

WELCOME to the historic mining town of Lake Valley, New Mexico. . .

The mining town of Lake Valley was founded in 1878 after silver was discovered. Almost overnight, the small frontier town blossomed into a major settlement with a population of 4,000 people. Today, silver mining has played out and all that remains is a ghost town. BLM has restored the schoolhouse and chapel. The restored schoolhouse provides a glimpse of what schooling in a rural area was like in the early 20th century. Other buildings in the town site have been stabilized to slow further deterioration. There also is a self-guided, interpretive walking tour.

ACTIVITIES

Scenic driving, wildlife watching, picnicking, historic interpretation, hiking

LOCATION / ACCESS

Go west of Caballo Lake on NM 152, then south on NM 27; or from NM 26 at the Town of Nutt, travel north on NM 27 for about 12 miles.

SEASON/HOURS

Open Year-round. Closed Tuesday and Wednesday.

FEES

None.

Contact Information:

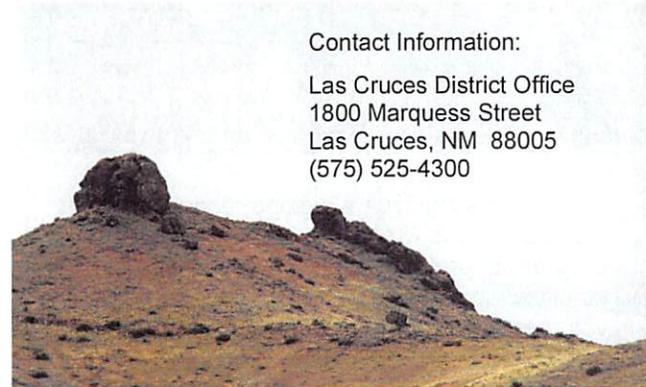
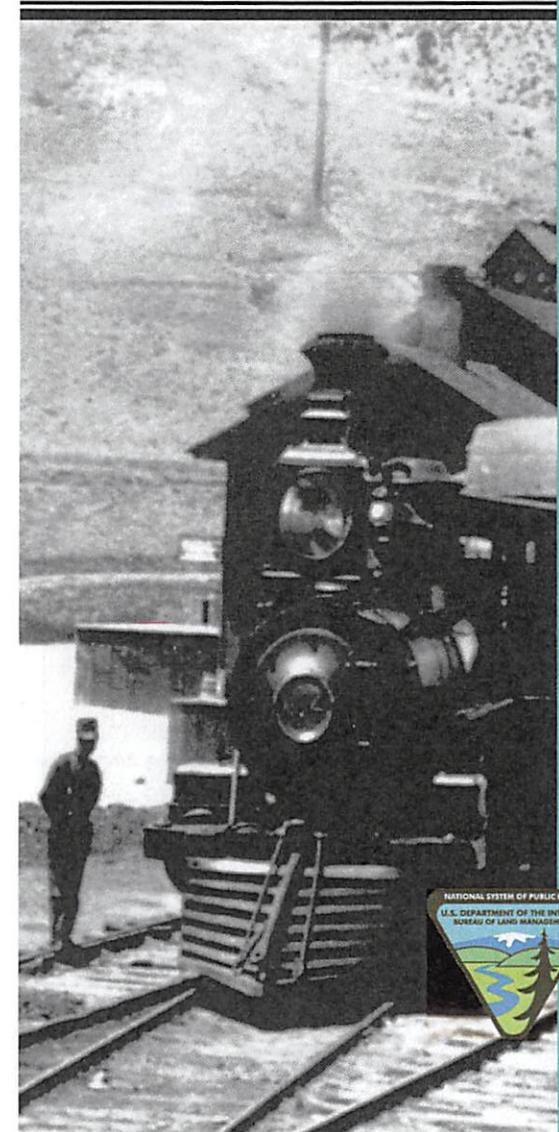
Las Cruces District Office
1800 Marquess Street
Las Cruces, NM 88005
(575) 525-4300



VISITORS PLEASE NOTE:

- Lake Valley is open for DAY USE ONLY. Lake Valley is free and open to the public. Donations are welcome. Please park your vehicle at the schoolhouse.
- Portions of Lake Valley are on PRIVATE PROPERTY. Please respect the owner's property rights by not trespassing. Stay on the roads and trails, do not enter buildings, and do not cross fences.
- Collection of artifacts, unauthorized digging within an archeological site, and destruction of historical resources on public land is prohibited by law. **Please. NO** artifact collection. **NO** metal detecting.
- Trail guides for the self-guided walking tour are available at the schoolhouse. For visitor safety and protection of the historic resources, please stay on established roads and trails. Lake Valley is notorious for rattlesnakes!
- For the protection of your pets from other animals, snakes, and cuts from stepping on sharp objects, please keep them on a leash and on the established roads and trails.
- No camping.
- Discharge of firearms is prohibited.

LAKE VALLEY HISTORIC TOWNSITE



BRIEF HISTORY



From the humble present conditions of Lake Valley, one would hardly imagine that it had such a colorful past. But prior to the turn of the century, Lake Valley was a booming mining town.

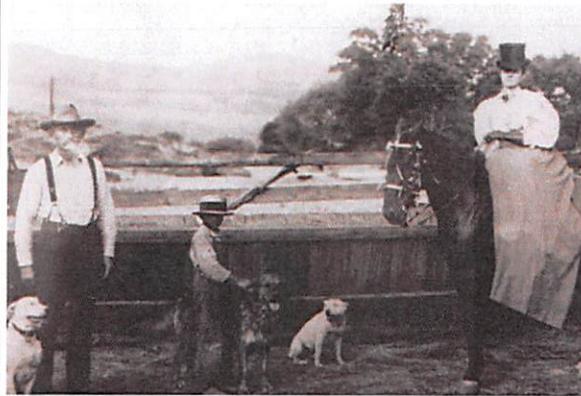
Silver was first found in Lake Valley in 1878, but it wasn't until 1882 that the big discovery was made. That was the year the Bridal Chamber was discovered. Silver ore was found just 40 feet from the surface. A single piece of silver from the mine was displayed at the World Exposition held in Denver in 1882. It was valued at \$7,000 at a time when silver was selling for about \$1.00 an ounce.

The Lake Valley Mines were controlled by the Sierra Grande Mining Company, established by financier Whitaker Wright. Naïve eastern investors flocked to invest their money in the western silver and gold mines. (One of the more famous stockholders in the Sierra Grande Mining Company was Walt Whitman, who owned 200 shares.) Whitaker went on to speculative ventures all over the globe. His endeavors were always tainted by accusations that he habitually misled investors. He finally created a world-wide sensation by swallowing cyanide in a London courtroom to avoid going to prison for fraud.

In 1884, the railroad was extended to Lake Valley. It was a typical mining town, with plenty of saloons open around the clock. The town had a reputation for "lawlessness", as did most other Western mining towns. A gunfighter named Jim Courtright, also known as "Longhair Jim", was hired as Town Marshal in 1882, and quickly brought things to order.



Lake Valley was a sister city to Hillsboro and Kingston, two mining towns a few miles to the north. The three towns were linked by the Lake Valley, Hillsboro and Kingston State and Express Line. The stage ran daily from the railhead at Lake Valley to the mining camps to the north. It was run by Sadie Orchard, also proprietress of the Kingston brothel.

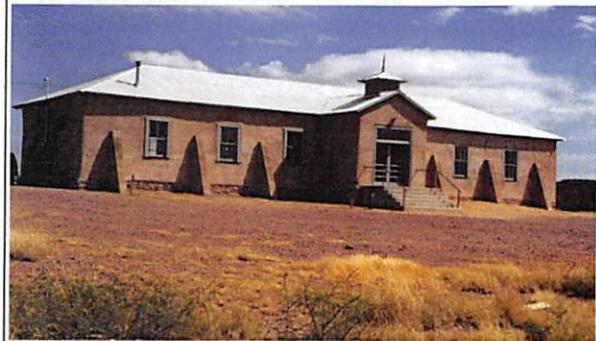


All this prosperity took a turn down in 1893 when silver was devalued. Hillsboro was somewhat spared the fate of Kingston and Lake Valley, in that its economy was based more on gold than silver.

To make matters worse for Lake Valley, most of Main Street burned to the ground in 1895. A few settlers who had put down roots in Lake Valley stayed on into the twentieth century. The others drifted away to try and make their fortunes elsewhere.



There have been brief periods of revival for Lake Valley: during the 1920's and again during the World War II era and in to the 1950's, when the area was mined for manganese ore. The little adobe chapel was used for church services as recently as the 1970's. A few hardy souls stuck with Lake Valley long, long after its heyday. Mrs. Blanch Nowlin was a resident from 1908 until her death in 1982. Pedro and Savina Martinez lived here until 1994. Mr. Martinez was a resident for some 90 years.



To save this significant historic resource, the Bureau of Land Management instituted a program to protect the area. This includes stabilization of some of the structures and having volunteer site stewards reside on site.