

Gilsonite Mining

Rainbow was a tiny town located in the desert a few miles from the Utah-Colorado state line. It was built by a gilsonite mining company for one purpose: to have a place for its employees to live with their families while they mined and shipped gilsonite. All of the nearby small towns -which is actually an extravagant term to describe some of them as you will see below- were built by the mining companies. This meant that the whole community of Rainbow was owned by the company, so there was little impetus for competing businesses to develop.

The first commercial gilsonite mines -the Black Dragon Mine and the Bandana Mine- were in the Dragon area right at the Colorado line, but those veins were quickly depleted. To replace them, other mines were opened. During the time grandpa and his family lived in Rainbow, it became the largest producer of the mineral and maintained that prominence until late 1939 .

About the time the mines were opened, the mining companies also started the famous but now defunct 75 mile long narrow-gauge Uintah Railroad. It was built specifically to transport gilsonite from the mines to Mack, Colorado. There was a Denver & Rio Grande terminus in Mack where its trains could load the gilsonite and move it to manufacturing centers in the east and west.

The map shows the last section of the tracks, with Rainbow Junction being the place where the 4 mile spur to Rainbow took off. The original design for the

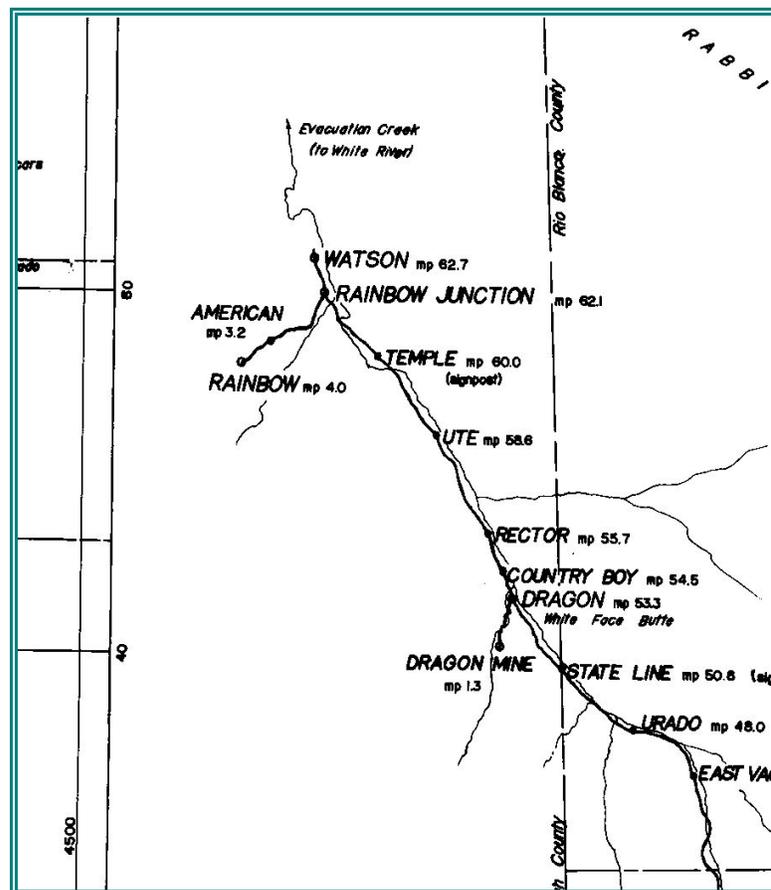


Figure 1 North end of Uintah Railroad
(Bender 1971:20)

rails ended at Dragon, Utah. However, as the veins in that region were exhausted and new veins were found to the north, the rails were extended to Watson, with the spur to Rainbow in the west a few miles.

Upwards of 200 men were employed in Rainbow during its heyday by the two mining companies in the business, The American Asphaltum Co. and the Gilson Mining Co. Grandpa set up housekeeping in Rainbow and there a few years during which time Marie was a child. He eked out a living for his large family. The atmosphere of this life in my mind is that of near poverty. Perhaps it wasn't but he must struggled mightily to provide for his large family in Rainbow because he didn't have a garden on account of the lack of surface water, and he couldn't keep livestock. Chickens, rabbit and deer in season constituted the bulk of their meat. The pay for this work must have been attractive to make him and a lot of other men move into those limited circumstances.

When the gilsonite veins ran out in Rainbow, Fuller moved back to Naples. The railroad was stopped about that time, and so did Rainbow. The houses of Rainbow were even disassembled and carted over to Bonanza where a new vein was opened. When I visited Rainbow in 1953, it was nothing but falling down houses and today when I did an internet search of ghost towns in Utah, Rainbow doesn't even show up. Watson did, but not Rainbow.

When we visited Rainbow during the 1953 summer, the 1953 cream and brown Chevrolet was filled with dad, Aunt Doris and Uncle John, Dick and I. We went out to the desert southeast of Vernal and drove into Rainbow. The area around Rainbow was perfectly flat and was bordered by more steep hills of shale. On the far side of the town at the foot of that cliff, there was a wide dry wash. Some of the houses looked like they had been damaged by water. That indicated that a river flooded through the area in the spring. We were there at the height of summer, and rain wasn't likely to fall in any quantity for months. But a kid raised in the region had heard plenty of stories of people out camping who were deluged and swept away by the huge flash floods that quickly develop when there is a heavy rain storm. The parched ground cannot absorb most of the water which actually creates sort of an impervious clay seal over the ground that prevents more rain from being



absorbed. In this situation, the rain quickly accumulates into powerful floods that unexpectedly churn down dry washes and sweep away animals, vehicles, and campers, killing some of them. I was fearful that might happen to us in Rainbow in spite of the clear blue sky. My greatest wish was to get out as soon as possible, just in case. The desolation of the ghost town accentuated the anxiety about floods. What if a flash flood had been the cause of the total departure of the inhabitants? If it happened then, it could happen again. Even the presence of my favorite Doris didn't deflect this train of thought.

Rainbow Camp

Rainbow Camp, as grandma Merrell called it, was a small cluster of buildings on a flat between the mountains where gilsonite was mined. It was laid out along a single wide opening that might be called a road but was wider than that. The original houses were sawed logs well-chinked to keep in the heat and out the cold. The following image of Rainbow was taken in 1922, a year before mom was born and



Figure 3. Rainbow, Utah in 1922 (Bender 1971:97)

is an excellent representation of the small dry town. I found it in Bender's book which is in my collection for whoever wants it. Turns out that dad also has a copy

of the book.

When I talked to Mom recently about what it was like in Rainbow, she said that when they moved to Rainbow, there were no private homes available. The only lodging available for the 11-member family when they moved to Rainbow from the Reservation was one of the apartment houses. That would have been a challenge for a family that had 12 members. As grandpa gained seniority and other families moved out, he was given a single family dwelling. It was a marvelous thing later to find this photo and see the large building on the left of this photo. That is the "apartment house" that grandma and his family were forced to live in until a single family dwelling became vacant. Some time after they moved into that building, a single family dwelling became available across the road. Mom said that one her first memories is of her carrying a heavy kettle across the "road" to the new house.

In 1953, we wandered around the town and went into some of these old buildings. They didn't look as good then as they do in this photo. They were simple structures with no plumbing or electricity and no interior doors. The outside doors and windows were missing. Either the last family to live there took them to a new house, or the houses were vandalized later. The roofs had holes in them and the walls were unpainted. I wondered about what it must have been like for Marie to be a child out there in a tiny community, isolated from a town of any size. Kids will be kids and will find things to entertain themselves and perhaps living in this narrow canyon was fun. How did the family get groceries, was there mail service, where did they keep their animals? There were no more people or livestock in the town, no crops, irrigation or vehicles. Just a collection of decrepit abandoned houses that had been left behind because that was all that could be done when each family left and the mining companies wrote the properties off. The sky was clear overhead while we wandered around, the sun was shining and nothing bad had happened to us, yet the visit was depressing. I didn't specifically think, "What a sad place for mom to have been a child!" but today that is the sense I have of my emotional response to Rainbow in 1953.

When we returned to Naples and talked to her about what we saw, I don't know if mom expected that we would be happy to see the place or whether she even thought about it at all. She didn't say much about what we said when we returned. It was Dad and Doris who were particularly interested in seeing the place. Since we were already in the region, it was a simple matter to get to Rainbow by driving on down the road. Whatever, I was struck by the sadness and

desolation of the sad little town, isolated by many parched desert miles from any other community. After spending an hour or so in the desolate, dry, depressing, deserted town, we got back in the car and returned to Vernal. The dirt road we drove joined Route 40 just west of Jensen on the top of the hill to the west of the "Dinah the Dinosaur" statue.

I called mom last night to ask about Rainbow. I learned more about her childhood in that hour than I learned in the rest of my life with her. She lived there several years, moving to Naples around the age of 6. In Naples her dad hewed logs and erected a house on a piece of land that continues to be occupied today by his oldest son Harold, age 98, some of Harold's kids and their families and some of Ross' kids and families.

Unitah Railway

Grandpa worked for the gilsonite mining companies. They and the Unitah Railway are the only businesses I know of that spent much money on the

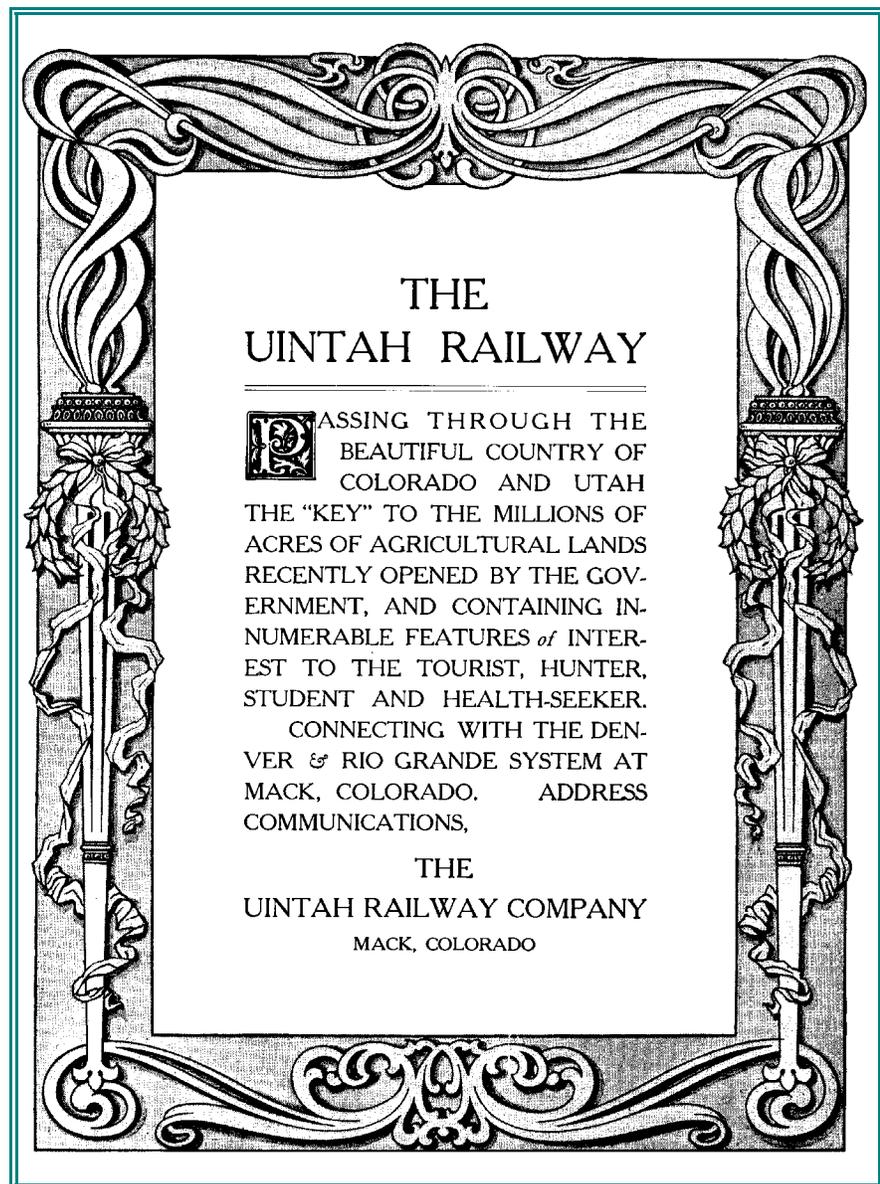


Figure 4 Bender 1971:130

development of Eastern Utah, so deserve compliments. True, they based their investment on the expected payoff from shipping gilsonite to San Francisco and the East, but nonetheless, there were some pretty generous folk in these companies to even grant credence to that proposition. The railway advertised itself with the grandiose words of this flyer. I don't know what it refers to when it says that "millions of acres of agricultural lands recently opened..."

Mack, Colorado is where the rail line started, in the middle of no where. I drove through it many times in 1971, when I worked for Dad on Dry Mesa. There is nothing there except for a cross road, a run-down rock shop and the concrete foundations of a few buildings long gone. Dad told me -at least this is how I remember it- that the famous "Mack trucks" were originated in the town of Mack to haul gilsonite. My memory is that he said the trucks were named for Mack, Colorado where there were built specifically to haul gilsonite. Perhaps that was his understanding, which is credible. But it turns out that the Mack was developed elsewhere and used successfully in Mack to haul gilsonite.

I have wondered since what role, if any the development of the Mack Truck played in Fuller's decision to leave Rainbow. Was the Depression the reason for his leaving, or was the demand for mule skimmers decreasing because of the influx of these new-fangled trucks? Here are photos of Mack trucks that were operational



Figure 6 1926 Mack Truck

<http://www.pacificnwtruckmuseum.org/Show2000/MackTrucks.html>



Figure 5 1926 Mack Truck

<http://www.pacificnwtruckmuseum.org/Show2000/MackTrucks.html>

in the 1920's which may have driven Fuller from his job. It is well documented that trains replaced horses in the gilsonite industry, and that trucks replaced the trains, so perhaps these trucks are

the reason that Grandpa moved to Naples.

Mom said that there was no farming at all in Rainbow so my memory of fields and gardens is incorrect. There were not even kitchen gardens because there was no water in the town other than that provided by the tank cars of the Uintah Railway out of Atchee, Colorado. The dry washes in the canyon were just that, gullies that were filled only during the spring or with the rain from a large thunderstorm. All water that the families used to cook and wash, and bath -which was rare- had to be transported to Rainbow from outside, except for that which was caught during rain storms from the house roofs in barrels.

Mom said that she and the kids were cautioned to be careful in the dry washes. Flash floods could come along and sweep them away. It would have been a sobering background to live and play in. Look at the narrow canyon in the next figure and imagine that the lazy stream turned into a raging flood that washed away granite boulders in its path.

Vegetables were available in the summer. They were hauled to the mining towns of Watson, Rainbow and Dragon in covered wagons drawn by horses. Out of Jensen, Utah or Vernal, Utah or Fort Duchesne, Utah. After its arrival, the wagon was located in the center of the town and women would go buy what they could afford.

There was one telephone in the town, the kind that was powered by small batteries. To get it to ring on the other end of the line, the user had to turn a crank

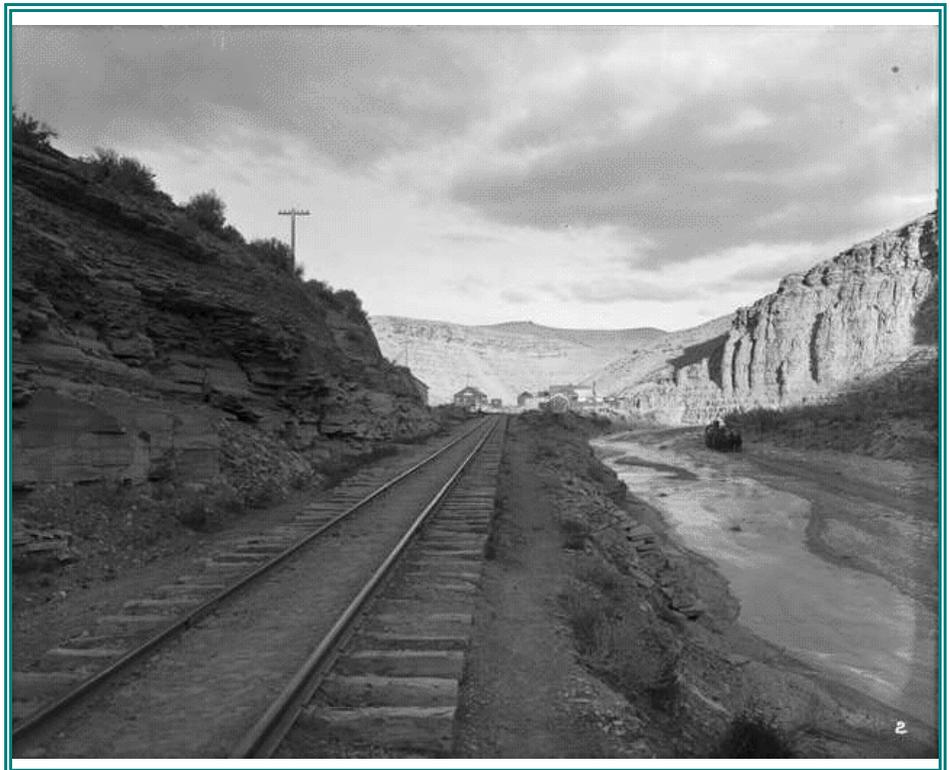


Figure 7 View of Watson with Uintah Railway narrow gauge tracks and a horse-drawn wagon between Evacuation Creek and cliffs.

<http://gowest.coalition.org/cgi-bin/imager?00138206+GB-8206>

which would activate a bell. The receiving party would hear the ring and pick up the phone. This phone went to Jensen and then to Vernal.

Mom said that Thelma, Ross' wife, was the telephone and telegraph operator for the Uintah Railroad. That's how Ross met her in Rainbow. She was stationed at Watson, the town in this photo, but went anywhere along the line that she was needed.

Watson was at the last town on the Uintah Railroad, the end of the line. Note in this photo the narrow canyon and river which flooded in the spring. The river is named "Evacuation Creek" which doubtless reveals something about things that happened in the region years before. The rails and the road were the only access to this desolate forsaken piece of real estate. Recently while I was asking mom about Rainbow, she referred to "The Vac" and startled herself. She said that she hadn't remembered that name since she was a kid, the name she used to refer to this creek.

This was territory that is acknowledged by historians to experience terrible floods particularly during the late summer and fall months, although they could also occur at other times of the year. The Uintah Railway books that I have, Bender (1970) and Polley (1999) contain stories of the catastrophes that happened along the Uintah Railroad at the hands of Mother Nature. Astonishing stories. The Uintah Railroad was one of the most rugged narrow gauge railroads in the world. The worst point was at a spot named "Moro Castle" on account of a small mesa by the tracks.

As the trains neared this point in the railroad, they entered a 66 degree turn which is an extremely sharp turn. Because of the terrain that had to be traversed by the rails at this point, the grade also rose to $7\frac{1}{2}\%$. An incredible turn and grade that most engines could not negotiate. In preparation for coming down from the summit, trains stopped at the top, checked all brakes again and even set some hand brakes to keep the train from running away. Special engines were required to handle the tight turns and angles because most narrow gauge engines would derail or not have the motive power to pull the load. Shay engines built by Lima or Baldwin for logging in the northwest were purchased and served the line well. The drivers were powered by gears instead of the more familiar pistons.

I read a story today in Bender from an engineer recounting his experience in the worst snow storm he ever experienced. He was driving a single Shay engine that day, and in the high passes he encountered a large snow slide that covered the rails. He was stopped flat when he had tried to clear the slide alone, even when he

backed up and hit the snow slide at speed. He returned to the last stop he had passed and after consultation it was decided to link three Shays together, not just two but three, for the extra motive power and weight. The string of three engines got up a head of steam and approached the snow slide. They stopped a short distance from the slide, unhooked the ore train and set its brakes. The plan was to return and re-connect the ore cars after the slide was cleared. To be sure that the three engines would have the power and speed to do the job, they opened their throttles up wide open so that when they hit the slide at full speed, they would, indeed, blow through it. They did. The snow flew aside as they magnificently flew through it. But as they slowed down to return and pick up the train of ore cars, they saw the snow slide collapse again on the rails. Since the snow plow was now on the front of the string of 3 engines, there was no way for them to go back to collect the train. They did the next best thing. They continued on to Atchee or Mack where they could turn around. After their arrival, wiser heads counseled that they wait the night and return in the morning to go through the slide and pick up the ore cars. They waited and returned to the slide in the morning. When they arrived, could not find the ore cars. They pulled out binoculars and after surveying the surrounding terrain, they found the remains of the cars far below the rails. The train had been washed off the tracks during the night by another mammoth snow slide. If they had not blown through the slide, they, too, might have lost their lives in the second slide. Such was the life on the Uintah Railway.

Watson Town

The town of Watson was smaller than the town of Rainbow. The entire town is seen in the two photos on the next page from Bender's excellent Uintah Railway, page 96. Bender's text accompanying these two photos reads:

"Nearly all of the new town of Watson, Utah, is seen in the two photographs on this page. The big building with the sign on the end is the Uintah Railway station and freight house. Just to the left and across the tracks, in the photo below, is the Watson Hotel. The road at the bottom of the narrow canyon in the foreground (below) led up the hill to Rainbow and it was definitely a road that required caution on the part of the drive. On one occasion a traveling salesman's auto was caught and demolished by a flash flood, and another time a Ford roadster driven by the Uintah's agent at

Watson, H. Bair, met a Chrysler head-on in the canyon, completely wrecking both cars and injuring the agent and his son."

(Bender 1971:96)



Figure 8. Road from Rainbow bottom left, looking across Watson



**Figure 9 Watson - Road to Rainbow in top center of image
(Bender. 1971:96)**

The road in Figure 14 is the one that grandpa Merrell took the family on when they went from Rainbow to shop in Watson.

Mom said that going to get groceries "was an adventure." Her dad hitched the horses to the family wagon, the kids piled in and away they went, five miles down the dusty road to Watson along that narrow road into Watson. Pretty darn desolate and barren isn't it. There was one dry goods store -in the center of Figure 15- that sold all the staples they needed, plus vegetables in season. Mom described this trip as "exciting".

Each family had its own root cellar to store root crops through the winter, potatoes, carrots, turnips and bottled food. In December mom's parents started collecting Christmas gifts and didn't have any place in the small crowded house to hide them, so they put them in the cellar and locked it. That was OK with mom because she didn't have to go down to the cellar to get anything. As the baby she was constantly being bossed around, ordered to do things for her older brothers and sisters that they could have done themselves but it was so convenient to have a little hand maiden to wait on them that she kept her busy.

The cellar was also a source of sadness to mom. She loved cats which were hard to get out there in the desert where coyotes would hunt them. She'd been given one kitten that got killed somehow so she begged for another one. Her parents finally got her another and admonished her to take good care of it so it didn't die like her last one did. One day after playing with it, she took it down into the cellar to put it away for safe-keeping. It was an odd place to keep a kitten but Marie was being careful of the kitten. After setting it down on the floor of the cellar, she ran up the few stairs and heaved the cellar shut. The door came down just as the kitten was starting to climb out. It was crushed - so was Marie. She didn't get another kitty.

Grandpa Merrell in the Rainbow Mines

Fuller worked in the Rainbow mine, the Rainbow Vein. He didn't work directly in the mines, rather he handled the horses that hauled the ore cars into and out of the mine and moved freight. Here's a shot of a string of freighters

getting ready to leave Watson at about the time Fuller was working down the road from Rainbow. That's what grandpa Merrell did, work with horses and wagons like this, just like this, at this very same time in this very same area. He had his own wagon but these large wagons are probably company rigs and stock.

This is the road seen above that he took to go to Rainbow with his wagon full of kids to buy groceries. Marie crossed this way many times.

To give you a more dramatic sense of precisely what grandpa did and the setting in which he did it, I've enclosed on the next page a photo that I purchased from the University of Utah.



Figure 10 Freighting outfits outbound from end of railroad at Watson by Evacuation Creek, a water trough, and cliffs.

<http://gowest.coalliance.org/cgi-bin/imager?00138204+GJB-8204>.

**This page is to be landscape of the
Black Dragon Miners**

See the guy in the clean clothes standing between the team of horses? That's the job grandpa Merrell had. You can also see how gilsonite veins run. Narrow, vertical veins that are solid gilsonite. Gilsonite is not a mixture of rock and ore. It is basically pure ore. When gilsonite is excavated, the walls of the mine have to be shored up to prevent cave-ins because there is nothing to support them otherwise.

Mom said that grandpa also had some kind of authority in the town to try and help resolve problems between people. If he couldn't handle it, the problem was kicked up to a supervisor. There was no government in Rainbow so the company hierarchy was the controlling influence.

Rattle snakes were common so kids were cautioned to avoid all snake. There were few things to play with in that desolate country and a snake was an interesting addition to a kid's boring day but they were off limits. I was always fascinated by these tubular slinky things when I saw them on the lawn or in a ditch. The folk lore of the region said that if you killed a snake, it didn't actually die until sunset. Us kids looked at what looked like pretty dead snakes, not able to understand why people said they were not dead, but the people obviously knew about these things so we obviously were just not understanding and left them alone until the next day.

Daily living was typical for the frontier. They cooked with coal brought on the Uintah Railroad from the company mines in Carbonera, Colorado. The coal was for the locomotives as well as domestic use. There was a small electricity generator that was turned on in the evenings for a few hours. The remainder of the time they used kerosene lanterns for light. Coal was also used for heating the homes in the winter.

There were no gardens and no farming because there was not enough water to do that. Outside of the few head of milk cows there were no livestock. All of the water that was used in Rainbow was brought into the town either by wagon or by train. By the time mom was born, the train had taken over the duty entirely and had 3 water cars to haul water in from Atchee, Colorado. At one point Atchee lost one of its two water tanks, so an urgent message was sent out to all towns along the railroad to conserve water!

There were a few milk cows in Rainbow because mom remembers the times they would get fresh milk.

Uintah basin is a prime location for Gilsonite that is not found anywhere else in the world. It was discovered in the late 1800's and is only found in Utah and Colorado with traces in Oregon. It is a hydrocarbon described as "solidified

petroleum". It resembles hardened tar in that it is hard and lightweight, and cleaves like obsidian, though it is much lighter in weight than obsidian. It occurs in vertical veins that generally aren't even a hundred feet wide. A man named Gilson is the one who found uses for the stuff for which reason it was renamed from "uintaite" to "gilsonite". After industry discovered this substance, the price skyrocketed to \$325 per POUND. That explains why businesses were willing to spend large amounts of money to get the ore.

This is an early shot of the Rainbow Vein probably about the time that Fuller moved there with his family. Mule skimmers still played a major role in the mines as you see here. The hauling of gilsonite was done three ways over the life of the mines. Horses were used in 1902 when commercial mining started. Wagons were

supplanted by the Uintah Railroad. However, the spur to Rainbow wasn't constructed for another 15 years so horse-drawn wagons like these were the only mode of transport. Gilsonite was generally transported in large gunny sacks each of which weighed 200+ pounds. In the 1920's, trucks began to replace the train as the preferred method for transporting gilsonite out of the mining town.

In the beginning, the mineral was mined by men standing on the vein swinging pickaxes. The loosened chunks were bagged in gunny sacks and hand-carried to the



Figure 11 Early Mining of Gilsonite Rainbow Mine, Utah

http://content.lib.utah.edu/cgi-bin/pview.exe?CISOROOT=/Photo_Archives&CISOPTR=8766&CISORESTMP=/qbuild/photo_template1.html&CISOVIEWTMP=/qbuild/template2.html

edge of the vein. For this reason the most productive veins were those situated on hills. That allowed the stuff to be rolled down hill. For obvious reasons the depth of the mine was not great. At the edge of the pit the gunny sacks of ore were loaded into horse-drawn wagons for transport.

No explosives could be used in the mining process both because it would have loosened the already unstable walls and because of the extremely high risk of secondary explosions and fires. When a mine caught fire it was abandoned to burn itself out both because there was no water in the desert to attempt to extinguish it and because even if there had been water it would not have extinguished the ferociously burning hydrocarbon.

The other serious problem with gilsonite mines was the constant danger of collapse. The vertical walls of any height in an open pit threatened to cave in on the miners. There were limited resources to shore up the walls and there was no mine safety oversight agency to see that miners were protected. Since the cost of transporting lumber and timbers from Mack or Craig or Vernal or Bonanza or Price was so high, the mine owners doubtless skimmed on the shoring. I don't have documentation to prove that and I am sure that none of them would admit to that, nor would the men who relied on the companies for their livelihood admit it. But it is, nonetheless, true. That is the essence of business: cut costs every place you can to maximize the return on investment.

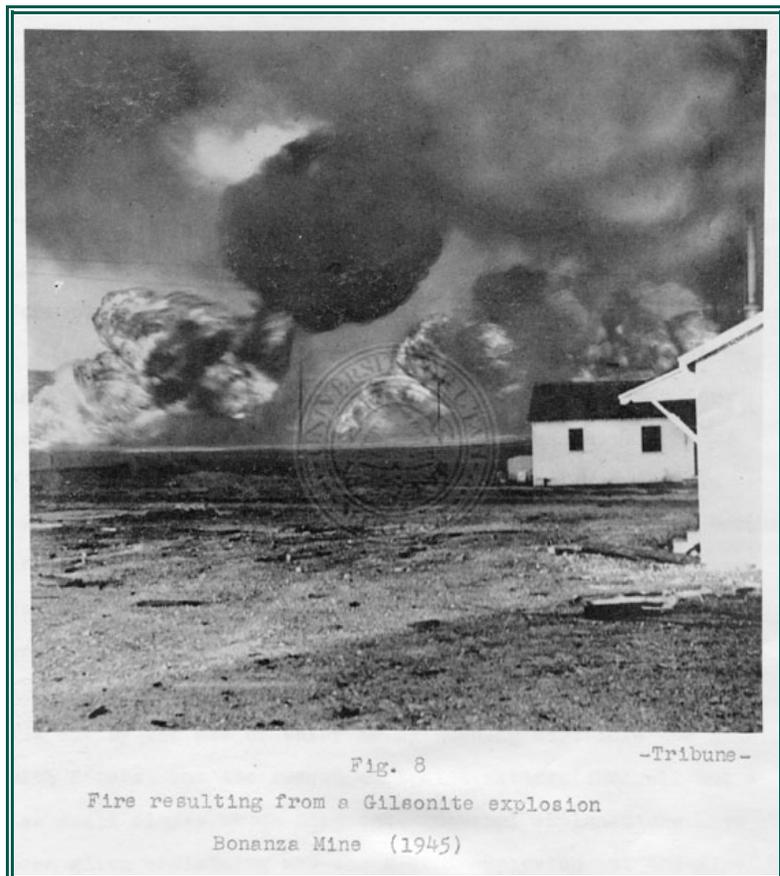


Figure 12 Bonanza fire when I was 3 years old

The other major threat was the extremely high risk of explosion. The danger arises from the dust that is produced during the mining process. Virtually any dust, e.g. dust in empty grain storage silos, when at the right concentration in air can be ignited. But gilsonite itself is flammable so gilsonite dust is more likely to be ignited. The resulting fire would ignite the vein of gilsonite and could not be extinguished. Any men in the wrong place when that happened were doomed.

The following pages contain photos of mom at various ages in Rainbow, i.e. from the age of 2 to the age of 7-8.

Marie in Rainbow

This is Marie with Grant who is two years older than she is and Delroy who is 2 years younger than she is. They're playing in the front of their house in the open central area of Rainbow as you can tell by the row of houses with the sage brush-spotted hill in the background. There was no pavement, no sidewalks and few toys or things to play with. Kids just made up things to do.

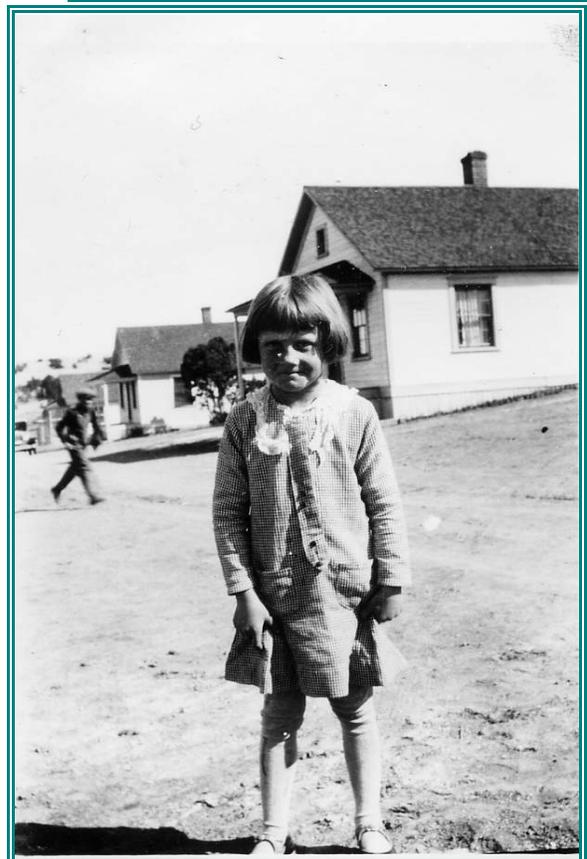


This image shows her in the same outfit, probably taken the same day, with Grant and another kid that must be a neighbor. He's about Grant's age, doesn't look like Delroy in the above photo and doesn't look like Leo who was 2 years older. He must have been a neighbor who wandered over for the occasion. They are making mud pies with water that had to be hand-carried from the central hydrant in the camp. Their tools are coal shovels. There's a wagon in the background.



She appears to be dressed in her Sunday-go-to-meetin' dress here. Some guy is running in the background.

I'm not sure what the difference is between the photo with a sawed log cabin and the photos with houses with white siding. Perhaps the siding was not applied to all sides of the houses, or in the photo with the log cabin they are playing in front of someone else's home.



Marie looks to be around 6 years old and is holding her baby doll in the winter behind someone's car that has chains on. That's Delroy, her baby brother, the only sibling who was younger than she was. The doll and snow suggest this might have been around Christmas time when someone came from Jensen or Naples to visit with presents.



TomBoy

Mom was a tomboy, a real spit-in-your-eye, in-your-face tomboy. Now that I suggest this to you, you will draw the same conclusion as you think of the way she lived but there is also persuasive evidence from Rainbow, for example, this photo. Some one is firmly holding her for this photo.

She's wearing her go-to-school outfit of a jacket, white shirt, tie, skirt, stockings and shoes but that's the only regulation thing she's doing. Otherwise, she looks like she's been in a brawl somewhere. Even her attitude shows that she isn't willingly taking time out of her day to have this photo, a sort of challenging look at the camera, not daring to say what she's thinking, but thinking it nonetheless. Her shoes are scuffed when I suspect grandma polished them regularly, her stockings are dirty, her tie is pulled loose and askew and the bottom 6 inches of her skirt are completely covered with dirt. It's almost white. She has obviously been playing in the desert with other kids, completely forgetting -or choosing to forget- that she should go home after school and change first into everyday clothes. The result is obvious and proves the point: she was a tomboy.

I actually hadn't realized that before. I'm 60 and it startles me to realize that I didn't understand this about my mom, but I didn't. During my life with her, she was a proper sort of lady in demeanor and dress. However, I look back and see things that suggested that she was a tomboy but I didn't understand. Those things actually irritated me and perhaps they wouldn't have done so had I understood where she was coming from.

For example, I remember in Boston how should would grab an arm around my neck, pull me down a bit, and lightly punch me in the stomach in front of some of her friends in the Cambridge Branch, a sort of sophisticated outfit of Harvard and



MIT students who tried to not show their country roots. I didn't like that, I resented it, but what was a kid to do. So I put up with it. And I tried to remember not to get too close to her when she might try to show off in front of her friends. I don't really know even now what the point of that mock toughness, that playfulness was, because it didn't fit with the rest of my experience of her. She tended in the rest of her life to be sober and serious. I think it was the dissonance between the two modes that irritated me.

You can see the same unwillingness to stand still for her photo in other photos. When I told her yesterday that I had discovered that she had been a tomboy, she instantly challenged me, "What do you mean I "was"?!". She added, "I still am!" She is. When you see the photos of her cooking on the Yukon or fishing in Resurrection Bay, you'll see the proof.

Today when I brought the topic up with her again, she had another flash of memory. She said that she just remembered that if she woke up in the morning before Delroy, her younger brother, she would put on his overalls. That's tomboyishness, isn't it. I asked her what her mom did about that and she said she didn't remember but "Delroy was sure bent out of shape."

Her new memories last night involved friends, snakes and the mines. I asked her who she played with because one of the photos shows her with a kid I can't identify who I know was not of her family. She said she didn't specifically remember them but she knew that her mom didn't want her to play with most of the kids. "You know how rough some of them could be in a mining camp." I agreed. The odd thing about her comments about friends was the distinction she drew between what she was allowed to do and what her older brothers were allowed to do. She said that her parents weren't so tough on her older brothers but she guessed that was because they could take care of themselves. That may be true and if that's the basis for the judgment about who was allowed to play with anyone, it is not a judgment based on values, not a judgment based on a fear of a kid learning bad habits. But I think it was.

She recalled how she'd play around the place and sometimes would encounter snakes. There wasn't much to play with so they were always interesting. Her mother had told her to never play with snakes but she said she liked to play with them. She would pick up any snake she found, assuming that they were probably water snakes -not likely where she lived- or garter snakes -more possible. I asked if she could tell the difference back then between a rattlesnake and harmless snake and she said she couldn't. But she would pick them up anyway, and would

wear them around her neck. Her mom hated it when she brought them home that way.

All little kids were warned about not going up to the mine shafts. They were dangerous and kids could fall in and be killed or rocks could fall on them. She said that she knew what her mom said but that when she could get away with it, she would sneak up to the mines anyway with some other kids. They would go just for the thrill of looking into the dark mines and probably for the thrill of doing something they were forbidden to do. I love it that she did that. She was a tomboy in all respects.

That's part of the reason that her first motorcycle ride with dad didn't scare her. She said that when dad commented to Mable, upon his return from the first ride, that Marie wasn't scared at all, that Marie didn't hang onto him like Mable did, Mable retorted, "Oh, she didn't tell you that she has older brothers who have motorcycles and so she's used to them!" The funny thing is that Mable, too, had those older brothers and Mable was afraid of motorcycle rides - or she took advantage of the rides to squeeze Alvin.

Whatever, mom was a tomboy and loved doing wild things. That's why she was so at home in Alaska and camping and doing things outdoors. Nothing made her squeamish. That's why she laughed at her mother in Naples in 1953 when grandma decided she wasn't going to reach into my pants pockets any more before putting them into the washing machine. She had found a dead frog or something squishy the week before and hated whatever it was. Her remedy was effective. She'd lay my pants on the floor, and then carefully step on all of the pockets to kill whatever was in them, and if she felt anything, to gingerly hold the pants upside down and empty the pocket from the inside. Mom thought that was funny and silly. Because she, not grandma, was a tomboy.

She's got the same outfit on again but the skirt is clean this time. No way to play in the dirt when it's covered with snow. But her necktie is askew again. She must have been a rambunctious kid. The siblings are:

Delroy to her right, with Ray, Leo and Grant in back, left to right.

No one has a coat on. Grant and Leo are wearing those neat hand-knit sweaters.



It is obvious from the photos that the family did return to visit their farm in Naples. In this photo mom is the same age as in the preceding shot and is wearing the same outfit. This time she's got a dark shirt under the jacket and everything is clean. She's wearing ankle boots and grins at the camera again, as if she really wanted to get away but condescended to allow the adult get another photo. The shrubs and plants in the background are on the north fence line where the irrigation ditch runs.



This photo of mom with Mable, Pearl and Bessie, was apparently taken on the same day as the previous photo because mom is the same age wearing the same outfit. This image startled me a great deal. I had not imagined the difference in age between mom and all three of her sisters. She had spoken of feeling like all of her siblings ordered her around as their handmaiden but I hadn't understood how likely that was. Poor little Marie. She was patronize, condescended to and ordered around. No wonder she left home and never returned.

This image would have been taken on the west end of their property. It's difficult to see but in the distant background you can see the old Naples School that had a central tower with a flagpole. It was taken down many years ago but it stood while I was a little kid in the area. Grandpa and Grandma's little country store was just a few hundred feet north of it.

