**NOTE:**

In this compendium of terms used in Ghost Towning, some words in the vignettes are indicated in **ALL RED CAPS**. Where this occurs, that specific term will be described elsewhere in this work.

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**ADIT**

A horizontal or slightly sloped passageway that connects a mine to the opening/entrance at the exterior surface.

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**ARRASTRA**

A primitive ore-crushing mill usually powered by burro, mule or a horse. It often consists of a circular ring of rock, with a smooth, hard surface on the bottom. A pole in the center has an arm affixed to it. The arm reaches to the outside of the ring, where the animal pulls it in a circle. A heavy weight is attached to the arm by a chain or rope, dragged over the ore-bearing rock, crushing it to a fine texture for additional processing.
**ASSAY**

This is a chemical or physical testing of a mineral ore to determine its metal content and value. These tests were generally performed in small businesses specifically suited for that purpose. ASSAY OFFICES were very common in old mining camps or towns near the mining regions. In more modern days, ASSAYS are performed in physical testing laboratories, rather than specialized locations.

**BATTERY**

Generally used in reference with Coastal Defense Forts, a battery is the massive gun emplacement that protected a stretch of coastline. They were usually invisible from the ocean, but from the land side consisted of large earthen berms or huge reinforced concrete structures topped with a thick blast apron to protect the crew and equipment. The protective guns and cannons then could be placed behind the barrier on special equipment to raise them for firing. Other batteries were mounted in plain view, but the guns were heavily armored.

**BLM**

This is the acronym for the United States Department of the Interior, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (see below).
BLUE HIGHWAYS

On road maps, different types of highways are designated in various colors and line thicknesses. Main arterials such as INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS and other primary highways are designated with thick red lines. The next level of highway type is called a secondary highway and is often designated with blue lines. Many times these "BLUE HIGHWAYS" are STATE or US (federal) HIGHWAYS that have been replaced by the Interstate. They may even be a COUNTY HIGHWAY. Some, such as US 6 and US 66, have developed loyal followers and associations that publish guides to the old routes that were once major inter or intra state highways, but now are either ghost roads, or are relegated to local use.

BOARDWALK

Raised sidewalks made of wooden planks so people would be able to enter buildings without walking through mud and/or water.

BOARD & BATTEN

A method of construction where the wood frame is covered by flat strips of lumber (usually vertically), and the joint or space is covered by a smaller, thinner piece of wood called a batten, to help keep wind and rain from penetrating the space between the boards.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)

This branch of the United States Department of the Interior is responsible for managing public lands, especially in the western part of the country.

CLAIM

Usually in reference to "MINING CLAIMS." These are OUTCROPPINGS or VEINS, or other valuable mineral deposits that a miner wants to take possession of, or claim. To do so, specific legal steps must be made, starting with a "Notice of Location" being posted on
Over the years, the forms have changed, but here is a sample of a 1941 "Notice of Location." Once the future mine has been properly posted, the location must be recorded with the governing agency (in the old days - usually the county). The mining claim is now the legal property of the miner, following certain stipulations, one of which is to perform annual assessments of the property's mineral value. If not performed, then that claim lapses and another miner can legally file on it. Another term often heard in the old days was "Claim Jumper." This was a person illegally taking possession of a mining claim under legal ownership of another. In the mining areas claim jumpers were dealt with harshly!

**CLASSIC GHOST TOWN**

This category of GHOST TOWN is generally listed as a CLASS C GHOST TOWN by Ghost Town USA. It references ghost towns that have standing, roofed buildings and contain no population, except maybe that of a caretaker.

**COMPANY TOWN**

This type of GHOST TOWN was either wholly or partially owned by the parent company that operated the mine, railroad, fishing or logging operation. The company, or more properly The Company would often operate a company-owned store and other amenities such as entertainment venues, laundry facilities and banking. Most of the time, the housing stock was also owned by the parent company and the houses were generally small, look-alike cabins that were rented to the workers and their families.
COPYRIGHT TOWN

These are FICTICIOUS town names placed on maps to aid the map companies in detecting copyright infringement issues with their maps. These names were not real locations, and for folks engaged in map research, can often lead to fruitless chases for non-existent towns.

COUNTY HIGHWAY / COUNTY ROAD

These secondary highways are maintained by the appropriate county (or parish). Most county highways are two lane roads, and may or may not be paved.

COYOTE HOLE

These are shallow pits dug by PLACER miners. They generally did not require shoring and were abandoned as soon as the valuable minerals were excavated or the pit abandoned due to lack of valuable minerals. Depending on soil conditions they can be as deep as 12-15 feet. Much deeper than that and they become SHAFTS. Note that this definition differs from that of the US Bureau of Mines, but is the term once used in the active placer grounds.

CROSSCUT

A CROSSCUT is a tunnel connecting two or more working tunnels in an underground mine. It is generally driven through non-ore bearing rock.

DETECTORIST

A person who enjoys the hobby of using a metal detector to find lost items such as coins, jewelry and/or relics.

DOWN TOWN CORE

A cluster of buildings (usually commercial) making up the business district of a town, and often located in the center of the town, or at a major crossroads. The largest business buildings in town are usually located here, and they generally decrease in size as they move away from the center of town.

CR **

This is the indicator for County Highways or Roads.
FALSE FRONT / FALSEFRONT

This popular style of architecture in the USA from the mid-19th Century through the first half of the 20th Century consisted of a large flat building front attached to a shorter, generally gable-roofed structure. It made them look larger, AND gave the store owner a large area to advertise. Over-the-sidewalk canopies and high fake windows were common accessories.

FURNACE

In regions where iron mining was prevalent, specialized reduction facilities known as FURNACES were built to physically reduce the ore into raw “pig iron.” These iron “pigs” were produced by the smelting of the ore into liquid iron, which then flowed into casting trenches, often looking like a mama pig with a litter of sucklings, hence the name. The iron pigs were then sent to FORGES for further refining and processing into useable products. The reduction furnaces were commonly fired by charcoal, coal or coke (reduced coal). They are also divided into COLD-BLAST (where the air is NOT preheated prior to being blown into the furnace) and HOT-BLAST (where the air IS preheated prior to induction) categories.

GHOST TOWN

“GHOST TOWN is a town or community that at one time had a commercial or population center, and is either wholly abandoned or faded greatly from its peak and now is just a shadow of its former self.”
**GHOST TOWNER**

A person who enjoys visiting and exploring GHOST TOWNS.

**GHOST TOWNING**

The act of visiting and exploring GHOST TOWNS. This quest for adventure often leads to DIRTY vehicles!

**GLORY HOLE**

A large chamber of rich mineral-bearing ore inside of an underground mine. They are usually in areas where the VEINS spread out, or appear as large OUTCROPPINGS of extremely rich ore and are larger than the tunnel around it.

**GNIS**

The Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) is the United States Department of the Interior, US Geologic Survey, US Board on Geographic Names' online database of over two million geographic and place names in the United States. It is an extremely valuable tool for GHOST TOWNERS to use to find the physical locations of GHOST TOWNS, as there are numerous maps, aerial photos, geographic details and Latitude/Longitude positions.

**HARDROCK MINE**

Also known as a LODE MINE, these are the stereotypical mines where mineral-bearing ore is extracted from by miners from underground by the use of tunnels. The tunnels can be horizontal (ADITS), sloped (WINZES) or vertical (SHAFTS).

Often in large mines, activity can occur on various levels throughout the workings.

**HEADFRAME**

This is the aboveground hoisting structure made of metal or timber that stands over a mine entrance. It can be a massive, enclosed structure or a now-whispy latticework frame that looks like it could fall over if a ground squirrel climbed up on it.
INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS

Often nicknamed the “Superslab” these wide, multi-lane, limited-access highways criss-cross the country. The system came into place beginning in the 1950s in order to facilitate easy movement around the country. They were built to route around traffic flow interruptions such as towns. Because of the limited access, speed limits are often high (as much as 80 MPH in ID, OR and TX) and long distance travel is generally fast and safe.

INDIAN ROUTE

Abbreviated as IR-*, these secondary roads are located on various Indian reservations, especially in Arizona and New Mexico. They may be paved or graded dirt, and are maintained and policed by the tribal government.

LEAD

Pronounced LEED, this is the exposed VEIN of valuable ore visible on the surface.

LODE MINE

...SEE HARDROCK MINE for the definition. This is another term used for this type of mine.
**MILE POST**

These are metallic “paddles” or small signlike appurtenances located along highways. They indicate the distance in miles either from the start of the road or the county (depending on which state they are in.) They come in many variations and colors, but usually are either black on reflective white or white on reflective green. Also depending on the state they may be called Post Miles, Mile Markers or Mile Paddles (due to their shape). They often coincide with EXIT numbers on the INTERSTATE. In some states, they “reset” at the county line.

**MINING CAMP**

This term is often used in conjunction with GHOST TOWNS, especially in book titles such as: “The Ghost Towns and Mining Camps of California.” A Mining Camp is a specific type of ghost town, and generally is on the smaller side. It would serve as the support town or camp for a mining operation, and often was a COMPANY TOWN. Most mining camps never developed into real, self-supporting towns and may only have consisted of a handful of tents or brush shanties.

**MINING DISTRICT**

A group of mines or mining camps grouped together under a common legislative umbrella wherein common laws and rules were issued and abided by. Some of the laws included size and number of claims a person could hold.

**MILLING TOWN**

These type of GHOST TOWNS based their existence on the milling of ore, grain or timber from nearby sources. Their life followed the ups and downs of the material sources or a need for the end product. When the economy turned, they had to adapt or die.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

This description is taken directly from the National Park Service website:

“The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archeological resources.”

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Ghost Town USA's Ghost Town Definitions

**NEAR GHOST**

This category of *GHOST TOWN* is generally listed as a **CLASS D or E GHOST TOWN** by **Ghost Town USA**. It references towns that are still alive, where there are numerous abandoned buildings, and a small resident population. Synonymous with **SEMI GHOST**.

**OPEN PIT**

As the name implies, this is a method of mining where ore is removed from a large surface hole, rather than through underground tunnels. Generally used for large, lower-grade deposits.

**OUTCROP**

An exposed geological formation of rocks at the surface of the ground.

**PAPER TOWN**

This type town had its site **PLATTED** or mapped and recorded with the land authority. The site may have been surveyed and staked, but no town ever physically developed.

**PLACER MINING**

This is the act of removing free gold or silver by using water or air to separate it from the sand or gravel in which it occurs. Methods of recovery may include gold pans, sluice boxes, or in dry regions, a dry washer (which uses air blown through a bellows to separate the gold from the sand and gravel).

**PLAT / PLATTING**

This is the physical act of mapping out the site of a new town on paper. The map is called a plat map and shows the features of the town such as lots, streets, and sometimes even buildings. The map is then recorded at the County Assessor or Recorder's office.

**ROAD TOWN**

A small town that caters to travelers along a highway. Services provided may include motels/auto courts, restaurant/café, gas stations, souvenir shops and other travel amenities. After the **INTERSTATE HIGHWAY** system came into wide use, many of these old communities found themselves on side roads, without customers and were abandoned. If located close to the Interstate, the town would often relocate to a nearby off ramp area.
RURAL COMMUNITY

This is a small community or cluster of people living in proximity to each other. It generally will have no DOWNTOWN CORE, but may have a cemetery, church, school or even a store. Many may be the faded remains of what once was a “real” town.

SEMI- GHOST

This category of GHOST TOWN is generally listed as a CLASS D or E GHOST TOWN by Ghost Town U.S.A. It references towns that are still alive, where there are numerous abandoned buildings, and a small resident population. Synonymous with NEAR GHOST.

SIDING

Located along railroad lines, these are side tracks where trains traveling in opposite directions, or slower than other trains can wait for passing trains to clear the main line. They can also be used as loading stations. In the days of steam railroading, stations were also located here, along with water and coal refilling stations. Today, most are just names on signs and/or a side track.

SHAFT

A vertical or inclined tunnel in an underground mine.

STAMP MILL

A mechanical milling structure that uses a cam shaft to raise and drop heavy stamps onto a tray filled with ore-bearing rock, crushing it to a fine powder. The crushed ore powder is then further processed to remove the valuable minerals.

SH **

State maintained highway.
SWITCHING STATION

A type of station located on railroad lines where rail cars are sorted and switched onto various trains. They are often located along the main lines, or in specific yards in larger locations.

TAILING PILES

Piles of non ore-bearing waste rock and sandy processing residue, usually located at the entrance of mines or around mills.

TOPO MAP

This is the shortened term for TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS, which are maps produced by the United States Geological Survey. They come in various resolutions and can be hardcopy or online. These maps show most physical features as well as towns and buildings.

US **

This is the designator for federal highways.

VEINS

Gold, silver and other valuable minerals often lie in thin, irregular seams or fissures lacing through the host rock. Where these veins reach the surface, they are called LEADS (pronounced LEEDS) or OUTCROPPINGS.

WPA

The Works Progress Administration / Work Progress Administration (after 1939) was a “make work” program initiated in 1935 during the Great Depression. At its peak in November 1938, the program employed 3.3 million unemployed people on various special projects such as roads, sidewalks, bridges, dams, schools, public buildings and numerous other types of projects. The program ended in 1943. For GHOST TOWNERS, the lasting legacy of this program was the series of traveler’s guidebooks published for each of the states.