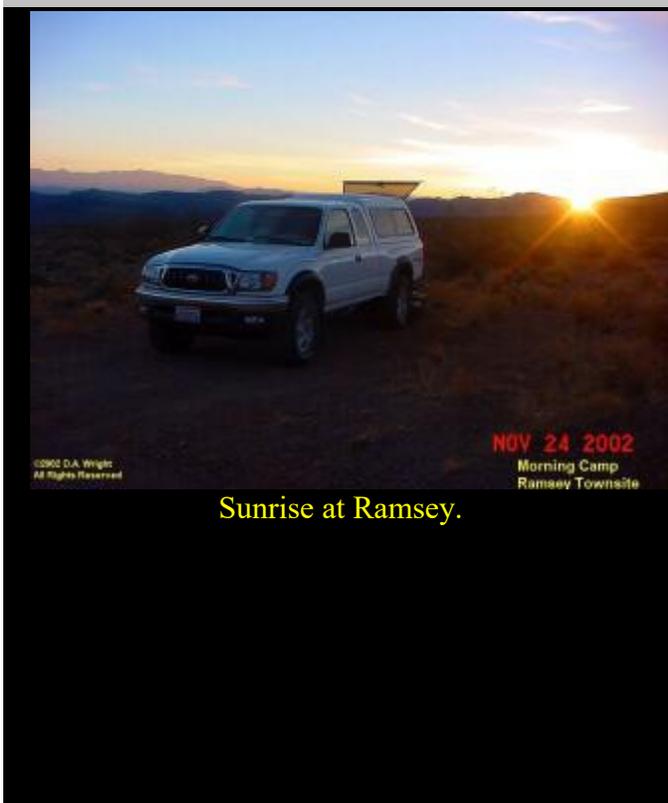
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Exploration Trips

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.

Introduction and Day 3: November 24, 2002



Sunrise at Ramsey.

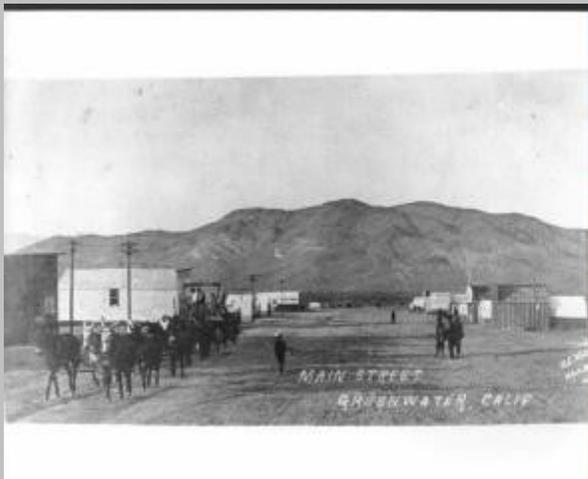
I arose just in time to capture digitally the first burst of the sun over the distant southeastern mountains. As usual, the first task of the day is to pump up the Coleman stove and heat water for coffee. As the water was heating, I busied myself with deflating the air mattress and folding up the sleeping bags. Breakfast consisted again of Cheerios. John called out a greeting on the FRS, indicating to me he was pretty much going through his morning routine a half mile away.

Today was the day I was to return to Trona. I was forced into working overtime to cover for one of the men who worked graveyard shift at the chemical plant, which put a bit of a black cloud over this day, since I needed to



return to Trona in time to rest a bit before going into work at 11:00 PM.

After we met up, John and I quickly explored the Ramsey townsite of Greenwater. Comparing old photos we tried to mimic the work of their photographers to compare old and new. During the interceding years, man and nature has largely erased the Greenwater boom that boasted from the front pages of the nation's newspapers. The tin age must have peaked in Greenwater and Greenwater ruins are largely populated by all manner, shape and size of rusted tin cans.



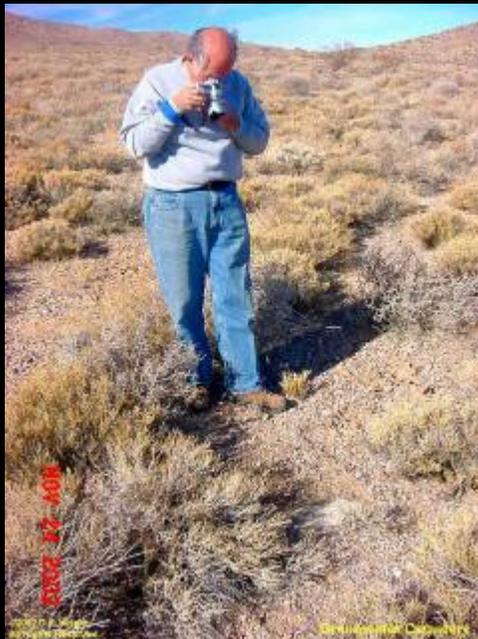
Ramsey townsite of Greenwater - 1906-2002.

The former main street can be delineated today by the difference in vegetation and its edges.



Ramsey is populated today by multitudes of rusted tin cans of every description.

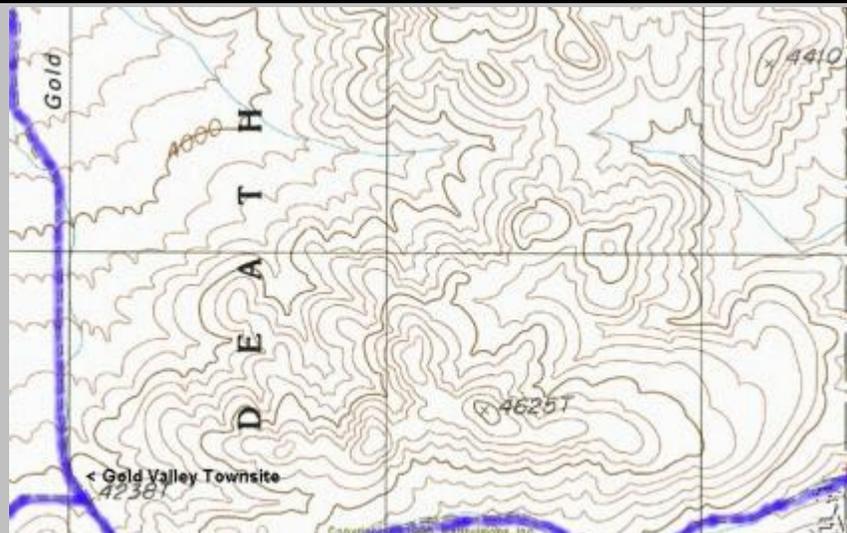
The word "cemetery" on the topo map had peaked my interest since the first stages of planning a trip to Greenwater, so the next location we set our sights was southwest of the Ramsey townsite on the south side of a prominent hill. John and I walked an area likely 500 feet square and found confusing signs: fairly large, flat sided stones whereas the surrounding landscape offered little in the way of rock; indistinct and subtle humps in the ground; and nothing more. One observation I used to surmise that the humps might be graves was the fact that large holes obviously dug by animals in the ground next to each hump may possibly be badger holes - in my experience many ghost town graveyards are perforated by badger tunnels.



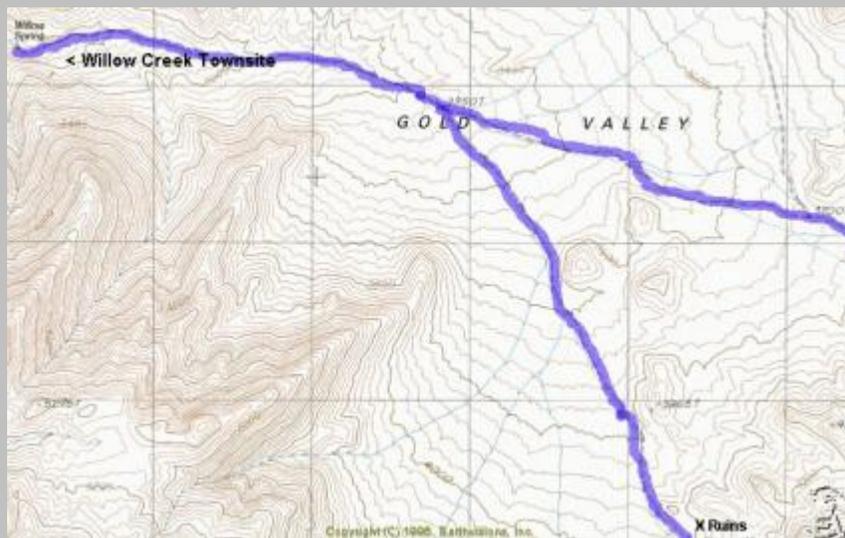
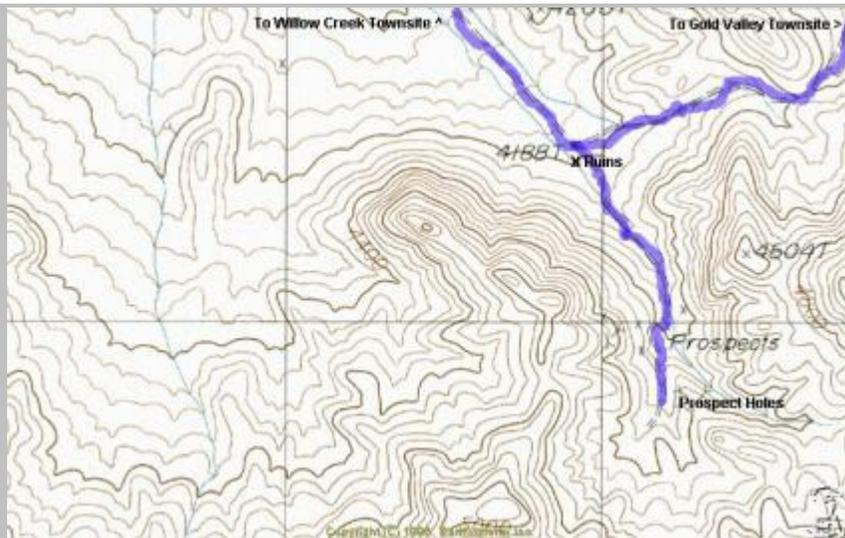
John photographs one of several other flat stones that we found scattered around the plot designated on the map as the cemetery.



John and Shadow point out one of several mounds that we found among the brush.



After our tour of the cemetery, John and I returned to the main road running the length of Greenwater Valley and turned south. Our sights were now upon Gold Valley and Willow Spring, about fifteen miles south of Greenwater in the Death Valley drainage of the Black Mountains.



Entering Gold Valley. The Panamint Range, on the other side of Death Valley, is seen in the background.

The road into Gold Valley at first was rather dull as it crossed over the plains of Greenwater Valley, but progress was slowed by projecting lava rock in the two-track road. As it reached the base of the Black Mountains it became far more interesting and soon a summit was reached and the large bowl of Gold Valley opened before us.

The ghost town of Gold Valley comes first and here the road forks shortly after topping the summit and forms a loop. The left (southern) side of the loop runs up into a deep canyon with spectacular outcroppings on the skyline, where are the mines that served Gold Valley. At the junction of the main road and that

running south was the location for Gold Valley townsite.

Inyo Independent, February 14, 1908

"INYO COUNTY"

... Gold Valley is 20 miles from Greenwater, straight down the Funeral Range, and is the centre [sic] of considerable excitement at present, caused by the accumulation of 40 tons of high-grade gold ore on the dumps of the Rice-Badgett lease on the Harry Ramsey property. This ore, it is claimed by Rice and Badgett will average \$400 to \$600 a ton. This new excitement has drawn mining men from all surrounding points, having practically depopulated the town of Greenwater. In addition to rice & Badgett [caps], Mr. Brockington is working eight men on the property that the Dupont powder people worked two years ago, and gold and silver ore is being taken out. Andy Kane is working seven men and recently took out a picked sample of ore that assayed 2000 ounces silver, and within a mile of his silver property, he mined copper ore that assayed 40 to 60 per cent.

Brockingham has brought two assayers from Boston and has also installed a complete assaying outfit, the furnace alone of which weighed 600 pounds.

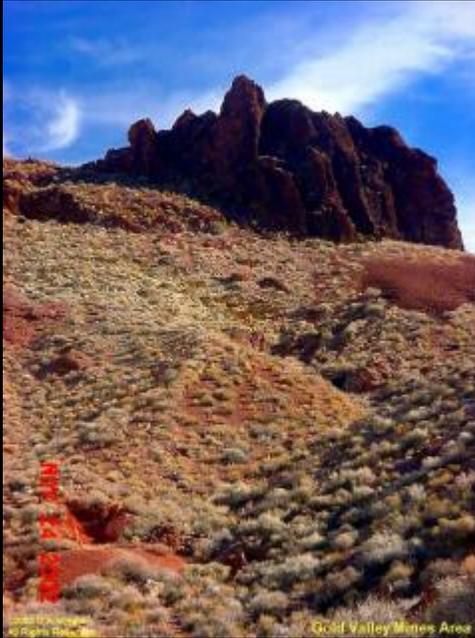
J.R. Le Cyr has down a 60-foot shaft, the entire bottom of which is in payable ore.

*To reach Gold Valley, take the T. & T. to Death Valley Junction, and Bill Brong's auto line 36 miles from the junction to Gold Valley. -- **American Mining Review***

John and I were not able to find any remains of Gold Valley. We were pressed for time since I needed to return to Trona later and it was already mid-afternoon, and so were not able to take a close look. We then turned south and up into the mining area for Gold Valley, but as we got to the first mines, the road deteriorated at a restrictive rock formation and we decided against further progress.



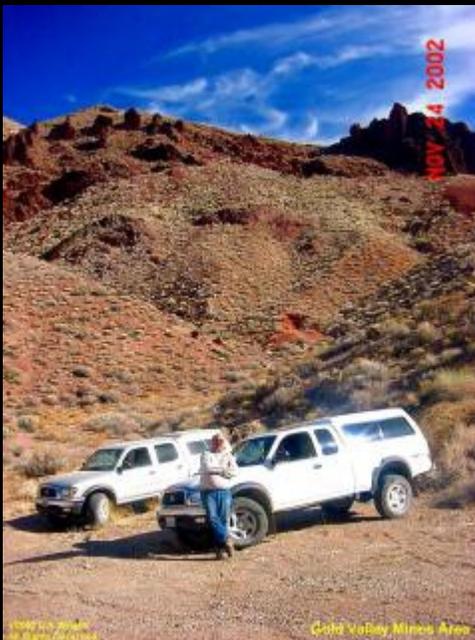
Left and Right: Gold Valley townsite.



A few of the subtle but visible Gold Valley prospects.



The point we decided not to go further. I wasn't in the mood for a tore up rocker pannel anyway. The road, according to our topo maps, indicated it didn't go much further. We didn't take the time to walk, but the map showed more prospects just ahead.



Me and our vehicles pose in some interesting topography. John McCulloch photo, taken with my camera.



Two leveled building sites near the mouth of the canyon, further into Gold Valley.

Our next destination was at the bottom of Gold Valley, Willow Spring. Here the valley pinches down into it lowest point and spills down into the depths of Death Valley. Here was located Willow Creek townsite.



On the road to Willow Spring.

Inyo Independent, April 3, 1908
"WILLOW CREEK DISTRICT."

The citizens of Gold Valley have applied for a post office, as the camp is forging ahead so well that a post office is an absolute necessity. If this camp had been on the Nevada side, it would be Gold Valley instead of Rawhide. This camp in a few short months will be to California what Goldfield is to Nevada.

The latest gold strike in Willow Creek was made a few days ago by Max Hohn on the Old Man and Scepter claims, where they get heavy pannings from both workings, the colors almost encircling the pan. This strike is one and a half miles northeast of Gold Valley townsite.

While in Rhyolite recently, Bert Thayer of Gold Valley exhibited some of Gold Valley's rock. Bert says pan them; there's no dope about this, but if they can show better ore, or more of it at the surface at Rawhide than at Gold Valley they will have to go some. If they really had stuff like this at Rawhide they might make a camp.

Stockholders of the Gold Valley Townsite Company will hold a meeting Wednesday, April 15th, to outline the policy of the company. Place of meeting will be given later.

The Gold Valley Mercantile company have



The end of the road at Willow Spring. Willow Creek townsite is spread out just above here. Below lie mill ruins among the willows.



Ruins next to the spring.

*moved into their new store as the camp has outgrown the old stand. -- **Greenwater Times.***



Willow Creek townsite.



Willow Creek townsite.

Willow Creek contained some visible trace of its former self: cans; a stone building site; some remains of milling activity due to the abundance of water. Time was getting short, our stomachs empty, so John and I ate our respective lunches and left Gold Valley.

Late afternoon shadows colored the distances as we entered Greenwater Valley. Reaching the main road again, we turned south a short distance to a point where the Dead Man Pass road leaves to the northeast for its destination up toward Death Valley Junction. Here is where John and I shook hands and bade each other goodbye. John head north to the old Lila C. mine area, I aimed my grill to Trona.



John in my rearview mirror as we left Gold Valley.



Back in Greenwater Valley.



Heading south on the Furnace Creek Wash road.



John leaving for the Lila C. Mine on the Dead Man Pass road.

My original thought was to hit CA178, then turn west and drop into Death Valley, then north along the Badwater road to Furnace Creek. However, concern about reliable gas supply drove me to turn east at CA178 and head to Shoshone. After gassing up, I returned back to Trona via Death Valley Junction.



Gassing Up at Shoshone

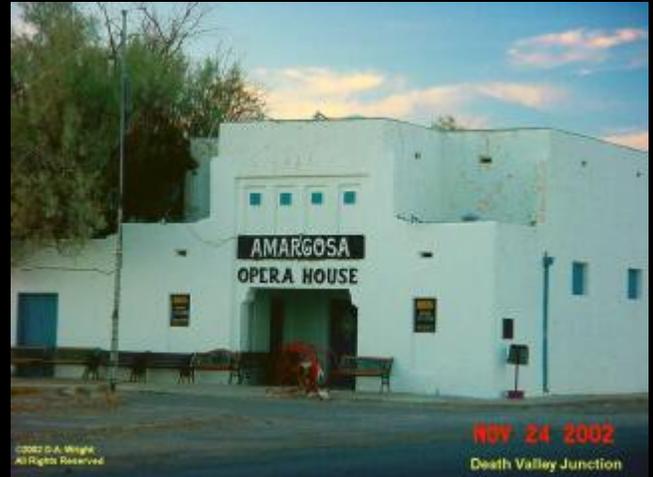


The museum at Shoshone, a former hospital at Greenwater.

Gassing up at Shoshone.



Eagle Mountain just south of Death Valley Junction.



The Amargosa Opera House at Death Valley Junction.



Westward on CA190 toward Furnace Creek.



Furnace Creek Inn and getting too dark to photograph as I made my last leg of the trip back to Trona, to work in the darkness of night at the chemical plant on overtime graveyard shift.

I got back in Trona with enough time to rest for a couple hours before going into the plant. Guess what? Work was dead and there wasn't a damn thing to do all night! Oh well, at least I had three days and two nights of fun and adventure!

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