



# Van Houten, New Mexico

Lesser-known than nearby Dawson, Van Houten began in 1902 as the mining camp of Willow, New Mexico. That same year the post office name was changed to Van Houten after the president of the coal company. The post office was discontinued in 1952, and by 1954 the mining was stopped entirely.

Nearly all of the structures were demolished, but there is still plenty to see at the site of Van Houten. The house foundations remain intact, laid out in careful grids, marking the neighborhoods where 1,500 people once lived. One house remains standing. Industrial foundations, at least one original mine entrance, and the mule barns are also visible.



Of the several mine entrances visible around the Van Houten area, this one remains intact, including the ironwork and stonework, and is still in use as a storage shed.





The mule barn:



The last house standing at Van Houten:

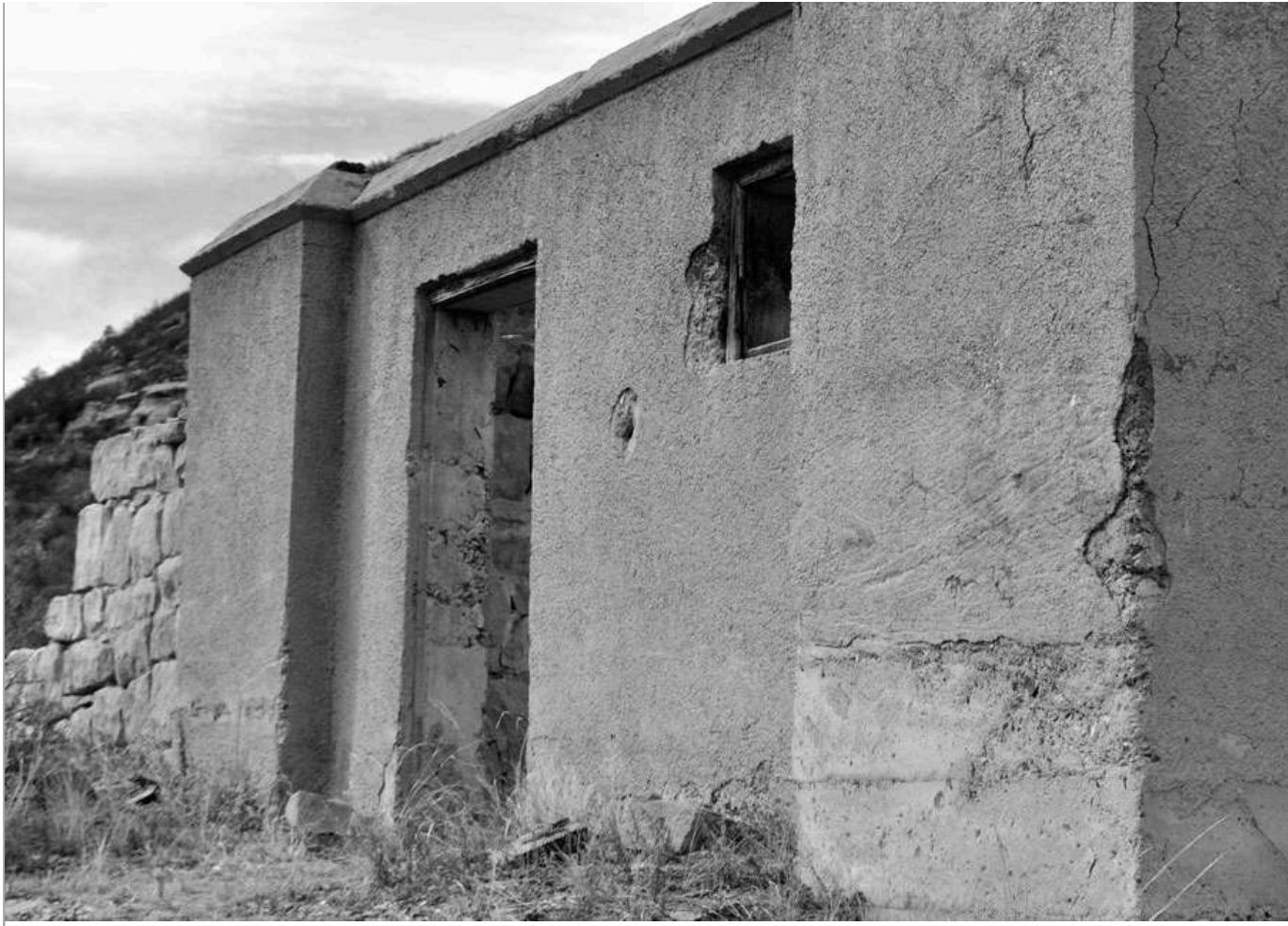




The remnants of a large building:



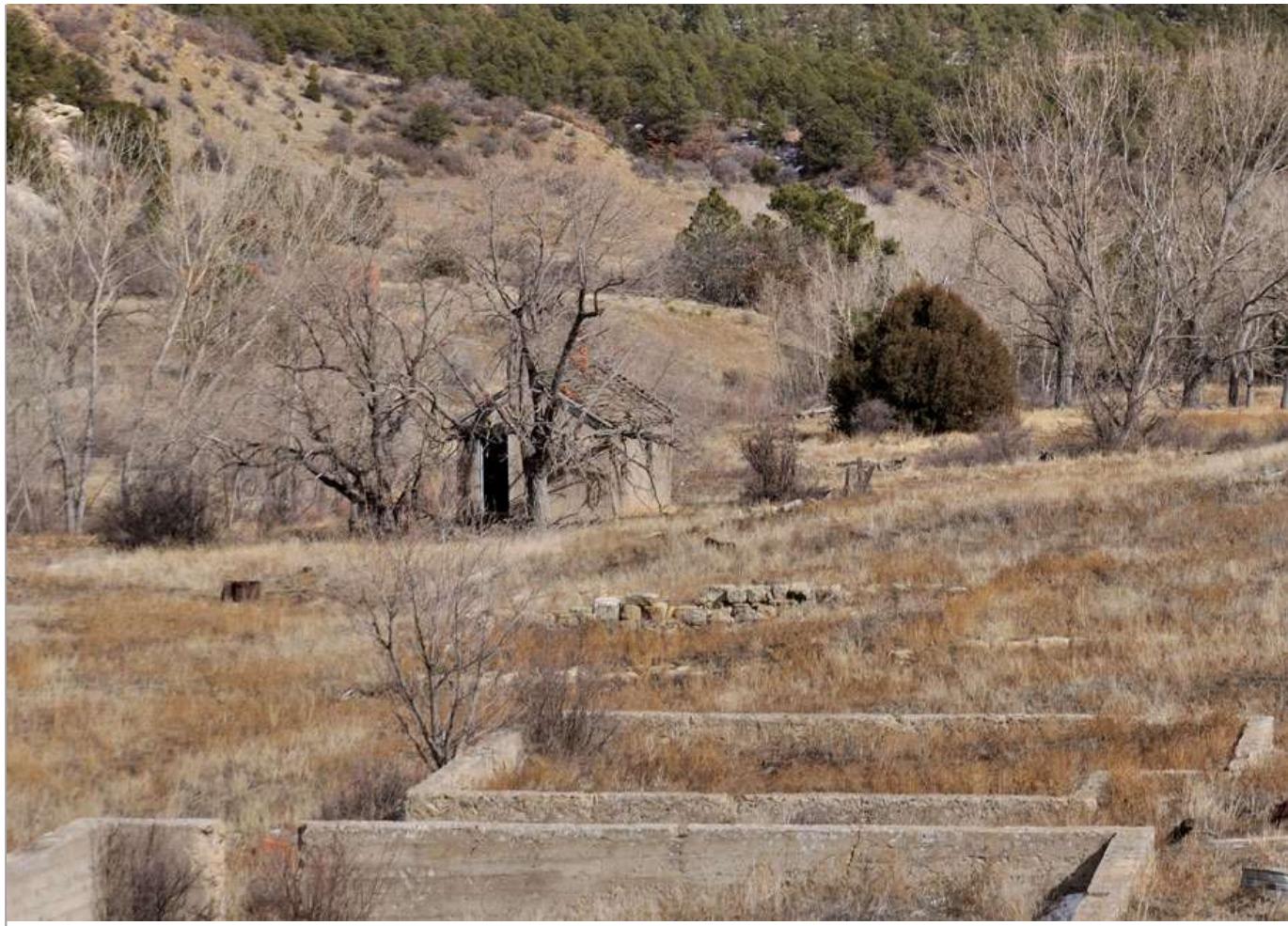




The building style is evident from debris and artifacts; this typical Van Houten house had a poured concrete basement with a main story made from hollow blocks.



Visible in satellite photos as neatly laid-out neighborhoods, most of the foundations are in very good condition.



The artifacts and domestic features in Van Houten provide important clues to the lifestyle of it's inhabitants.







Van Houten is a rarity in New Mexico ghost towns; it is in excellent condition, is being carefully preserved as-is by the current owners, and is open to the public on a conditional basis. The town site is located on the N.R.A. Whittington Center property and is accessible with permission, which generally involves checking in at the visitor center and signing a waiver at the security gate. Some areas of the town are off-limits for visitor safety on account of the nearby shooting ranges. The entire town site can be off-limits during certain times.



In addition to visiting the town of Van Houten, the Whittington Center is home to the Frank Brownell Museum of the Southwest, which is free and open to the public. The ruts of the Santa Fe Trail are also visible on the property.

## Comments

### *Van Houten, NM — 34 Comments*

Sharon Sumner  
on April 4, 2024 at 6:31 pm said:

My grandfather and grandmother immigrated to VanHouten from Bulgaria in 1919. Their names were Simeon (Sam) and Zorka Savoff. They had two children and he passed away in 1927 from pneumonia. They lived in a company owned house as he worked in the coal mine. To this day, his name can be seen above the stall of the mule barn. The day he passed away, the company threw my grandmother and her two small children out of the house. Thank goodness we have unions now to protect us from this kind of treatment. Grandmother then moved herself and the children to Raton where she got a job as a maid at the Swastika Hotel. The building is still there and I think is now a bank. Grandmother passed away in 1989 at the age of 103. Her early life was a hard one along with everyone else in the mining community.

Ryan Rodighiero

on December 31, 2023 at 7:37 pm said:

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My Great Grandparents John Rodighiero (Bocho)Dina Rodighiero and John and Jen Rodighiero all lived there back in the 30's. I've visited there for a family reunion back in 03'. The Rodighiero's eventually moved to Colorado and have since scattered throughout the USA while some of the Rodighiero's still reside in CO,UT,NV,& NC.

James Jorquez

on March 13, 2023 at 6:45 pm said:

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My wife (baptized name Antonia Cruz (June) was born in VH on June 13, 1933. The Great Depression was raging. She is the the 4th child of 13 kids. The family moved to San Pedro CA during 1942 (WW2 era) . The texk to Ca was like in the movie the Grapes of Wrath"... My wife , as a child grew up tough and worked hard hard... After we married at age 19, She hepled put me throgh college and we gradually formed a very good life (with 3 kidis.

We are xpecting to celebrate our 71 wedding anniversary this August. My wife still remembers little stories of being a child in VN.... It is now a gosht town, but full of loving memories from our side....God bless the people of that region...You can't do better!!

Love Jim Jorquez

Sharon Sumner

on April 4, 2024 at 6:37 pm said:

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James, I visited the VanHouten areaa about 6 years ago. It is now all fenced off and owned by the NRA. I asked if I could drive thru the area and was given permission to do so. The mine is still there all gated off and the mule barn is still there but slowly disintegrating. There is the shell of one company house still standing. It gave me a great sense of appreciation of how my grandparents lived and their struggles.

James Padilla

on April 4, 2022 at 7:43 pm said:

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Amazing stories, That is so nice for everyone to participate and share all their memories! Now I know more or les where Van Houten is located. I was born in San Antonio Nm, where Conrad Hilton was also born. So much history in NM.

Susan Jones Emery

on April 2, 2022 at 9:02 am said:

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My grandfather, Roy Jones who was born in Raton, worked in the Van Houten mine. All of his children were born in VH and they stayed until relocating to CA in 1943. I visited Van Houten in 1990 with my infant daughter and we were guided by a volunteer from Whittingham Center. I was able to share my photos of VH with my grandmother, Evelyn, who was very appreciative and remembered many happy times there. My grandfather was Welsh and often told fond stories of the Greek and Italian miners who worked with him.

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STEPHANIE VAN HOUTEN

on December 17, 2021 at 11:38 am said:

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My daughter is moving to Albuquerque from ft Worth over the next few weeks. When I come out to visit her I have GOT to visit Van Houten. Can you guess why? LOL

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Bill Walters

on July 30, 2021 at 10:16 am said:

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My wife lived in Van Houten about 1947-50. Her dad Paul Lopez & her uncle worked in the mines. Their names are on the miner's memorial in Trinidad, CO. We recently went Van Houten. Access is limited because many of the pictures above show buildings we did not see. I hope to find more information such as a map showing a layout of the mining area where buildings were located etc.

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Tina Dellas

on June 16, 2021 at 6:15 am said:

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I know Van Houten, NM from my father's 1919 birth certificate. My grandfather wrote letters to his parents in Crete from there and from Dawson. A few years later my uncle was born in Price, UT and my grandfather Dimitris Angelakis/Jim Dellas was killed at Castle Gate 1924. The 1910 ship manifest where my grpa is listed with his friend Matheos Vranakis from the same village in Apokoronas Crete actually lists Van Houten, NM as their final destination. This suggests they were hired from Crete by the labor recruiters who brought immigrants to work in the mines.

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Rita X Stafford

on September 19, 2023 at 3:57 pm said:

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To Tina Dellas: Thank you for submitting your comments. My maternal grandparents, Ioannis and Argyro Maragoudakis also came from Hania, Crete and settled in Van Houten. They ran a boarding house mostly for relatives who worked in the copper mines. They had four children while they were there. My grandparents and the four children all returned to Crete around 1920-21(?). My mother, Olga, was four years old when they went back. She returned to the U.S. as an American citizen in 1947. My grandparents' brothers and sisters who were in Van Houten but stayed in the U.S. included my grandfather's sister, Filio Perakis who settled with her family in Denver, Colorado; one of my grandmother's brothers, Louis Papadakis, who settled with his family in Utah; and one of her sister's Eleni Hillas (Hiladakis?) who settled in Chicago. By the time my mother returned to the states, she had

a ready made American family of loving aunts and uncles and many first cousins. I was 10 months old when she left Crete with my older sister. My father, George Xanthoudakis and I joined them in NYC in December 1949. I would love to have the birth records and a record of the ship's manifest from the early part of the 20th century. I know that my mother and sister, and later, my father and I all sailed to NY on the USS Carp, a ship famous for bringing post WW II European immigrants and holocaust survivors to NYC.

Rita X Stafford

on September 19, 2023 at 4:05 pm said:

Tina, thank you for mentioning Castle Gate. I was not familiar with it and looked it up.

<https://historytogo.utah.gov/castle-gate/> What a sorrowful event!

reno faoro

on May 4, 2021 at 11:06 am said:

MY DAD AND HIS BROTHER CAME FROM ARSIE , ITALY , VENETO REGION C.1915. BOTH WORKED THE MINES UNTIL ? 1930 ANGELO FAORO to Detroit , John to Chicago .My 4 siblings were all born in Van Houten. 1919-1927. All are deceased . My moms first cousins were CUNICOS AND ROHDIGHIERO'S . Rosita married JOHN LEON , Lena married Victor Dona . The DONA'S lived in Trinidad ,after SOPRIS was flooded .

Henry Bruce Brummel

on February 1, 2023 at 11:38 pm said:

My grandparents, Giovanni and Vitalina Faoro came to Vanhouten from Rocco D'Arcy. They moved to Chicago after a mine accident. My mother was Angelina Faoro, married to Henry Brummel.

Mark Zbikowski

on March 23, 2021 at 3:22 pm said:

My grandfather (Stevan Raicevich) was a miner in the 'teens. My mother was born there in 1923. My GF went to Alaska for nine months in the mid '20s while my GM and my aunts (3) and uncle stayed behind. I believe they left ~'30.

Looking at Ellis Island and '20 census, I believe my great-uncle Pavle Raicevich was there as well.

Any further information would be deeply appreciated. Email mark at [zbikowski.org](mailto:zbikowski.org)

Larry Sanchez

on March 6, 2021 at 6:10 pm said:

My dad, Eduardo (Eddie) Sanchez, Jr worked in the mines in Van Houten, NM back in the 1940's after he was discharged from the U.S. Army during World War II. He actually lived there for a few short years until the mine closed he then re-located to Raton, NM and made it his residence until he passed away in August, 2003. He returned to work in the mine at York Canyon Mine, Kaiser Steel Corp. He retired in 1988 entirely from the mine.

Kathy Rork DeFore  
on [July 2, 2020 at 9:07 am](#) said:

My father, Elwood C Rork, was raised in Van Houten, with six siblings (2 others died very young). Two of the girls married Segottas, another Van Houren family. I have had a private tour of the area many years ago but am going to take my grandchildren since it now sounds possible. What an interesting life it was. Harsh, but the people I met from there when I was younger were exceptionally living and proud.

Rick Itzenhuiser  
on [June 26, 2020 at 3:57 pm](#) said:

According to the 1920 census, my Great Grandfather Mike Daley was the barber in Van Houten. I know that they did not stay very long. My Great Grandmother and children, were in Wisconsin by the early 1930's.

Chris J Sakelaris  
on [May 27, 2020 at 4:57 am](#) said:

My Grand Father George Lionakis Grand Mother Christina 4 children Othan (Otto) Jane (my Mother) Uncle Mike (Manoli) and Aunt Sophie we're raised there in the 30s. Kalimani Family was also raised there..

Dale Smith  
on [May 26, 2020 at 5:42 am](#) said:

My Great-Great Grandmother (Kansas Singletary Wilson), Great-Grandparents (Frank & Olivia Wells), and my maternal Grandmother (Myrtle Wells) were all from Van Houten. I grew up hearing many stories about it, and was blessed to get to attend a "town reunion" back in 1977 (I think). Love seeing the pictures. Would love to visit again.

Brianne Randall  
on [July 31, 2020 at 2:49 pm](#) said:

I think we are related. My dad is Lloyd Randall, son of Elizabeth (Betty Wells) Randall. She was born at the camp in 1931. Your grandmother Myrtle was her Aunt along with Aunt Burt. Frank and Olivia were her Grandparents. My dad was just telling me about the town when I came across this message to my surprise. Crazy small world

John Carter  
on April 17, 2020 at 7:34 pm said:

It's a shame that there are not pictures of what it looked like when it was still standing. Wish I had a key to that gate

john cordova  
on November 18, 2020 at 5:41 pm said:

November 18, 2020

Manuel & Genevieve Cordova lived in Van Houten, the family sons & daughters born here are: David, John, Alice, Josie and Rosie Cordova, other brothers were born in Cimarron, NM are: Alfred, Frank, Manuel Jr. (Mel) and Lucio (Cio) Cordova. All are deceased except John Cordova, Rio Rancho Nm (505-814, 5613), Alice Cordova South Fulton, Tn, Josie Cordova Blanco, NM, Rosie Cordova San Diego, CA.

Roz Garland  
on February 26, 2021 at 7:13 pm said:

There are photos. Check at the gift shop at Whittington. I bought a book full of photos and names.

Bill Walters  
on July 18, 2021 at 6:35 pm said:

In raton the museum has pictures of the mine. My late father in law worked there until about 1950.

Antonio Reales  
on June 8, 2019 at 1:57 pm said:

Bob:I'm Tony Reales,Son and I stopped by store May 26,2019.We enjoyed the vist with you and your wife.We talked about Mine Towns.I enjoy the photos very much.I coulnd't find the satellite photos of Kholer.Do you Have any. I'll be in the Raton area July 27th 2019. Hope to have time to stop in and said hello.

Be Safe:  
Tony

Edwin Tomac

on May 31, 2019 at 12:13 pm said:

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I was born in Van Houten in 1039 to John (Johnich) Tomac. Any responses to this message would be appreciated,

Edwin Tomac

Bobtheearch

on June 5, 2019 at 11:27 pm said:

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Hello Edwin. I'm posting your message but with the email address removed so that it doesn't get picked up by spammers. I'll post any replies here.

Georgia Vigil

on April 30, 2019 at 3:29 pm said:

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Just found out my Grandma was born in Van Houten, NM in 1927 and grew up there her name is Virginia Miera now Vigil.

Ed Lopez

on January 31, 2019 at 10:14 am said:

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My dad Paul Lopez was born in Van Houten in 1905. His name was Polito Marez. But he changed to Paul Lopez. He had a sister by the name or Romelia.

If anyone knows the Marez family especially Paul let me know.

Ed Lopez

Formerly of Vigil, Colorado

Apodaca Paul

on May 9, 2018 at 10:41 pm said:

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My mother lived in van houten when she was growing up her name was Margaret Miera. My grandpa lost his life at the mine in 1950

Jerry De Amicis

on May 4, 2018 at 8:18 pm said:

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Paul,

Your dad(Jimmy ) was my uncle and my dad's brother (Jean). We left Van Houten in 1941.

I was 11 years old when we left Van Houten but I remember it very well.

I hope this note finds you well.

Jerry

Paul De Amicis

on [August 8, 2021 at 6:24 pm](#) said:

Hi Jerry. Of course I remember you. I just saw your message today (3 years later!). I didn't know you and Little Jean were born in Van Houten. I always thought you guys were born in San Jose. You know,Dad had a bad case of what I call "Poverty Consciousness." Now I see why. Van Houten was Dirt Poor and Rugged as Hell!!! Hope you're well Jerry. Last I heard you were playing with young girls in Central America (laugh). I still remember that story you told me at Dad's funeral about Dad calling you from the Eureka train station with no memory of the last 3 days. I've told that story to a few of my girlfriends over the years and they loved it. Cheers Jerry!!! – Paul De Amicis

Tjapko Detmers

on [December 18, 2017 at 7:45 pm](#) said:

My great uncle Roelf Lantinga came to this area from the Netherlands in 1903. Jan Van Houten was his cousin. There must have been disappointment because he left with a couple other settlers and headed for southern Alberta....where another Dutch colony was setting up. As a family we are trying to gather as much information as we can about my great uncle Roelf Lantinga, as well as his cousin Jan Van Houten. I believe there was a Dutch colony (Christian Reformed Church) close to Maxwell at this time as well. I would appreciate whatever information anyone could send me. My personal email address is [tjdetmers@hotmail.com](mailto:tjdetmers@hotmail.com). Thanks.

Paul De Amicis

on [October 9, 2017 at 10:49 am](#) said:

My father was born and raised in the Van Houten mining camp. He was too young to ever work the mines, but his 2 older brothers did. Dad told me stories of his "Van Houten Days" and it all sounded like a rather bleak existence to me. Very interesting to see actual photos of Van Houten (even as a Ghost Town). It gives me some idea of what Dad was talking about, and yes, it all looks as bleak as Dad described (laugh).  
Thanks for the photos!

Paul De Amicis

San Jose, California

Posted: October 2017