

Earl's Diary - Saturday - March 1, 2014

Dear Loyal Readers, the ones I know about, and the ones I don't know about:

Here I am at Dead Horse Ranch State Park. It rained last night! Boy, did it rain! The Peanut did well in repulsing the wind and rain. This morning it's cloudy and drizzly. The clouds are obscuring the mountains around the Verde Valley.

Last night the weather was so clear before the rain descended upon us that from my camping spot I could see the lights of Cottonwood below me. To the right side the lights of Jerome were perched on the hillside. I can hardly wait to see if I can obtain a photo of these sights. More on that later.

Dead Horse Ranch - Funny name for a park? Yep! The park brochure gives that information: "The Ireys family came to Arizona from Minnesota looking to buy a ranch in the late 1940's. At one of the ranches they discovered a large dead horse lying by the road. After two days of viewing ranches, Dad Ireys asked the kids which ranch they liked the best. The kids said, "the one with the dead horse, Dad!" The Ireys family chose the name Dead Horse Ranch and later, in 1973, when Arizona State Parks acquired the park, the Ireys made retaining the name a condition of sale."

The developed portion of Dead Horse Ranch State Park covers 423 acres. The 3,300 foot elevation accounts for the mild temperatures that are ideal for camping, mountain biking in the Coconino National Forest, hiking along the Verde River, canoeing, picnicking, fishing, or just wading in the cool water.



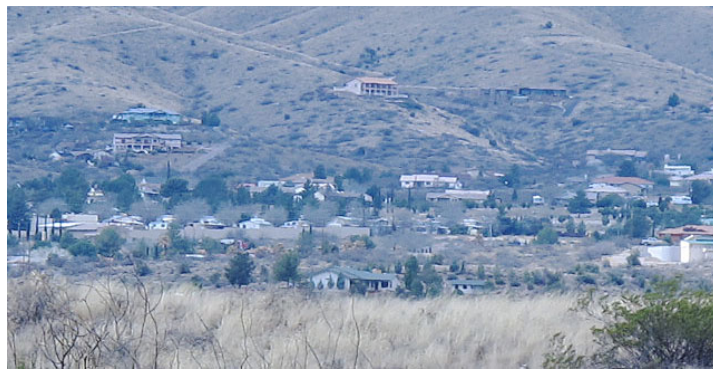
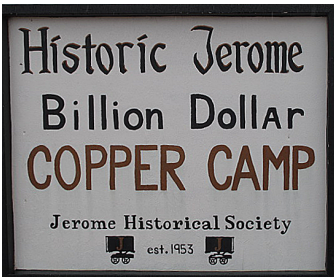
Site #102, Dead Horse Ranch State Park

Looking down on the cloud covered Verde Valley during the rain

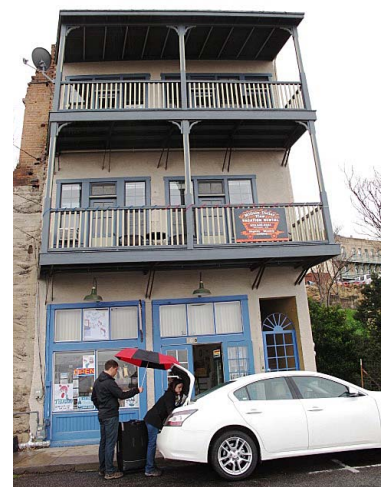


This afternoon it was still trying to rain. We still wanted to see the town of Jerome - so off we went - in spite of the rain. When we got there, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Jerome is literally built on the side of a mountain! There were so many interesting photo shots that I couldn't begin to shoot them all. We braved the elements and went for a short walk through the main streets.

This is Jerome perched on the mountainside (elevation 5,000 feet) as seen from my camping spot (3,300 feet).



It was rainy and drizzly so hard to get clear shots.



Your history lesson for today: Jerome was built on Cleopatra Hill on top of what was the largest copper mine in Arizona -- it produced an astonishing three million pounds of copper per month.

Jerome's modern history began in 1876 when three prospectors staked claims on rich copper deposits. They sold out to a group which formed the United Verde Copper Company in 1883. The resultant mining camp of board and canvas shacks was named in honor of Eugene Jerome, the venture's principal backer. Hopes for the enterprise ran high, but the costs of operating, especially for transportation, outstripped profits, and the company folded in less than two years.

It took the vision and vast financial resources of a new owner, William A. Clark, to bring in a narrow gauge railroad and reduce freight costs. By the early 20th century, the United Verde was the largest producing copper mine in the Arizona Territory. Jerome was becoming a frame and brick town, and could boast two churches, an opera house, a school and several civic buildings.

In 1912, James S. Douglas purchased and began development of the Little Daisy Mine. By 1916, Jerome had two bonanza mines. Copper production peaked in 1929, but the Depression and low grade ore deposits reversed the fortunes of the town. The Little Daisy shut down in 1938. Phelps Dodge took over the United Verde in 1935, but loss of profits brought the operation and Jerome's mining days to an end in 1953.

After "King Copper" left town, the population went from a peak of 15,000 in the 20's, to some 50 persons in the late 50's. Within five years of the mine's closing, Jerome became the largest ghost town in America.

Jerome's personality has changed dramatically in the past 30 years. Once a thriving mining camp between the late-1880's and early 1950's, Jerome is now a bustling tourist magnet and artistic community of about 480.



One narrow space between two buildings was occupied by ???



Three levels of buildings



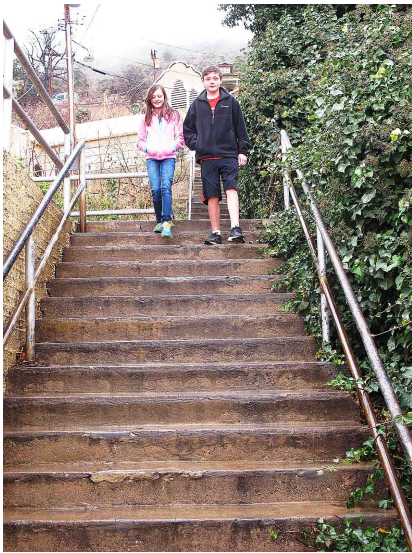
One way streets on Main Street





My thoughts: Where did all these people come from? This must be a typical tourist trap town. Cars and more cars everywhere! Fortunately when we visited a couple of shops my Impulse Buying Filter was solidly engaged!

Buildings on the hillside. There doesn't seem to be any level areas!



Kate and Dalton were exploring the stairway that led up to the next street level.



By the time we left, the streets were wet - and so were we! That didn't dissuade the hoards of tourists still flocking to town. The streets were still busy with people in and out of eating establishments and artsy/craft shops. By this time I knew it was time for us to leave!

More about the area: Fires ravaged the clapboard town again and again. Between 1894 and 1899, four disastrous fires destroyed large sections of the town. By 1918, underground mining was augmented by Arizona's first open pit mine after an uncontrollable fire had erupted in one of the tunnels. The fire burned for over 20 years.

In the late 1930's, an enormous charge of dynamite was set off - equal to six freight car loads - and the surface began to shift. Tunnels under the town, some as deep as 4,800 feet below the surface, began to crack. The shifting, combined with the 30 degree incline of the mountainside, pulled a number of buildings down the slope. There are still 88 miles of tunnels under the town, and there are four geological faults in the area.

When we got back to our campsite we spotted some very unusual vehicles. One person (who shall remain anonymous) remarked that they looked just like modded (modified) garbage trucks. Here, see what you think.



Not only was there one, there was three of them!!!

I also spied a rather unusual R-Pod. It had a slide-out!



Tonight we are getting a steady rain. Did we get rain again! Oh yes! It rained steadily for at least 3 hours. I went to bed with the pitter patter on the roof. Much later, the rain stopped with only a few intermittent showers coming down the rest of the night.

What an exciting day -weather wise. Thanks for coming along with me today. Bye for now - - Earl