It's time to be Hittin' the Trail again. A little longer journey this time. We're heading for Rhyolite, Nevada, a ghost town about four miles from Beatty, Nevada. Approximately 270 miles and 4 1/2 to 5 hours driving time from Santa Clarita to Rhyolite. Better think in terms of overnight lodging in Beatty unless you really enjoy a lot of driving in one day and night.

Movies filmed in Rhyolite are few and far between. Westerns make up the least amount of the filmography. You might want to view "Ride Him Cowboy" starring John Wayne as it is the most readily available western movie. It's a 1932 remake of the silent film "The Unknown Cavalier" starring Ken Maynard from 1926. Brief stock footage scenes from Maynard's "lost film" can be seen with a great view of the main street of Rhyolite as Maynard is being chased on horseback by the good guys (or are they bad guys?) Don't blink or you will miss the scene.

Rhyolite's main attraction is not its movie history. It just happens to be one of the few remaining ghost towns with easy paved road access. How many B-Westerns have you watched with a ghost town being a brief or major part of the story line? Unfortunately, most are studio-built ghost town at one of the ranches in and around the Santa Clarita area. However, Rhyolite's the real deal.

If you're inclined to jump in the car and head to Rhyolite without any knowledge about the history of Rhyolite, you might arrive, drive around the town in 15 minutes and leave thinking you wasted your time. Avoid that impulse and get yourself primed before Hittin' the Trail. Start with a little homework on the internet. No better place to start than www.rhyolitesite.com. Lots of photos, history and information you will find useful. Next, visit www.rhyolitenevada.com to get more data. Now lets take a brief visit to www.goldwellmuseum.org to gather information about the outdoor museum you will see as you approach the town of Rhyolite.

Assuming you will overnight in Beatty, Nevada there are two websites you should visit prior to the trip. Start with www.beattynevada.org to familiarize yourself about lodging and dining. Then visit www.beattymuseum.org to get more history about the area. While in Beatty, Nevada, the absolute must-see attraction is The Beatty Musuem, open 7 days a week, 10-4. I recommend a visit to the Musuem prior to visiting Rhyolite as that will certainly enhance your enjoyment and knowledge of what you're going to see before you see it.

As with any outing requiring several hours of driving, always take the essentials. Water and food are of utmost importance since part of your trek to Rhyolite will take you through a portion of Death Valley (a subject for a future Hittin' the Trail article). Don't forget your camera and/or filming equipment. Knowing the distance you can safely travel by starting with a full gas tank is important. Can you make it all the way to Beatty on one tank of gas? If you have to fill up in Death Valley, be ready for sticker shock. Any doubts at all, you might consider topping off the tank in Mojave or somewhere along 395 before turning towards Death Valley. If you can get to Beatty on one tank safely, you'll be pleasantly surprised to find gas prices that are generally lower than what you pay at home.

Now that you're primed for Rhyolite, you'll appreciate seeing the real deal. Unlike a visit to Calico or the Ghost Town at Knott's Berry Farm, you can enjoy walking around a real ghost town.

Gee, ghost towns, the old west, western movies, all sounds so romantic... Must be something about Rhyolite that brings out the romantic side of me. Yes indeed, I was married in Rhyolite, right in front of the Cook Bank Building on Golden Street back in 1995. Now I'm not saying that anyone will be quite that romantically inclined by simply seeing a ghost town, but don't say I didn't warn you!

What's the best time of year to visit Rhyolite? Weather history indicates the best time would be from October through March. Hot weather in Rhyolite, Death Valley and Beatty can at times be almost unbearable, especially during the summer months. Always check weather and road conditions before Hittin' the Trail.