

Van Houten History





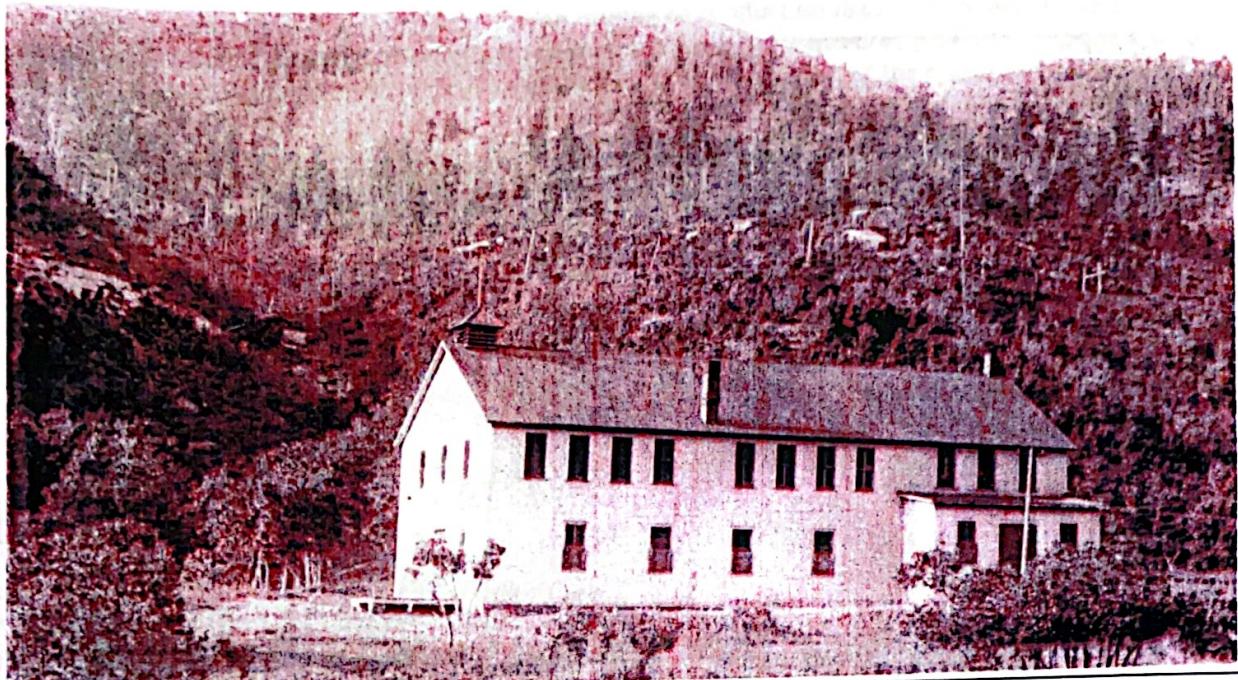
Van Houten Mine on the NRA Whittington Center
Excerpts taken from the book: THE VAN HOUTEN (NEW MEXICO) STORY

It was not always known as Van Houten, to begin with. The original name was The Willow Coal Mine Camp. Because Jan Van Houten was to save the camp from folding up, the name was changed to honor him. It was one of the oldest coal camps in Colfax County. The Maxwell Land Grant Company already knew of coal in this seam by 1900. Real progress was made with the formation of the Rocky Mountain & St. Louis Railway & Coal Company. By 1903 the camp was firmly established.

Jan Van Houten, for whom the camp was named, was the son of S. Van Houten of Holland, the president of the Maxwell Land Grant Company. Jan took care of the company's cattle ranch and made Maxwell City his home. In time he became a trustee of the company and vice president under Frank Springer. Later he became president. He managed the coal properties of the company since 1901.

In 1904 Van Houten and all the coal camps were harassed by strikes. The Blossburg mine completely closed down. Only eighteen men reported for work at Van Houten. No one could put their finger on the cause since the United Mine Workers gave no reason for calling the strike. Most of the men went to Raton to live in quarters sponsored by the Union. Jan Van Houten hired guards to protect the property. Convinced that the men would not return to work, he sent to Chicago for fifty experienced miners. At the end of the year he had one hundred and forty-five men at work. The strikers waylaid many of these and threatened them. In some instances there was bloodshed. It was also suspected that much of the underground machinery had been tampered with. Toward the end of June, 1904, Judge W.J. Mills issued an injunction against a number of the strikebreakers. The strike was not over until sometime in October. About eight months later Frank Springer, Charles Springer, Jan Van Houten and several others formed the famous St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Company. Although the change of hands little affected the employees, it did bring about an expansion that was to last a number of years until the company was no longer able to cope with the inroads of progress, automation, oil as fuel for the Santa Fe engines. These were the factors that killed the town of Van Houten. In between many things happened. Life went on as usual. Van Houten did not experience the terrible tragedies of Dawson except the final tragedy of its own demise.

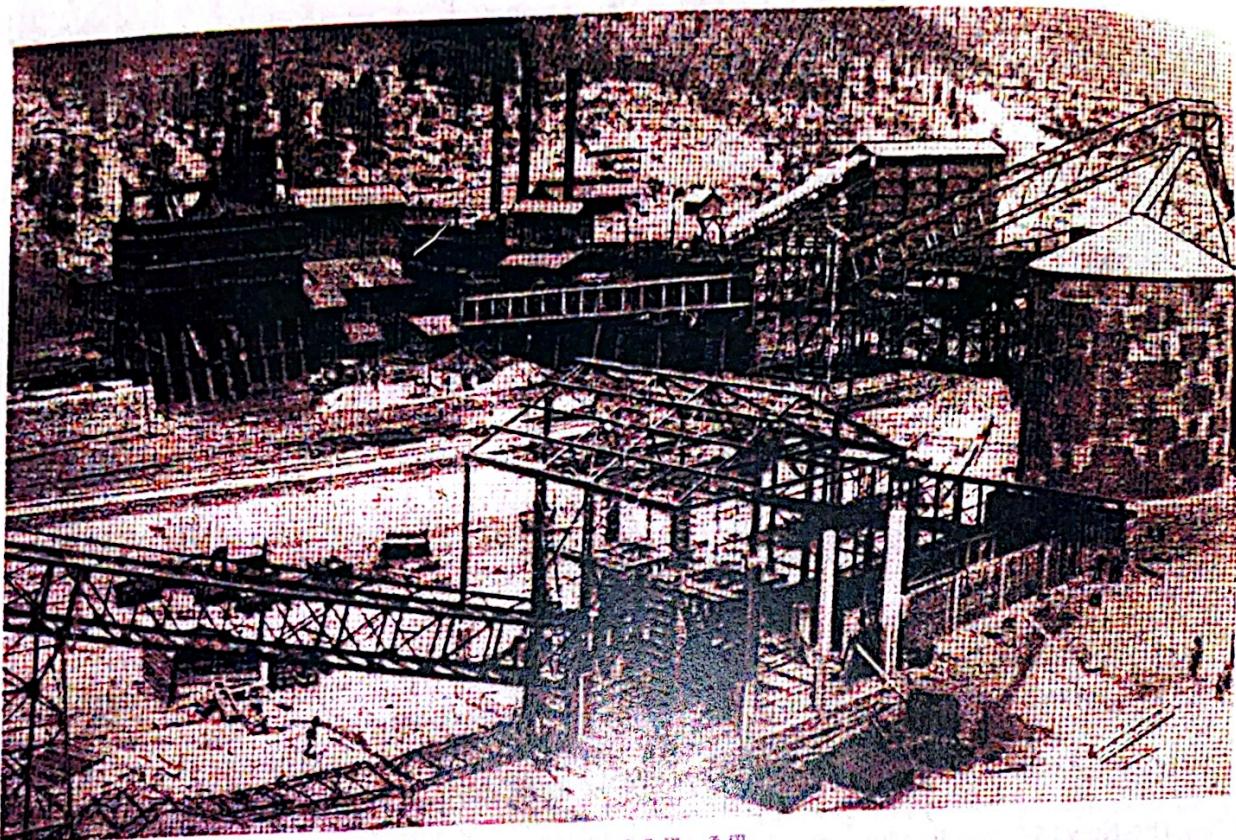
It is interesting to note that the post office was established on December 2, 1902, with the name Willow, New Mexico, and William Pratt as postmaster. Later the name was changed and E.P. McGuire succeeded Pratt as postmaster. Rumor developed that The Rocky Mountain Company was selling out to the Santa Fe, later it was said that the Swastika Company was buying up the railroad into Van Houten because there was a slack in the coal market. Officials denied this. Mrs. M. M. Foster, who had conducted the Wagon Mound Hotel, bought the Van Houten Hotel and operated it successfully. The Van Houten School was successfully conducted.



Van Houten School

By 1906 there were two hundred and seventy-nine miners working underground; twenty men working outside the mine. Five boys were employed in the mine; four outside. The majority of the employees were Italians, Austrians and Germans. Although Van Houten was possessed of a fine ball team, a sports program and other activities, now and then violence erupted.

The New Mexico Mine Inspector had this to say for Van Houten in his 1910 report:
"The Van Houten mine is on a branch of the A.T & S.F. Railroad, which connects with the main line at Hebron, New Mexico, and with the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Railway at Preston, New Mexico. The mine comprises of five openings, known as Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. The coal from all except No. 5 is dumped over the same tipple. No. 5 has a separate tipple about one and a forth miles from the others. The plant is operated by steam and electricity; boiler capacity, 700 horsepower; two steam engines, combined capacity 550 horsepower. The loaded mine cars are gathered by mules and pulled from the mine partings to the tipple by four 15-ton Westinghouse motors and one 10-ton Morgan-Gardner motor, which have a total haulage capacity of 4,000 tons a day. The mines are ventilated by three exhaust fans. The mines are operated 22 days during the fiscal year; total output, 659,324 tons; amount used in operating the mine, 3,775 tons; amount of unwashed slack and coal shipped to the coke ovens of Gardiner, New Mexico, 101,320 tons; net product of coal shipped to market, 552,974 tons; average price per ton at the mine, \$1.17; total value of coal shipped to market, \$646,979.58. Increase of gross production over preceding fiscal year, 184,321.21 tons. In addition to the coal sold, 45,079 tons of coke was produced, having a value of \$2.99 per ton at the ovens; total value, \$266,077.11, or a total value of coal and coke produced, \$913,056.69. An average of 324 miners, 99 company men, and 6 boys were employed underground and 34 men and 3 boys outside; a total of 446 persons employed immediately in operation of the mines. Practically all nationalities except Chinese were represented. Inspections were made at the Van Houten mines on October 15, October 16, November 19 of 1909 and on May 20 and February 17 of 1910."



COAL MINE TIPPLE AT
VAN HOUTEN, N.M. 1913

The pattern was pretty much the same during those years until World War I. Numerous boys left the mines to enlist.

Van Houten also had its dances. Many times when Sugarite or Yankee or Dawson gave a dance Van Houten would put off its dance and attend these. This also helped bring crowds from these camps to Van Houten on Saturday nights and Sundays. A picnic and dance always followed a ball game on Sunday.

It was the rule during those war months to sew for the Red Cross, entertain for the purpose of raising funds for the needs of the boys "over there". There were also drives for Liberty Bonds. Pro-German expressions are not tolerated in the Van Houten camp by the young men who had constituted themselves as a vigilance committee for the suppression of disloyal talk. Patriotism runs high at the mining camp, in spite of the fact that a large percentage of the population is foreign-born. This camp is one of the heaviest community subscribers to the Liberty Loan and has raised twenty-one thousand dollars. It has also raised three hundred and seventy dollars for the Red Cross.

Ministers and priests come in from Raton to Van Houten to conduct services. These services were conducted in the spacious hall. The stage is usually the sanctuary. It was pretty hard to keep one's mind on what he was doing because of all those wonderful etchings and prints of the masters along the walls.

May 10, 1918: Koehler and Van Houten, two of the largest camps operated by the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Company in this district, claims with excellent right the honor of the first two places in the nation's honor roll of communities subscribing the greatest amount per capita to the Third Liberty Loan in the campaign concluded Saturday. These two camps, with a total working population of slightly more than a thousand men, subscribed a total of \$225,000. Koehler raised \$114,000, while its rival camp raises \$111,000. The former camp employs at the mines, coke ovens, stores and other working places, five hundred and sixty men, while Van Houten employs four hundred and forty-seven.

A new amusement hall opened on May 16, 1920. Three thousand people attended the opening. The Van Houten baseball team at this time was known as the Swastikas. This was really to honor the Swastika Coal Company. Naturally the swastika signs disappeared in World War II. The reason is obvious. Even the big, beautiful hotel in Raton, the lordly Swastika, had its name changed to the Yucca. Of course there was a ball game on the eventful day of the opening of the new amusement hall. Movies were shown in the new amusement hall on Mondays and Wednesdays. In Van Houten baseball was part of the life line of the camp.

The population of Van Houten in 1920 was six hundred and eleven. The residents of the camp were quite content and loved the place. It was surrounded by hills, a natural setting, and away from the turmoil of traffic. The NEW MEXICO GUIDE book in all three of its editions omits mention of Van Houten; the second and third editions which added maps, failed to indicate the place ever existed even by name. This may be of no importance to the public in general, but it is something cherished by former employees of the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Company as well as all the descendants of the people who worked the mines and lived in the community. Although a town of the past, it must not be scratched out of the history books. It was home to many; it played a role - a minor one, no doubt - but a role nevertheless in making history as far as New Mexico is concerned from the turn of the century to shortly after World War II. There wasn't a person who was not sad when the mine was closing. They wore a purple heart that day.

J. Van Houten struck an ominous note when he reported to the stockholders in 1938: "Unless present conditions of additional taxation, Government controlled coal prices, increased competition with oil and gas, and business recession, one cannot venture any prediction as to future earnings. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company, the company's largest purchaser of fuel for locomotive purposes, is gradually extending the use of oil where coal was formerly used. As long as oil production is abundant and prices comparatively low, there is no denying the fact that the use of oil on locomotives presents material advantages over the use of coal. To what extent this will further affect the sale of coal may only be surmised. Possibly control of oil and gas by Government agencies, the same as is now done with coal, may to some extent definitely determine the district in which the use of coal should economically predominate."

Naturally all the miners living in Van Houten were expected to burn coal both for cooking and winter warmth if they lived at the camp. Many did prefer to live in Van Houten because the rent was very reasonable. The mine was closed but a short time, but the need for coal during the war years caused it to be re-opened. Although each year saw fewer consumers of coal and more of oil the company continued to hang on. The twenty-four day coal strike in 1948 did not help matters. The miners were

now earning more pay than they ever did. Inside employees were making \$92.10 per week; outside employees received \$83.51 per week. The men were allowed six and a half hours actual working time; one and a half hours travel time to and from Raton to work and a half hour for lunch. If a miner put in twelve months work he received an additional one hundred dollars as vacation pay. Despite these increases, the charges for rent, fuel and medical services remained the same.

The Brilliant mine was closed July 29, 1953, and the equipment and buildings were sold for scrap except for a few small remaining items which are not yet disposed of and the values of which are more or less problematical, indicating practically no further realization. The investment at Brilliant was probably near a million dollars at one time; and for what was left at Brilliant at date of closing, plus valuable steel tipple and tipple equipment at Sugarite and some valuable property at Van Houten, the company received thirty-five thousand dollars.

Van Houten was closed February 2, 1954. Van Houten remained open until February 2, 1954, for the production of coal for shipment to the power plant at Dawson, New Mexico, a plant which had been sold to the R E A for local distribution of power and light. This plant was discontinued, as the new plant at Algodones, New Mexico, is sufficient to cover a very large territory through the state of New Mexico. It was installed to take the place of the local operation.

The notice was posted by the company on the bulletin board of the mine: "Due to curtailment of coal orders and conditions adversely affecting coal sales, the Van Houten mine will cease operations effective at midnight May 27."

Van Houten mine was left on a "stand-by" basis, as was Brilliant, in case of an increase in the demand for coal. Van Houten was closed once before, for a year, in 1940 and 1941, but was re-opened when coal demand increased during the war. Most of the men working in Van Houten live in Raton. There are only eight or ten houses left in the camp where once lived several thousand persons." — RATON RANGE, May 26, 1949

Many of the miners of Van Houten found employment in Raton, Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Trinidad when the mines closed down shortly after World War II.

Thus the story endeth. Nobody took up the company on the "stand-by" basis and Van Houten never was re-opened. They say more and more by-products of coal are being discovered. Perhaps this may warrant a re-opening.

EXCERPTS TAKEN FROM THE BOOK:

THE VAN HOUTEN (NEW MEXICO) STORY

By F. Stanley
October 1964

A SHORT NARRATIVE OF THE VAN HOUTEN (Colfax County, New Mexico) COAL CAMP:

This coal mining area is part of a huge land grant approved in 1841, by Mexican Governor Manuel Armijo. Armijo awarded the grant to Don Carlos Beaubien and Don Guadalupe Miranda for their service to the government and their promise of "improving the property without injury to any third party".

In 1842, Lucien B. Maxwell, an adventurer and friend of Kit Carson, courted and married Don Carlos' daughter Luz. Maxwell acquired the land holdings of Don Carlos upon his death, and later bought out Miranda's interest. Thus began the saga of the Maxwell Land Grant, an almost legendary aspect of New Mexico's history.

Maxwell, an imposing man of great authority and open handed generosity, lived in a princely style. In Cimarron he built a home the size of a city block in which he could entertain frontier friends at great balls and gambling affairs.

In 1867, Maxwell, getting along in years, decided to sell his holdings. The property passed through various hands and finally wound up with a syndicate in The Netherlands. Mr. S. Van Houten, of Amsterdam, was made the President of the Maxwell Land Grant, and his son Jan Van Houten was sent to New Mexico as Agent to manage the grant's cattle ranch, and other enterprises.

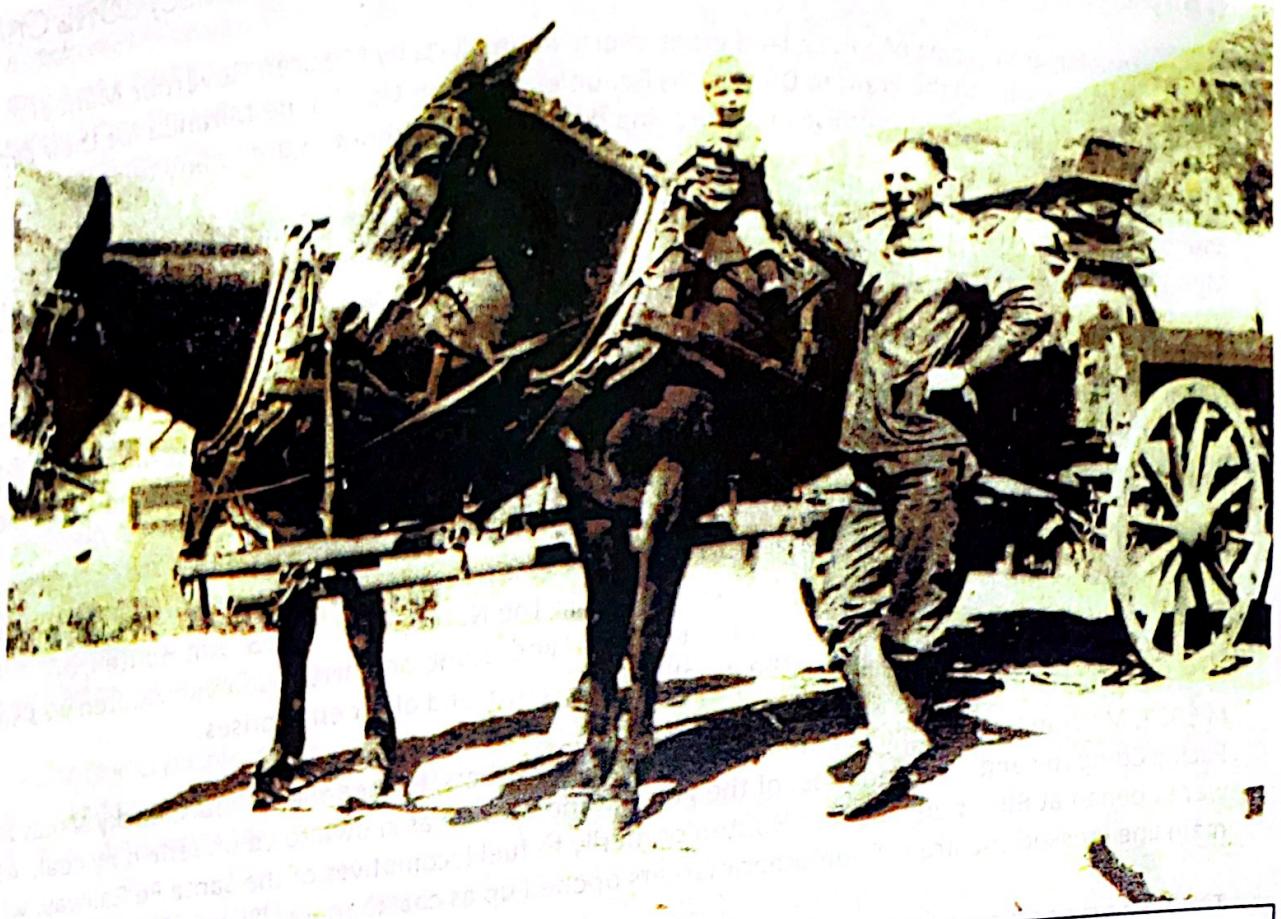
In 1902, Mr. Van Houten, along with Frank Springer and others, formed the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Company and acquired most of the grant's land which was known to be underlain by coal. Mines were opened at Blossburg and Van Houten primarily to fuel locomotives of the Santa Fe Railway, whose main line crossed the area. Soon other markets opened up as coal then was "king" of fuels.

The area was originally known as Willow or Willow Creek, and the mine openings carried the designation of each as, Willow #1, #2, etc. The coal camp in 1906 was named Van Houten.

Van Houten is about 19 miles by highway southwest of Raton. It is on a branch line (the rails at this date are still in place), to Preston about two miles from Van Houten and from Hebron, about 9 miles east.

Van Houten is a small town with a population of about 200 people. It is located in a valley between two mountains, the West and East Mimbres Mountains. The town is surrounded by rolling hills and mountains, with the Rio Grande River flowing through it. The town has a mix of modern and traditional architecture, with many historic buildings and homes. The town is known for its coal mining industry, which has been a major part of the economy for many years. The town also has a rich history, with a long history of mining and agriculture. The town is a great place to visit, with many things to see and do.

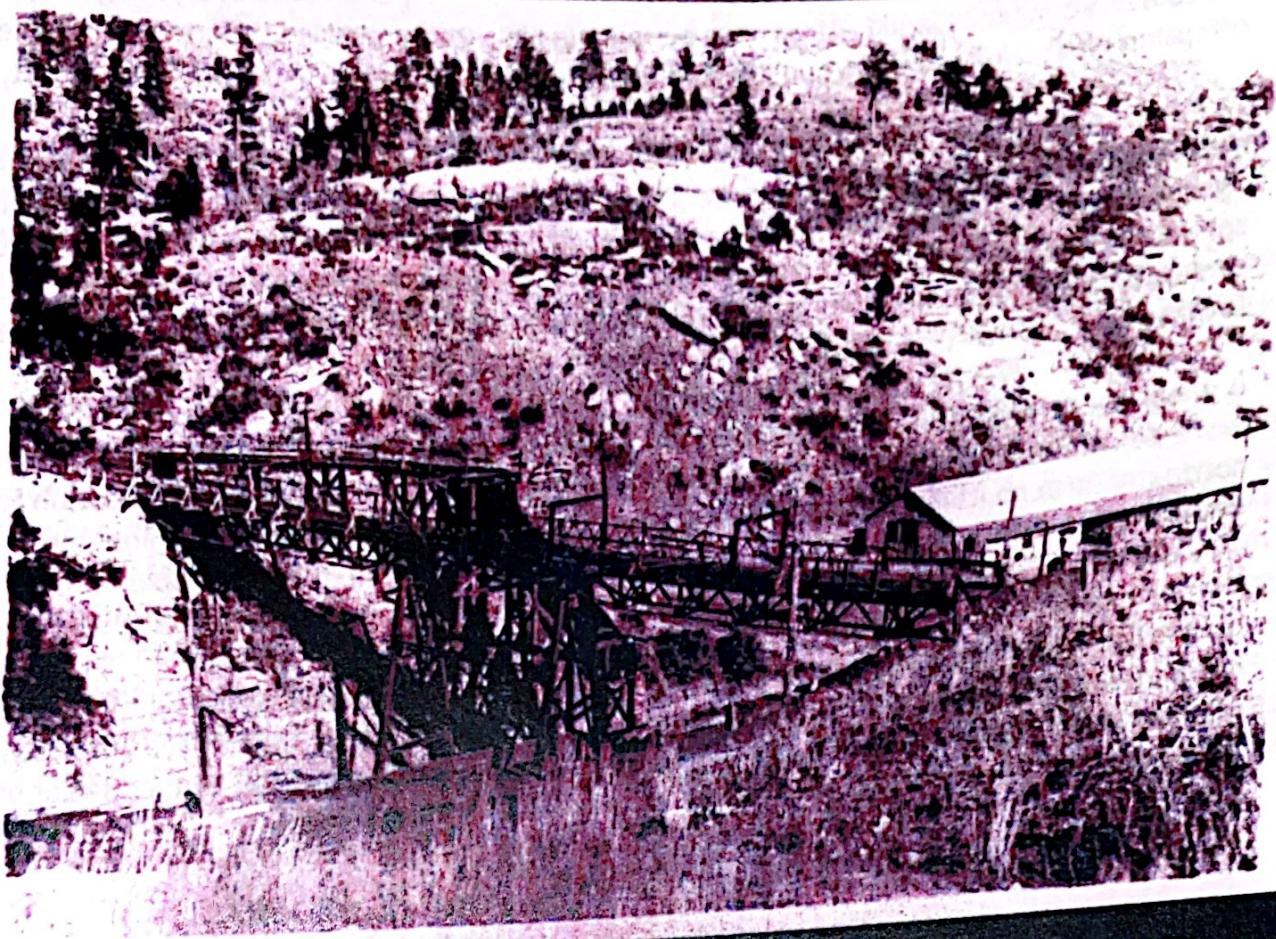
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Water Carrier

The coal was coking in character and the new company not only supplied steam coal for locomotives, but for power plants, harvesting combines in Kansas, cotton gins in Texas, and fine coal for the Gardiner beehive coke ovens about 20 miles northwest and also supplied coal for the manufacture of artificial gas, and for domestic use.

There were six mines at Van Houten, the coal from all excepting No 5 was dumped over the same tipple. The seams were opened at the outcrop on both sides of Willow Creek Canyon and dipped to the northwest about $1\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, and were from four to fifteen feet in thickness. In the early days, this was pick and shovel operation, and coal was blasted out of the seams by black powder, and later when this prohibited, by "monobel" powder. Haulage from the working faces was by mule. Carbide lamps were means of illumination inside.



COAL BIN, BRIDGE AND MILK BARN, VAN HOUTEN, W. M.

Because of the dwindling market for coal, the railroads having gone to diesel locomotives, and other users started burning fuel oil and natural gas, operations were uneconomical and Van Houten was finally closed at midnight, May 27, 1950, and the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Company offered the property and coal holdings for sale. Kaiser Steel Corporation in 1955 purchased the property and is now the owner of Van Houten and the vast area that belonged to the St. LRM&PCO.

In its heyday, Van Houten employed over 600 miners and the Camp population was over 2000. The output at times was 2000 to 2500 tons per working day. During its 50 years of operation it produced 15,000,000 tons of coal.

In the early days the miners were of all nationalities – Montenegrins, Slavs, Greeks, Italians, Austrians, Welsh, Chicanos, some Anglos and Blacks. Those with European origin immigrated to America and came directly to coal mining camps such as Van Houten. Without any previous experience, unable to speak the language, they came at the behest of relatives and friends who had preceded them. By choice, they lived in separate areas with their fellow countrymen though there never was any racial trouble as, being miners, they had too much in common. They adapted quickly to their new surroundings, learned the language, invariably became citizens, and shortly sent for their families in the old country to join them. They made a generous cultural contribution to the life of the camp. Their training in Europe taught them to cultivate the soil successfully, they were masters of arrangement; their natural love for the beautiful was expressed by gorgeous flowers; they had a deep love for music; the men and their sons

and grandsons were superior athletes; the women were thrifty and made everything they could and saved everything they could. They were people of solid virtues, unfailing courtesy, and when their offspring went out "into the world", ended up as successes in industry, the professions, art, etc.

The Van Houten camp, until it became unionized under UMWA in 1934, had its company store, and script; in fact, all commercial and service pursuits were furnished and conducted by the company. The camp had a bank, resident doctor, saloon, pool hall, community house for meetings and church services, schools as good as any in the larger communities, movies, baseball diamond, cemetery, etc. And often the men would go hunting for rabbits and other game, deer, turkey, bear, and elk, to supplement their food supply.

It was a rough going for the miners and their families in the early days. They worked long hours and were paid "piece work", or by the ton of coal dug, there was no workmens compensation (though the company through its medical-hospital plan took care of those injured after a fashion), not unemployment insurance, no social security, welfare, Medicare, no free text books for school children. Obviously, before the advent of safer mining practices and safety rules, coal mining was hazardous.

And now the property is to be used as a recreation area. In all probability among the NRA membership are descendants of Van Houten miners who now will be able to enjoy themselves in a much different manner than did their fathers and grandfathers who had to eke out a living by the "sweat of their brows".

PREPARED BY JOE KASTLER - June 5, 1973

**Living History: A tour of Van Houten Canyon
Another fantastic benefit of the NRA Whittington Center!**

1989, and time again for the NRA Whittington Center Adventure Camp! Staff training is almost complete, and good fortune strikes. The Camp Coordinator and NRA Board Member Barbara Bonahoom, has arranged a guided tour of the old coal mining area of Van Houten Canyon, lead by two former residents and family members. Mr George (Judo) Yaksich and his older brother, Nick, who now reside in nearby Raton, New Mexico, gave a living history tour of their former home. As many visitors to this Shooting Center can attest, a drive up this canyon is a memorable part of their trip. But imagine being shown around by a person who remembers the names of former neighbors and friends! We heard graphic descriptions of life as has not been lived for SEVERAL generations!

Everyone participated in group activities, the old and the youngsters alike. The world news was a major community event nightly at 9:00pm with the family gathered around the radio, and interruptions simply were not tolerated. Ball games were a regular event, pitting camps in competition with each other. Wow, competition has at least a 60 year prior history here, and WE are the newcomers. We were shown the old mining areas, closed since 1952 because of dwindling demand as well as declining quality and quantity of coal reserves. We heard of "Company Store" life first hand. We were shown foundations of the old school, with adjacent playground and "Teachery", where the teachers lived. The mining office, where "script" was the tender of the mine. This was used at the company store to buy goods, but could NOT be used to buy beer at the community center. However, we learned firsthand how to "convert" script for a price, under the table, with some town merchants.

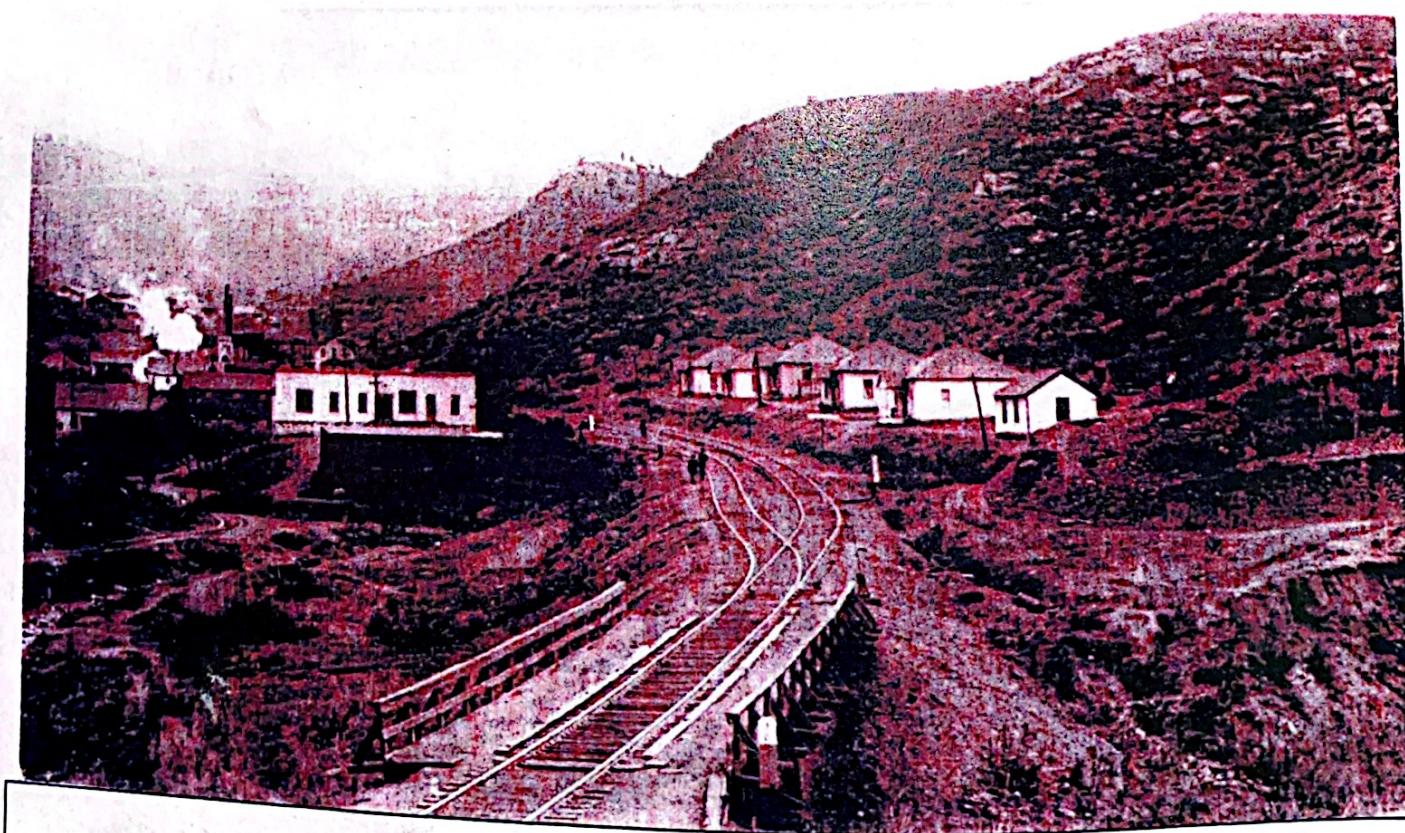


Van Houten History

We saw the old boarding house locations, where the single miners lived together. There was "Monty" hill, and "Sunshine" hill, Cunico Town and Greek Town. We learned of a three hole golf course, which we looked for and looked for, but nothing remains today. It was located between the Hunter Silhouette Range and the Big Bore Range, but on the south side of the road. The windmill is still in place at the mouth of Windmill Canyon, now known as Willow Canyon, home to Elk and Deer, with an occasional Bear visiting the campers.

We all said a special thanks to our Camp Director and NRA Board Member, Joe Nava, for squeezing the time frame enough to allow this late addition to the schedule. LIVING HISTORY was how each of us, the camp staff, saw this amazing day.

I would like to take time to thank those NRA visionaries who fought and scraped to acquire this amazing property. This magnificent setting for the first class ranges, with more construction proceeding in logical sequence, assures NRA Members continuity of National Level and Regional Level competition for all of us as well as our children and grandchildren. If you would like these teenage youngsters to receive an introduction to the shooting and hunting sports, consider applying for their participation in a Whittington Center Adventure Camp. Two weeks of shooting and hunting instruction, with LOTS of practical application, with magnificent scenery, with first class equipment, most of which was donated by manufacturers who also believe in both our youth and the right to keep and bear arms and a staff committed to passing on skills and attitudes reflecting their own respects for the outdoors and the shooting sports.



The town of Van Houten.

Monte Hill: Little Serbia in New Mexico
Excerpt taken from Serb World USA Jan/Feb 1987
By: Mela Vulcich

Van Houten was home to many Serbs from Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia, Hercegovinia, Lika and other European countries came in the 1900's.

Van Houten was one of several coal camps situated near the northern boundary of New Mexico, fifteen miles south of Raton which marks the entrance into the state of the famous scenic highway, America's oldest road. From the summit of the pass, the early adventurer saw below the beautiful mountains, mesas and rolling prairies bordered in the far distance by blue mountains.

The easy grade to the pass invited the railroad: the mountain fastness, the trapper: the great open plains, the stockman and the ore-ribbed hills, the miner.

The Serbs along with the Greeks, Bulgarians, Russians, Italians, Irishmen and Spaniards became engaged in mining coal, and industry which was very foreign to most of them and especially to the Serbs. Since little or no English was spoken, there was little communication among these varied nationalities, and very soon they paired off into their own groups. The Greeks moved to one part of the camp and called their section Greek town. The Italians did likewise and named their section Cunico Town as there were several families there by that name. The Serbs clustered into one area, and their area was known as Monte Hill from "Montenegrins". Each group was more comfortable among its own people. The Serbs spoke in their native tongue. They exchanged news that they received from their relatives in the Old Country. They talked about the difficult jobs they had in the coal mines and about the poor living conditions in the camp. There were only a few men with families, and some of the single men lived with them. Other single men formed small groups to cut down on living expenses for their bachelor quarters.

We had no Orthodox church anywhere near New Mexico. The nearest one was in Pueblo, Colorado, one hundred and fifty miles from Van Houten. Father Grishan was a wonderful man who came all the way from Pueblo for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Very few people had cars, and there were hardly any in Van Houten. It was a long journey for him travelling by railroad or bus.

We grew up in very poor living conditions – that is there were no facilities of any kind. Our water supply was very limited: we bought it from the company officials at twenty-five cents a barrel. We used every drop of rain for laundry and baths.

When we started school we did not know a word of English. There were no parent-teacher contacts either because our parents and teachers could not communicate with one another. For Christmas the school always put on a program, and the parents all attended mostly to see their children perform, but also got a glimpse of the teachers at that time.

As we children began learning English, our parents felt that we should know more than we did. We were expected to know how to read and write letters, interpret newspaper articles and order items from catalogues among other things. We had only one store in Van Houten where we purchased our food. Since the prices for clothing were prohibitive, we had to depend on getting our clothes through a mail order catalogue. We children had to know how to place orders to Montgomery Ward, the only place from which we ever ordered.

Our parents often felt that children in the Old Country in comparable grades were more advanced than we were. There was a great deal of pressure on us to study. Our uncle, our *striko*, was the father-figure in our home since our father died when we were very small children. *Striko* was always very concerned about our progress in school. I shall never forget how embarrassed I was when he asked me to figure the cost of a certain number of bales of hay. After struggling with the figures for a while and realizing I was licked, I told him we had not yet studied how to figure hay. Imagine, if you can, what his remarks were!

It was during the Great Depression years that we were in high school. The nearest one was fifteen miles from our home, and we rode a bus along unpaved roads. Often times during the winter months or a rainy season travel was very difficult, and we were not able to get home until after dark. Since we did not have money to buy our lunches, we took a sandwich from home – of course, there were no hot lunches in any of the schools.

All the children of the Serbian families did well in school, and with the exception of one or two, all were awarded their diplomas. Some went on to further education. Most got jobs as accountants, office managers, stenographers, electricians, teachers and social workers.

As the years went by mining coal slackened, and sometimes the men only worked one or two days a week. Every day the miners and their families waited for the five o'clock whistle which would tell them whether there would be work the next day. If it blew once, that meant there would be work. If it blew twice, there would not be. Those were indeed tense moments.

The wages the men were receiving were very meager, hardly enough to support their families. When the opportunity came, they organized and became members of the United Mine Workers of America with John L. Lewis at the helm in Washington. Working conditions greatly improved. As a result, the miners and their families received many fringe benefits. Unfortunately the mines closed during the Second World War, and everyone had to move away from the dying camp. There were many sad goodbyes.

Some of the miners and their families moved to California to seek employment in the shipyards; others scattered throughout the state of New Mexico where there was work. Some were eligible to retire. In later years many became ill as a result of their years underground in the mines. Their lung troubles qualified them for Black Lung Benefits.

We followed the whereabouts of the Serbs who left our little canyon. Few of the families moved to San Pedro, California. A few moved to Albuquerque; some are still in Raton. Ours is the only family in Santa Fe. We miss hearing our language spoken, and we miss the get-togethers. But we still have the memories.

In looking back at my memories, I would say that in spite of the many handicaps and hardships, we lived a pretty good life. We were far from rich in material things, but there was love all around us. We always had approval and encouragement from our parents and teachers. But it was the women, or good and loyal Serbian mothers, who gave us the guidance and showed us the way.

And so I close with the poet Amelia Welby's words:
"As dew to the blossoms, and bud to the bee,
As scent to the rose, are those memories to me."

Van Houten History

**EXCERPT FROM: GHOST TOWNS & MINING CAMPS OF NEW MEXICO
BY: JAMES E. SHERMAN, BARBARA H. SHERMAN**

A favorite picnic spot for young people about a mile and a half from Van Houten was called the Devil's Kitchen. At this spot a slow-glowing fire supplied by natural gas seepage had been burning for several years. When the fire was low and visitors wished to do a bit of cooking they would vigorously scratch the charred ground surface and the flames would burst through. The local old-timers told how early pioneers scared off attacking Indians when a discharging rifle ignited the gasses, causing a large explosion and a mass of flame which scattered the frightened savages in every direction.

**EXCERPT TAKEN FROM: REPORT OF THE US SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FOR
THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1911**

INSTRUCTIONS TO MINERS.

The following is a copy of the instructions to miners, issued and printed in four languages and posted in and at its mines by St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific Co.:

1. No miner is allowed to enter any of the mines of this company without permission of the fire boss or pit boss, and at no time shall he attempt to enter the mine if the mine gate is closed.
 2. No miner, while in or about the mines, is allowed to have in his possession any powder, fuse, caps, or other explosives.
 3. No miner shall enter any working place where a danger board has been put up.
 4. In mining, the miner shall mine or cut his coal, and no hole shall be drilled beyond such mining or cutting. The miner must see that his drill at all times is of sufficient size to make a hole large enough to admit the safety cartridges.
 5. When leaving his room the miner must leave in front of each hole a sufficient number of dummy cartridges filled with clay to properly fill the hole. Clay for that purposes will be delivered by the company at convenient places in the mine.
 6. The miner will be charged by the company with the amount of powder, fuse, and caps actually used in his working place by the shot firer.
 7. The shot firers are instructed not to fire any holes which do not conform with these regulations.
- These regulations are made to insure safety of life and property, and must be strictly complied with.

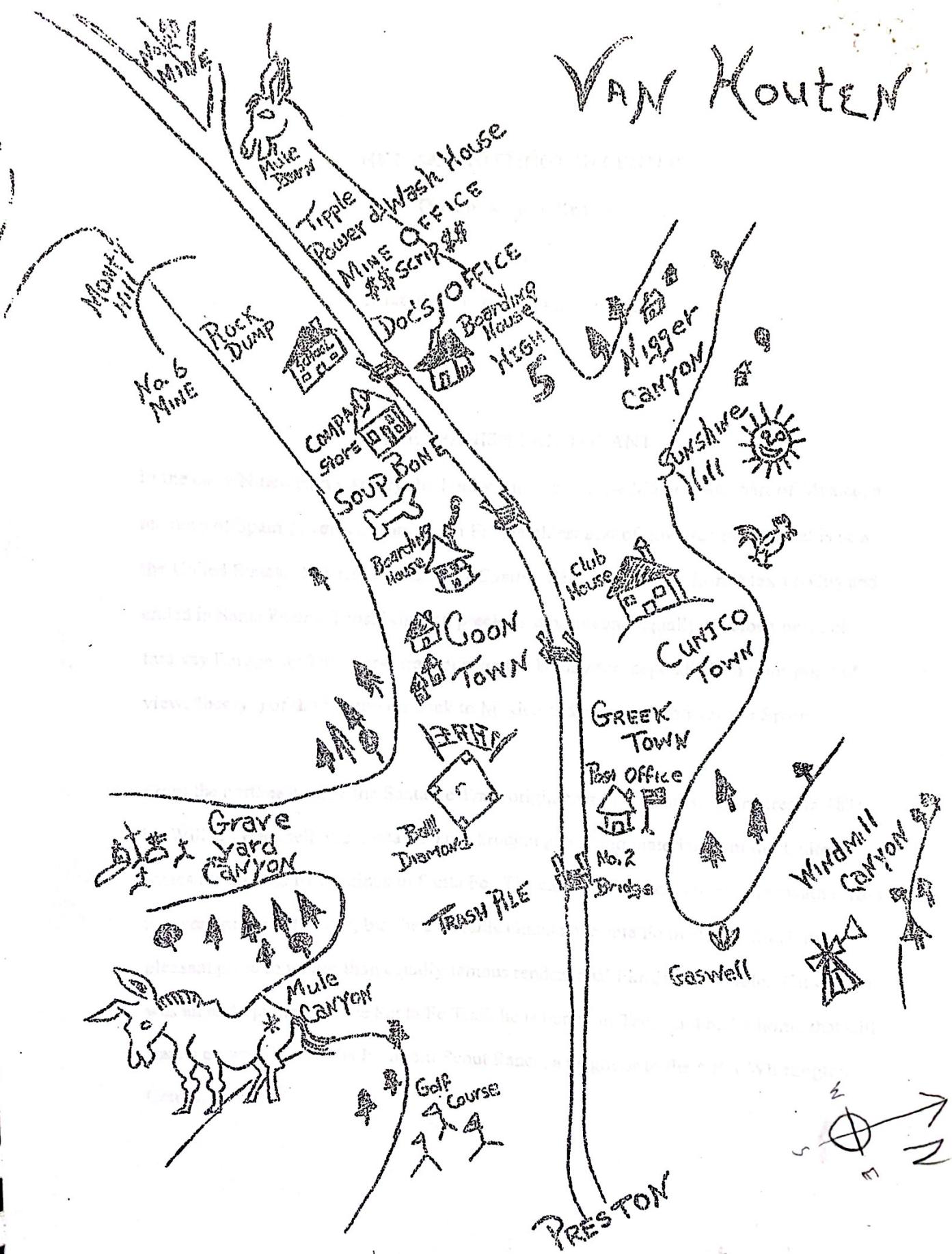
INSTRUCTIONS TO SHOT FIRERS.

The following instructions are also issued:

1. All shot firers shall report to the pit boss of the mine to which they are assigned and get his instructions before entering such mine.
2. Upon entering the mine the shot firers must close and lock the mine gates and see that they remain so as long as they are in the mine.
3. The shot firer shall never charge or load any hole which, in his opinion, would make an unsafe shot; neither shall he fire any hole which has been charged by the miner.
4. If a miner has left an insufficient number of dummy cartridges to properly fill the hole, or if the cartridges are filled with any other substance than clay, or if the hole drilled is too small to properly admit the safety cartridges, or if the hole is not properly placed and drilled so as to make a safe shot, the shot firer shall not attempt to charge or fire such hole.

5. The shot firer shall only use such explosives as are furnished him by the company, and shall keep an accurate account in a book furnished him by the company of the amount of powder, caps and fuse actually used by him in each working place.
 6. After the shots in a working place have been fired, the shot firer shall examine said working place as quickly as possible and see whether the shooting has left the working place in an unsafe condition, and if a shot has missed fire, or if a working place should be in an unsafe condition, shot firer shall not return to face, but shall put up a danger board, so that no one can enter the place without seeing same. He shall also make report to the fire boss when he comes on his shift. And if shot still hangs fire when it is time for the miners to be allowed to enter the mine, fire boss shall not allow party who works in that place to enter same. Shot firers to take care of conditions next evening when they come on their shift.
 7. No explosives, caps, or fuse shall be left in the mine by the shot firers.
 8. Shot firers shall work in pairs as much as possible, and if it is necessary to work alone they must keep one another advised as to where they expect to work.
 9. Before leaving the mine shot firer shall make out report to pit boss, giving the entry and room number of all holes refused or unsafe places; also the reason for not firing. This report shall be left where mine boss can examine same each morning before starting in on his regular duties.
- These regulations are made to insure safety of life and property and must be strictly complied with.

VAN KOUTEN



THE NRA WHITTINGTON CENTER

Dream, Vision, Reality

By

Mike Ballew and Craig Boddington

With contributions from the NRA Whittington Center's Mike Ballew and Craig Boddington

and the NRA Whittington Center's Craig Boddington on "non-discretionary" gifts

and the NRA Whittington Center's Mike Ballew and Craig Boddington on the Spanish

Land Grant.

With contributions from the NRA Whittington Center's Mike Ballew and Craig Boddington

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THE SPANISH LAND GRANT

In the early Nineteenth Century the land we now call New Mexico was part of Mexico, a

territory of Spain governed from Santa Fe, the oldest seat of government in what is now

part of the United States. The King's Road, *El Camino Real*, came north from Mexico City and

ended in Santa Fe and Taos, bringing precious supplies and equally precious news of

faraway Europe, and of course transporting the bounty (or, depending on your point of

view, "booty") of the Southwest back to Mexico and eventually onward to Spain.

The Santa Fe Trail originated in 1821, by William Becknell,

the Santa Fe Trail.

From the northeast came the Santa Fe Trail, originating in St. Louis. Pioneered in 1821,

by William Becknell, the Santa Fe Trail brought goods and material from the United

States for trade to its terminus in Santa Fe. The early adventurers cut a wide swath across

the western United States, but the favorable climate of Santa Fe made it a much more

pleasant place to winter than equally famous rendezvous' like Jackson Hole. Kit Carson

was an early pioneer on the Santa Fe Trail; he is buried in Taos, and had a home that still

stands on what is now the Philmont Scout Ranch, a neighbor to the NRA Whittington

Center.

With contributions from the NRA Whittington Center's Mike Ballew and Craig Boddington

and the NRA Whittington Center's Craig Boddington on the Spanish Land Grant.

"Uncle" Dick Wooten was another early visitor to visit the region. We tend to think of the "mountain men" as explorers and adventurers, which they were, but they were also entrepreneurs, seeking fortune by whatever means were available in their time. In another era they might have become "dot-com" millionaires, but in their time they trapped and traded fur, later perhaps striking gold or establishing trading posts and ranches. Dick Wooten saw the three-day journey over Raton Pass and engineered and hand-carved a better trail, cutting the travel time in half and charging a toll!

Through the 1830s and 1840s, before our war with Mexico, commerce in Santa Fe and Taos was booming as the Spanish and encroaching American cultures began to collide. Although many Spanish citizens settled in the region, there were still vast tracts of unclaimed land. Two residents of Taos, Carlos Beaubien and one Miranda petitioned the King of Spain for a tract of this land demarcated by geographical boundaries: From Chico

Rico Creek (east of the NRA Whittington Center) west to the crest of the Sangre de Christo's; north into Colorado to the Purgatory River; south to the confluence of the Cimarron and the Canadian Rivers. The total land mass was 1.7 million acres, the largest land grant ever given in what is now the territory of the United States.

Beaubien and Miranda probably had little concept of the total size of the land they controlled by royal decree, and the King of Spain in distant Madrid probably didn't, either. They picked landmarks that made sense, apparently justifying the massive size under the concept that the raw land was unsuited for agriculture. Yes, much of this land is arid, with low carrying capacity . . . but the justification given to authorities that had

never seen it (the petitioners probably hadn't, either!) was that much of it was swampland! The grant was properly deeded under Spanish law. One could speculate that the Beaubien and Miranda families had at least friends and family in the Spanish court, if not fortune, to obtain such a massive grant—even if it was useless swamp! In the mid-1840s the grant headquarters was established south of what is now Springer. Lucien Maxwell was another fur trader who came out from the East in these early days. He befriended the Miranda and Bobeann families, and married one of the Bobeann daughters, Luz, reportedly when she was thirteen! This made him part of the family on the land grant, but he further legitimized his claim by purchasing the Miranda interest for about \$3500. That was a lot of money in the 1840s, but it put Lucien Maxwell in control of an awful lot of land. He moved his headquarters North to Cimarron, using his cattle and the good grass and water of the Cimarron River to establish a primary way station along the Santa Fe Trail.

In this part of the country the Santa Fe Trail crosses the Raton Pass, the most formidable barrier in its entire 950-mile length. Then it comes down into our well-watered country and turns west, following along the plain below our east-west ridge, unique in the north-south Rocky Mountain chain. The Trail was pioneered so that water and good grass for stock could be found at ten or twelve-mile intervals, a day's journey by wagon. This was not the most direct route to Santa Fe, but it was far safer than the drier country to the south. Lucien Maxwell, through the efforts of his share croppers and the Santa Fe Trail prospered greatly. History referred to him as the 'Empersario of the Plains'.

Business was brisk as traffic along the Trail increased, and Maxwell became a wealthy man. He was also somewhat of a political activist for his day, and having himself come West, he believed in the theory of Manifest Destiny, that the United States was destined to spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Along with Kit Carson, he accompanied John C. Fremont on both of his expeditions to California, and participated in the Bear Flag revolt that put California in the hands of the United States.

Much the same happened in New Mexico. In 1848, at the conclusion of our war with Mexico, Maxwell and Carson assisted Steven Watts Karney in his "liberation" of New Mexico. By this time Mexico had won independence from Spain, but it had not been a simple process, with numerous changes of government and revolts (including Texas in 1836). New Mexico was a harsh world away from Mexico City, with American traffic and commerce along the Santa Fe Trail far exceeding the flow from the south. So when Karney reached Santa Fe and raised the American flag the citizens of both Mexican and American heritage held a celebration for him, and he acquired the region for the U.S. with hardly a shot fired. The Treaty of Guadalupe/Hidalgo ceded the region to the United States in 1848. California's Bear Flag revolt came the following year, in 1849.

The relatively new Mexican government had validated the Spanish land grants, so that change in government had been transparent to Lucien Maxwell. Now, however, New Mexico was a territory of the United States, so land claims had to be validated once again. Maxwell hired an educated young man from the East, Charles Springer,

memorialized in the name of the town of Springer, New Mexico. Charles Springer wound up working for the grant the most of his life, but his early contribution was one of his most significant. He took the land grant claim all the way to the United States Supreme Court, where it was eventually validated.

Times were good from the 1850s through the 1870s. Traffic along the Santa Fe Trail continued to increase, with even the American Civil War having little direct effect on this part of the country. In addition to commerce from the Trail Lucien Maxwell was appointed Indian Agent for the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, selling his beef to the U.S.

Government as well as to Santa Fe-bound travelers. This changed when the railroad crossed Raton Pass in 1881. The railroad wasn't concerned with good grass and water at short intervals, but with direct routes and easy ground for laying tracks. The railroad came over Raton Pass, using the old toll road carved out by Dick Wooten. The tracks rolled into Raton, then called Willow Springs, and then headed on south through dry country to Santa Fe, bypassing Maxwell's land by as much as forty miles.

Now things began to change. With Trail commerce dwindling, Maxwell moved his Indian Agency down to Fort Sumner, below Clovis. He died down there, succeeded as Indian Agent by his son, Pete Maxwell, who also played a major role in New Mexico history. Pat Garrett shot William Bonney, better known as Billy the Kid, in Pete Maxwell's bedroom!

Over time the Grant was cut up and sold to various interests, then resold. During the California Gold Rush a Texan named Tom Stockton rounded up a big herd of Texas cattle and drove them all the way to the California gold fields, then returned and bought a piece of the land grant from Lucien Maxwell. Just outside of Raton, along the Canadian River, there's a historical marker where his house sat, built in 1865 and burned in 1875. It wasn't rebuilt because the railroad was coming through, and business would change. Tom Stockton's descendants still own the land he bought from Lucien Maxwell, and are our neighbors to the northeast.

The Stockton purchase was perhaps the first "subdivision" of Maxwell's land, but certainly not the last. Over time Charles Springer acquired some 200,000 acres to the south, still intact as the "CS Ranch" for Charles Springer. Our neighbor to the north is the country we know as Vermejo Park, an area that has changed both ownership and size many times over the years. Pennzoil acquired Vermejo in 1973, at the same time the NRA Whittington Center was acquired. It passed to Ted Turner in the late 1990s, and is now 585,000 acres. This is about one third of the original Beaubien-Miranda grant and is the largest single parcel. Over the years, as people passed on and heirs married, some of the grant became divided into smaller parcels, with the 33,000 acres of the NRA Whittington Center one of these.

SEARCH AND ACQUISITION

Today we shooters and hunters, America's gunowners and members of the National Rifle

Association, consider our ongoing battle against the "antis" just a normal part of life.

One generation ago things were a bit different. We came out of World War II the "nation of

riflemen" we believed we had always been—but in the 1960s began a subtle change

spurred by numerous events. The assassination of President Kennedy, ostensibly by a

cheap-military-surplus rifle, was a watershed event, of course followed relatively soon by

the assassinations of his brother, U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and the

Reverend Martin Luther King. We were involved in the most unpopular war in

American history, the Vietnam War. Times had changed, and anti-gun sentiment was

reaching an all-time high.

The passage of the 1968 Gun Control Act (GCA) was a call to arms for the NRA and

American gun owners—but in those days we had no way of knowing where this would

take us. The political shift was obvious, but perhaps equally insidious but more gradual

was the urbanization of America, a problem that continues to escalate today. In the late

1960s and early 1970s long-established shooting facilities were closing all over the

country, overrun by politics and urban sprawl. This last is not especially anti-gun, but

more a sign of the times. The American public has made it clear they don't want to build

their homes around facilities that are unpleasant, whether for pollution, potential health

hazard, or noise. The list includes nuclear plants, waste sites, airports, and shooting

ranges. The most recent and potent in the list seems to be ranges near N.D.A. Parks

and other public lands, such as the White River National Forest and the

The National Rifle Association is America's governing body for many shooting disciplines, including silhouette, conventional pistol, small bore rifle, and high power rifle. But, other than the national headquarters, the NRA had never owned property. All of the NRA-sanctioned shooting programs and competitions have been held at private or public shooting facilities, perhaps the most famous being Camp Perry, Ohio, a National Guard post where the national matches have traditionally been held for generations.

After the passage of the 1968 GCA it became crystal clear that the antis wanted our guns—but what good would they be anyway if we had no place left to shoot?

The leadership of the NRA determined that what was needed was a site where a *fail-safe* range facility could be established, a place where the future of the shooting sports could be assured in perpetuity. A site selection committee was appointed, headed by former NRA President Fred Hakenjos. His definition of "fail safe" was a location isolated enough to be free from urban sprawl, and large enough and defined enough to ensure complete safety from stray bullets to any community or neighbor.

The site selection campaign was truly national in scope, with properties examined in areas as diverse as California, Tennessee, Montana, and of course here in New Mexico. New Mexico was an early contender, but the initial sites examined were found unsuitable. It could have been left at that, but then-Governor of New Mexico Bruce King saw an opportunity for his state. He appointed his Director of the New Mexico Game and Fish Department, Ladd Gordon, to take an active role in assisting the NRA's site selection committee.

The Mayor of Raton, Lucien Maxwell, George Segotta, Alvin Stockton, and Bruce King, and community members

With the assistance of Bruce King and his people, this Raton site was tentatively selected

and site selection passed to *site evaluation*. Now the Raton site, once part of the

Beaubien-Miranda land grant, came under close scrutiny. The community of Raton

responded, with citizens Richard Segotta, Alvin Stockton, and Mayor Tony Pesavento

forming a committee to assist in obtaining information and statistics on the site. A

consulting team of landscape architects from Kansas State University was also hired to

provide a study of the Raton property for the evaluation committee.

The great strengths of the Raton site were both demographic and geographic. Although it

remains an active mining area underlain by vast coal reserves, the region is sparsely

populated and is primarily a ranching economy. Land ownership has tended to be stable,

with many properties remaining in the same families since Lucien Maxwell's day.

Geographically, Interstate 25 provides ready year-round access from Colorado Springs

and Denver to the north and Santa Fe and Albuquerque to the south. From the standpoint

of a range facility, that unique east-west bend of the Rocky Mountains couldn't be more

ideal. The southern plains butt up against the east-west ridges of Whittington Center,

providing a massive natural range backstop that allows a north-south orientation to the

ranges. This is not unimportant, because it means that competitive shooters will never

have to squint into a setting sun.

Perhaps the most instrumental person in the site selection process was NRA Board

Member and Amarillo, Texas attorney George Whittington. Whittington loved the

mountain states and was a frequent visitor to the Raton area, both for recreation and in his business as an oilman, buying, selling, trading, and swapping land and mineral rights. With the help and influence of George Whittington and the involvement of state and local officials, Raton was selected as the best possible site. Now came approval of the NRA Board.

In August 1973 more than sixty NRA Board members converged on Raton to investigate the site. Most of the area was then accessible by automobile, with the citizens of Raton

donating their time and four-wheel-drive vehicles to provide a tour of the area.

Following a tour of the site the Board returned to Denver, where a special meeting was

held. The roll vote was fifty-six in favor of acquiring the Raton site, with just six

opposed. The Raton site for what would someday become the NRA Whittington Center was selected—but major hurdles lay ahead.

Governor Bruce King believed the NRA would be good for New Mexico, and Mayor

Tony Pesavento believed the NRA would be good for Raton. Their view was not

universal. One of the major controversies in Raton centered on the water supply, the

wells would be inadequate to support the major public facility envisioned. Many local

citizens were concerned that Raton's water source, Lake Maloya, might not be adequate

to serve the center and continue to support Raton—and even if it was, a major pipeline project was required to bring the water to the center.

The mayor of Raton, initially Tony Pesavento and later Mike Pappas, and commissioners Charles Butram, Gilbert Madrid, Bob Gurule, and Hurley Bacon committed to vote for an eight-inch pipeline project that would bring water to the property line of what was initially the National Rifle Association Outdoor Center, followed by a six-inch pipeline to the Municipal Airport at Crews Field. The cost would be \$750,000. Despite serious controversy, after the NRA Board approved the acquisition the city commission authorized a bond issue for the project. The bonds were funded through TMIIA on July

1, 1976, and the pipeline could become a reality.

Before the pipeline could be built titles to the NRA site had to be cleared. Obtaining the land and ensuring its fail-safe criteria of absolute safety required a complex series of land swaps. Amazingly, not a single square foot of the land where the NRA Center sits was purchased. The site itself was a natural, but it didn't actually belong to one owner, so

putting it together was a difficult process. It was all traded for, thanks to the skills of

George Whittington and the vision of the property owners, who were willing to sacrifice portions of their land to make the NRA Center a reality.

Alvin Stockton traded land he owned for land near Kiowa and the TO Ranch. Annita Van Brugger sold portions of her land to NRA, who in turn traded land to Annie Ruth Bell. Kaiser Steel traded part of its Raton land for industrial property purchased by NRA in California. NRA had its site for a permanent center and range facility, and in time the pipeline would be completed. But more trouble lay ahead.

To start building, the pipe had to be laid in 600 feet of class A dry sand at a depth of 100 feet.

A HUMBLE BEGINNING

NRA's 1977 Cincinnati convention still stands in NRA history as a pinnacle of dissension bordering on revolt. One of the major internal riffs concerned the Center, with many members vehement in their belief that NRA dues monies should not be used to finance Center projects. Max Rich, then Executive Vice President of NRA, had been instrumental in locating the Center in Raton. He was fired.

The end result of the Cincinnati meeting was passage of a by-law that stated dues monies from the general membership would not be used for the Raton Center until a long-term budget and plan for development was presented and approved by the NRA membership. The Raton Center was on the verge of being cast aside, and only the determination of Board members like George Whittington prevented a total disaster.

The following year, at the Salt Lake City NRA meeting in 1978, a budget and plans were approved by the membership. Funds would be limited and would be used only to commence a fund-raising program, with an advance of up to \$200,000 authorized. The Center was ordered to become self-sufficient, and \$100,000 was advanced to begin the Center's fund-raising efforts. No additional funds would come from the NRA, and from that moment the Center was essentially on its own.

From 1979 to 1983 barely enough money was raised for the Center to exist and begin a few projects. But the fund-raising program worked! In 1983 George Whittington presented NRA with a check for \$100,000 to repay the initial advance. Initial lack of

funds greatly slowed plans to build various ranges. In turn, this early lack of facilities

greatly retarded the NRA's promise to the community of Raton—remembering that the

community leaders went 'way out on a limb in inviting the NRA, and then bulldozing

through the essential water project. As late as 1986, when longtime director Mike Ballew

was hired, only 7400 people visited the Raton Center, and undoubtedly many good

citizens of Raton were wondering what all the fuss was about.

It took time, and fortunately the community was patient. Today all of the promises and

more have been fulfilled. Initially established as a 501.C(3) tax exempt entity, the Center

is totally dependent on tax-deductible donations and internal fund-raising activities. It is,

and has been for many years, totally self-sufficient and financially stable. None of this

could have happened without years of effort by visionaries who believed in the concept

and the Center.

Without question George Whittington was at the forefront of these efforts. A legend at

the Center is that, at the very beginning, local contractor Harold Butt was driving a

bulldozer to clear the property boundary between Kaiser Steel and the NRA Center.

George Whittington himself walked in front of the bulldozer and placed colored engineer

tape on the property line. So it was not only his vision, but also his personal efforts at all

levels, that resulted in the Center eventually being named in his honor. Initially the

Raton site was named the NRA Outdoor Center. Later the name was changed to NRA

National Range and Outdoor Center, and finally the name we know it by today: NRA

Whittington Center, generally referred to simply as the "Whittington Center."

"A WORLD CLASS SHOOTING FACILITY"

In 2008 the NRA Whittington Center's website (www.nrawc.org) lists 118 scheduled events spanning all twelve months of the calendar. These events are supported by more than thirty Center employees and six hundred volunteers, and will bring more than 180,000 visitors to the Center and to the Raton community. Yes, the NRA's promise to the Raton community and the state of New Mexico has been fulfilled. So has the charge of the site selection committee to the NRA board.

There are now 17 established ranges on the Center, mostly oriented north with that wonderful east-west ridge as a backstop. The NRA Whittington Center is indeed a *fail-safe* range facility, with all projectiles fired landing safely on Center property, and its future politically ensured by its own success as it brings local employment and an estimated 30 million annual tourism dollars into the region.

Perhaps more importantly, the Center has truly become a world class shooting facility supporting the full range of shooting disciplines. As Mike Ballew once remarked to Craig Boddington, "If there's a viable shooting game out there we believe the Center should have a range to support it." A quick browse through the annually published schedule shows this promise has been met. Trap, skeet, sporting clays; benchrest, long range, silhouette, smallbore, schuetzenfest; defense pistol, PPC, bullseye, cowboy action; blackpowder and .50-caliber; Creedmore, Palma, and so much more. Of course, the Center isn't only for competitive shooting. Many of the ranges are open and available for

recreational shooting throughout the year, with ranges enjoyed by visitors and local shooters alike.

Another important aspect of Center activities is training opportunities, not only for competitive shooters and individuals, but also for law enforcement personnel from all 50 states. On an increasing basis, visiting shooters come to the Center from all over the

world as well as throughout the United States. The Adventure Camp for young people encourages leadership and team spirit, and teaches youngsters not only safe shooting, but also wilderness survival skills, map and compass, and basic wildlife management.

Special events include the annual Santa Fe Trail Rendezvous, held since 1975. The Rendezvous is an informal gathering of people interested in the ways and lore of the mountain men, and has become an important event for America's buckskinners and historians.

In the Center's thirty-five years the facilities have increased dramatically and continue to be upgraded. The Visitor's Center houses the Center's business offices and includes the

Frank Brownell Museum of the Southwest, Bud and Willa Eyman Research Library and gift shop. Visitors can use a variety of onsite accommodations including housing facilities, recreational vehicle hookups, and well-appointed cabins. The dining facility

will serve 125 people, with the Ajax Class Room Building seating seventy-five people.

The Center now occupies 33,300 acres, only 10% of which is devoted to range facilities and safety fans, the Center remains prime habitat, with sound wildlife management an implied task and inherent responsibility. Depending on annual game surveys, hunting is

conducted for elk, mule deer, pronghorn, black bear, and wild turkey. All hunts are conducted under the supervision of Whittington Center personnel, with a certain number of permits allocated by drawing. This is not an easy draw as these "tags" are highly prized, but the winning permits holders can be assured of a top-quality New Mexico hunting experience at extremely low cost.

The second program is a guided hunting operation, conducted by Center personnel with proceeds going directly into the Center's operating fund. Initially these hunts were conducted strictly on Center property, but the program was so successful that the Center expanded the operation by leasing the hunting rights on more than 100,000 acres of neighboring ranches. Lodging and meals are provided at the Center and costs are in line with local outfitting fees. This program has been successful for the Center, putting nearly \$200,000 annually into operations and facilities improvement. It has been successful for the participants as well, so much so that there is usually a waiting list for key hunts such as bull elk and trophy mule deer.

Wildlife truly thrives on Whittington Center. Mule deer, elk, pronghorn, and wild turkey will be seen on nearly a daily basis any time of the year, and in the back country sightings of black bear and mountain lion are not uncommon. On any range shooters are always vigilant for four-legged visitors, and a "check fire" while wildlife wander through is a common occurrence.

Today the Center is governed by a Board of Trustees, separate and independent from the NRA Board of Directors, with the mission of overseeing the activities and setting the budget. Day to day operations are managed by the Center's Director, who was Frank Foote from the beginning until August 1986. At that time Mike Ballew, a proven land management expert and former NRA Board member, became Director, his tenure running through August 2008. In September 2008, after 22 years of service as Director, Mike accepted the challenge of Director of Planned Giving for the NRA Whittington Center. A vital task to ensure all that he had worked to build over his years of dedication would be around for generations to come. In that same month Wayne Armacost was appointed as the third Director of the Whittington Center.

The credo of the Whittington Center is for its operations and maintenance to be self-sustaining. Range, user, and room and board fees are kept as economical as possible within this policy, with ongoing improvements generally funded by donations. Not counting land, to date the Center has funded nearly 15 million dollars in improvements, funded primarily by private donations. The Center receives no organized or formal support from any external organization, and remains grateful for both small and large donations. Internal support mechanisms include the guided hunt operation, Whittington Center Gun Club and the Founders and Trail Blazer Clubs, a group of supporters with an initial contribution of \$1000 and \$2500 who, collectively, have provided nearly eight million dollars to the Center.

The land probably doesn't look much different than it did when the King of Spain

granted it to the Beaubien and Miranda. It wasn't a swampland then, and it isn't a

swampland now. The improvements are in keeping with the southwestern style

established long before Lucien Maxwell joined the Beaubien family. The Whittington

Center has been a good steward of its land and has become a good neighbor to the Raton

Community. It is the largest and most diverse civilian range facility in the entire world,

and the most-visited range facility in the world, truly living up to the dream of the NRA

Board in those seemingly dark days of the late 1960s: A fail-safe range facility,

established in perpetuity, continuing to grow, and offering a venue for any shooting

discipline. For information on how you can become involved in the NRA Whittington

Center, visit our website at www.nrawc.org.

Located on 1,200 acres here shooting ranges are available for all disciplines.

With the following facilities, the NRA Whittington Center offers the best in competitive

shooting in the country: a 100-yard pistol range, a 100-yard rifle range, a 100-yard trap

range, a 100-yard skeet range, a 100-yard trap and skeet combination range, a 100-yard

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A timeline of the NRA Whittington Center and its surrounding area

25000 B.C. – A.D. 1500

- (25000 B.C.) Sandia Indians leave earliest evidence of human existence
- (9000 – 8000 B.C.) Earliest evidence of humans in Raton-Springer area were left by Folsom man

1541 – 1821

- (1541) Earliest white entry into Raton-Springer area was the Spanish Coronado expedition
- Spaniards sent missionaries and colonized part of the area known as New Spain
- After several successful revolts by the Pueblo Indians, the Spaniards instituted rule of the area until September when Mexico became independent. (1821)
- (1821) Santa Fe Trail established: William Becknell

1840 – 1869

- (1841) Charles Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda received a grant of land from Spain known as the Beaubien and Miranda Land Grant.
- (1842) Lucien Maxwell inherited the land from his father-in-law, Beaubien, and bought out Miranda's share
- May (1846) Mexico's President Polk announced war with United States
- August (1846) General Stephan W. Kearny marched into Santa Fe and declared it a part of the United States.
- (1846) Reuben Letton selected Willow Springs (today known as Raton) as future site of United States forage station
- (1848) Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo confirmed new ownership and established boundaries of Santa Fe.
- (1850) Territory of New Mexico was established ; opened the area to trade and settlement
- (1861) Cimarron, New Mexico was officially established. Named after the Spanish words meaning "wild "and "unbroken".
- (1866) Willow Springs Forage Station was established. Willow Springs was later used by the Barlow, Sanderson & Co. Stage Line as a water stop and emergency station.
- (1869) Maxwell became the sole owner of the Maxwell Land Grant after the passing of Beaubien and buying out all the other claimants.

1870 – 1900

- (1870) Maxwell deeds property to John Dawson, Jerome Chaffee, George Chilcott and Charles Holly; this formed the English syndicate, Maxwell Land Grant & Railway Co.
- (1872) Henri Lambert, a cook for General Grant and President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, built the St. James Hotel in Cimarron, New Mexico. The St. James Hotel has record of many

historically prominent names that stayed at the hotel, such as; Clay Allison, Black jack Ketchum, Buffalo Bill Cody, Annie Oakley, The Earp Brothers and Jesse James. Visitors to the St. James Hotel can still see the bullet holes in the saloon's ceiling from the many shooting escapades that took place nearly a century and a half ago.

- (1875) Maxwell Land Grant & Railway Co. went bankrupt.
- (1878) reorganization of Maxwell Land Grant & Railway Co. ; underwritten by King of Holland
- (1879) Santa Fe railway reached New Mexico at Raton.
- (1880) Completion of the railroad to Santa Fe brought an end to the Santa Fe Trail.
- (1887) Settlers and miners forced off the original Land Grant or they had to acquire title rights from the Maxwell Land Grant & Railway Co. John Dawson, an early settler, could not be evicted. His deed was held valid by the courts (20,000 acres).
- (1901) Dawson Ranch sold to C.B. Eddy and Associates as the Dawson Fuel Co.

1900 – 2000

- (1902) Founded by S. Van Houten and Frank Springer, the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain and Pacific Co. was created to mine coal. The first camp was called "Willow Coal Mine Camp."
- (1906) "Willow Coal Mine Camp" renamed to "Van Houten" to honor the Van Houten's who pumped lots of money into the mining enterprise. Jan Van Houten built the Swastika Hotel in Raton, it is now International Bank.

Swastika- meaning "good" "to be" represents sun, power, strength and good luck.

- (1910) Atchinson, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad extended a branch line to Van Houten.
- (1915) Peak of Van Houten residency; about 1500-2000 residents
- (1940) Mine closed then reopened 1 year later with the crisis of WWII. Van Houten produced 15,000,000 tons of coal over its 52 years of operation.
- (1954) All mining activity ceased at Van Houten.
- (1955) Kaiser Steel Corporation bought the property.
- (1973) Land traded for NRA site, known as the National Rifle Association Outdoor Center.
- (1977) NRA Annual Meeting; decided that NRA dues from general memberships would no longer be used to fund NRA Outdoor Center until a long-term budget and plan for development was presented and approved by NRA memberships.
- (1978) NRA Annual Meeting; budget and plans were approved for the NRA Outdoor Center. One time advancement of \$100,000.00 was given to help get fundraising going. No additional funds would come from the National Rifle Association. NRA Outdoor Center became its own entity and self sustaining facility. (501 C3; nonprofit)
- (1979 – 1983) NRA Outdoor Center was able to barely raise enough money for the facility to exist and to start a few projects.
- (1983) George Whittington presented NRA with a check for \$100,000.00 to repay their initial advancement.
- (1986) Mike Ballew became Executive Director of the now known as NRA Whittington Center.

- (1986 – 2008) Approximately 17 shooting ranges were developed, shooting events have grown to over 200 events taking place annually and more than 180,000 visitors came through the NRA Whittington Center's gate.
- (2008) Wayne Armacost became Executive Director.
- (2008 to current) Wayne Armacost still holds as the Executive Director for the Whittington Center and is currently executing some BIG plans to expand the Whittington Center. Please follow our website (www.nrawc.org) for updates on future endeavors of the NRA Whittington Center.

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