

RUBY

FROM ITS HEYDAY IN THE 1930's TO GHOST TOWN

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Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon

PREFACE

This paper is one of three papers prepared for the Spring 2002 New Mexico–Arizona Joint History Convention special session: “Ruby, Arizona: From Four Star Mining Camp to Ghost Town.” This first paper, “Montana Camp: Gold and Silver Mining at the Montana Mine in the Arizona Territory Borderland,” covers the history of the Montana mine from the mid 1800’s to 1912, when Montana Camp was renamed Ruby. The second paper, “Ruby: The Montana Mine Becomes the Largest Producer of Lead and Zinc in the State of Arizona,” covers the period from 1912 to the present. This paper, the third of the group, “Ruby: From Its Heyday in the 1930’s to Ghost Town,” covers the author’s recollections of her life in Ruby in the 1930’s and a description of today’s ghost town.

These papers on Ruby are one product of continuing research by the authors on the history of mining in Southern Arizona, primarily in Santa Cruz County’s Oro Blanco region. Several major sources of information on early mining records and activities should be mentioned. These include the State of Arizona, Department of Library, Archives and Public Records; Pima County Recorder’s Office; Santa Cruz County Recorder’s Office; Santa Cruz County Assessor’s Office; and microfilm records of the *Arizona Daily Star* and *Arizona Daily Citizen* at the Arizona Historical Society. The authors have spent literally hundreds of hours compiling a detailed history of Oro Blanco mining from these sources.

In this paper, Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon shares part of her extensive private collection of photographs and data on Ruby. Much of this material came from Ms. Cahoon’s parents, who were very interested in preserving the history of Ruby. Ms. Cahoon also obtained photos, documents, and oral histories from other former Ruby residents and local historians.

RUBY: FROM ITS HEYDAY IN THE 1930's TO GHOST TOWN

Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon was born in 1929 and lived in Ruby from then until 1938. During that period the Montana Mine Group, owned and operated by the Eagle-Picher Lead Company, became the largest producer of lead and zinc in Arizona. Ruby's population ballooned from fewer than 100 people to about 1,200 people. Ms. Cahoon's father, Walter Pfrimmer, was a mining engineer at the Montana and was responsible for improving the mining and mill operation, and led the project to pipe water from the Santa Cruz River to Ruby.

This paper covers the Cahoon's account of life in Ruby during its lead and zinc mining heyday. The story includes a description of Ms. Cahoon's father's background and the water line project; the mining camp; the Pfrimmer home; Ruby's mercantile, hospital, school, and confectionary; recreation opportunities; church services; transportation; law and order; and memorable natural events. The paper concludes with Ms. Cahoon's feelings on leaving Ruby, a Pfrimmer family postscript, and a description of the ghost town that Ruby has become.

The Montana mine was first worked for gold and silver by Spanish prospectors, starting in the mid 1740's, and by Americans, from the mid 1850's to about the time Arizona became a state in 1912. Montana Camp was renamed Ruby in 1912 and the transition to lead and zinc mining at the Montana mine began. (1)

Over the next 10-15 years, several mining companies made unsuccessful attempts to develop and operate the mine for lead and zinc production. In 1926, the Eagle-Picher Lead Company of Joplin, Missouri took an option on the Montana mine and then purchased the mine in 1927 from prominent Tucson merchant Louis Zeckendorf. The following 14 years were the Montana mine's heyday, when lead and zinc mining boomed. (2)

My Dad, Walter Pfrimmer, Comes to Ruby

Walter S. Pfrimmer, my father, came to Ruby in 1926, driving his gray Model A Ford Coupe. At the time he was 36 years old and engaged to my mother, Natalia Allison 35, a Tucson native. My father was born in the southern Indiana farming community of Corydon. He graduated from the Colorado School of Mines and, before coming to Ruby, worked for several years in the western United States and Mexico.

Dad was hired by Eagle-Picher to design, update, and enlarge the Montana's mill and mining operations. This project lasted two years. A major challenge became constructing a concentrator at the mill that would process four hundred tons of ore daily.

Dad and mom were married at Holy Family Church, Tucson, on April 17, 1928.

As Ruby's population grew with the expansion of mining operations, the need for dependable drinking water became critical. In the fall of 1928, Dad received an assignment to design the route and then build a four-inch diameter pipeline to bring water from the Santa Cruz River, 17 miles away, through the Atascosa Mountains, into the isolated mining camp. He spent day after day hiking through the rugged terrain, camping and mapping as he went. When the route was finalized, construction of the pipeline began.



*My dad, Walter Pfrimmer, standing next to a connection joint on the new water pipeline.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection, 1929)*

The pipeline project was completed early in the year 1930. After the 17-mile trip from the Santa Cruz River, the water was deposited in a 5,000-gallon tank south of the mill. (3) No longer was it necessary for residents to haul vessels of water from local springs. Now, Ruby residents had cold running water in their homes. Life was greatly simplified.

The Ruby I Remember – 1930's

I was born in Tucson, Arizona in 1929, before medical facilities became available in Ruby, but was soon brought to Ruby, where I lived until 1938. So I was there when both the mining and Ruby's population took off! (4)

Ruby is situated in a lovely spot in southern Arizona, 70 miles southwest of Tucson and four miles north of the border with Mexico. The old mining camp is located at an elevation of about 4,200 feet, amongst beautiful rolling hills and rugged canyons, near the base of massive Montana Peak, elevation 5,370 feet.

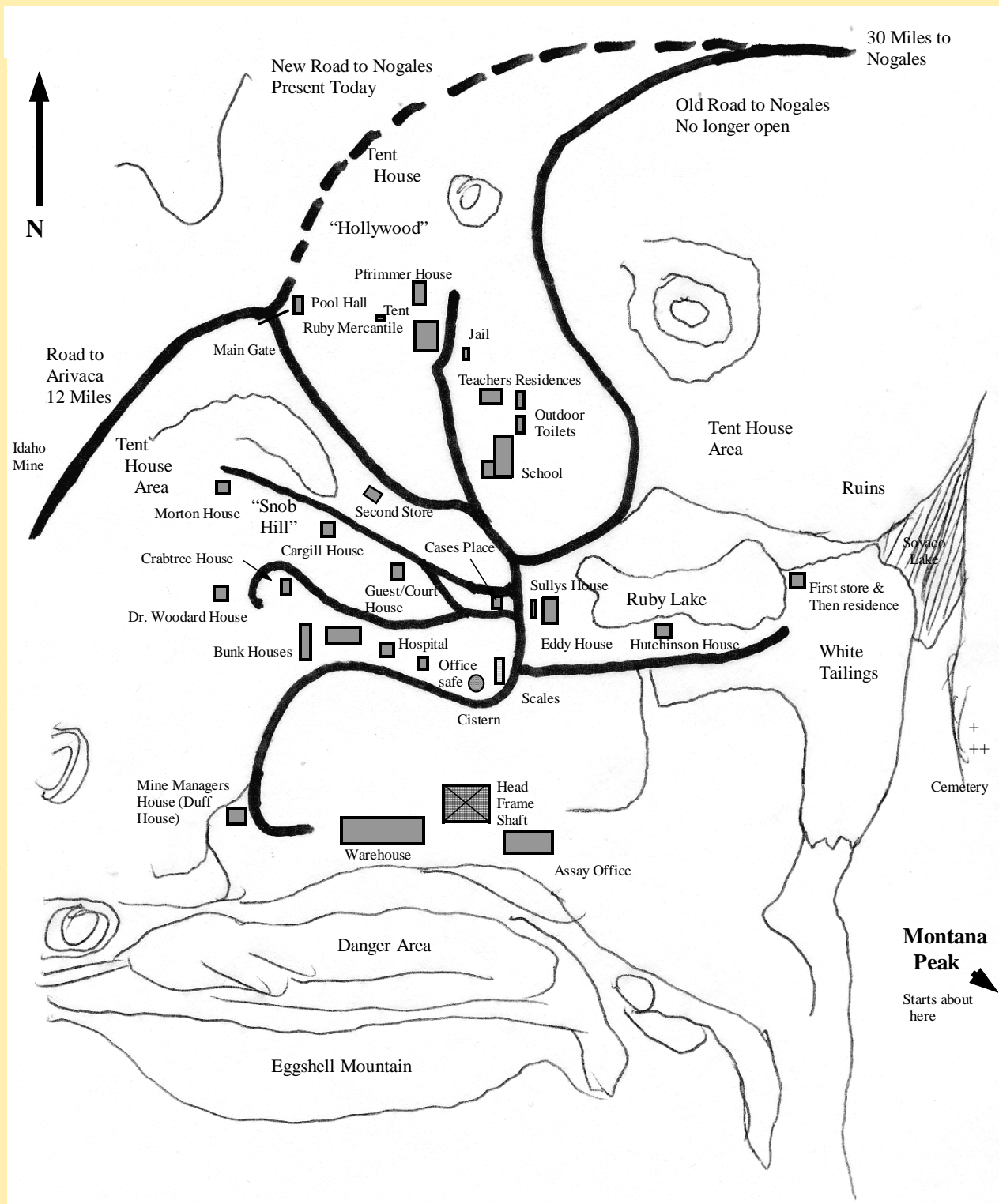
Ruby reached its full development in the mid to late 1930's, with mining operations, mining camp buildings,

and personal residences spread over 300 acres. By the late 1930's, Ruby's population had grown from fewer than a hundred people to about 1,200 people! Ruby had a hospital, an eight-grade school, a confectionary, a general store with a gas station, a pool hall, and a jail.

Ruby was laid out on the hills surrounding Ruby Lake. Up against a good-sized hill on the south end of the camp, was the Montana's mine pad with headframe and shaft, the mill to process the ore, the assay office, and the warehouse. A large area of snow-white mine tailings, a byproduct of the mining, was situated southeast of the Lake. Living accommodations for the people of Ruby, spread over the surrounding hills, included adobe and/or lumber homes, boarding houses, bunkhouses, prefabricated buildings called "Ronstadt" houses, and because of the rapidly expanding population, tents.



*This bird's eye view of Ruby in the late 1930's looks across the mining camp to the southwest.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)*



*The mining camp, Ruby, Arizona, was laid out on the hills surrounding Ruby Lake.
 (Map drawn by Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon and Al Ring, 2001)*

One of the “residential” areas on the west side of the camp was called “Snob Hill.” Another area, where we lived, was called “Hollywood.” (I don’t know the reason for the name “Hollywood,” but I’m sure “Snob Hill” was named for the fact that the General Manager of the mine lived there.) Yards were planted and cared for, some with vegetables and flowers. Many people raised yerba buena (mint).

Ruby was a company town, an “Eagle-Picher” town.” All homes and other buildings were owned by the company. No one owned his own home. Rent was \$2.50 to \$10 per month, including water and electricity, depending on the size of the home.

My Home in Ruby

The Pfrimmer home was a three-room adobe building with a large storeroom built of lumber on the northeast end. Our home was located behind the general store, called the Ruby Mercantile. Adobe bricks for our home were made on site, but were a different color than those made elsewhere for other buildings in the mining camp. The earth used for our place was a lighter brown.

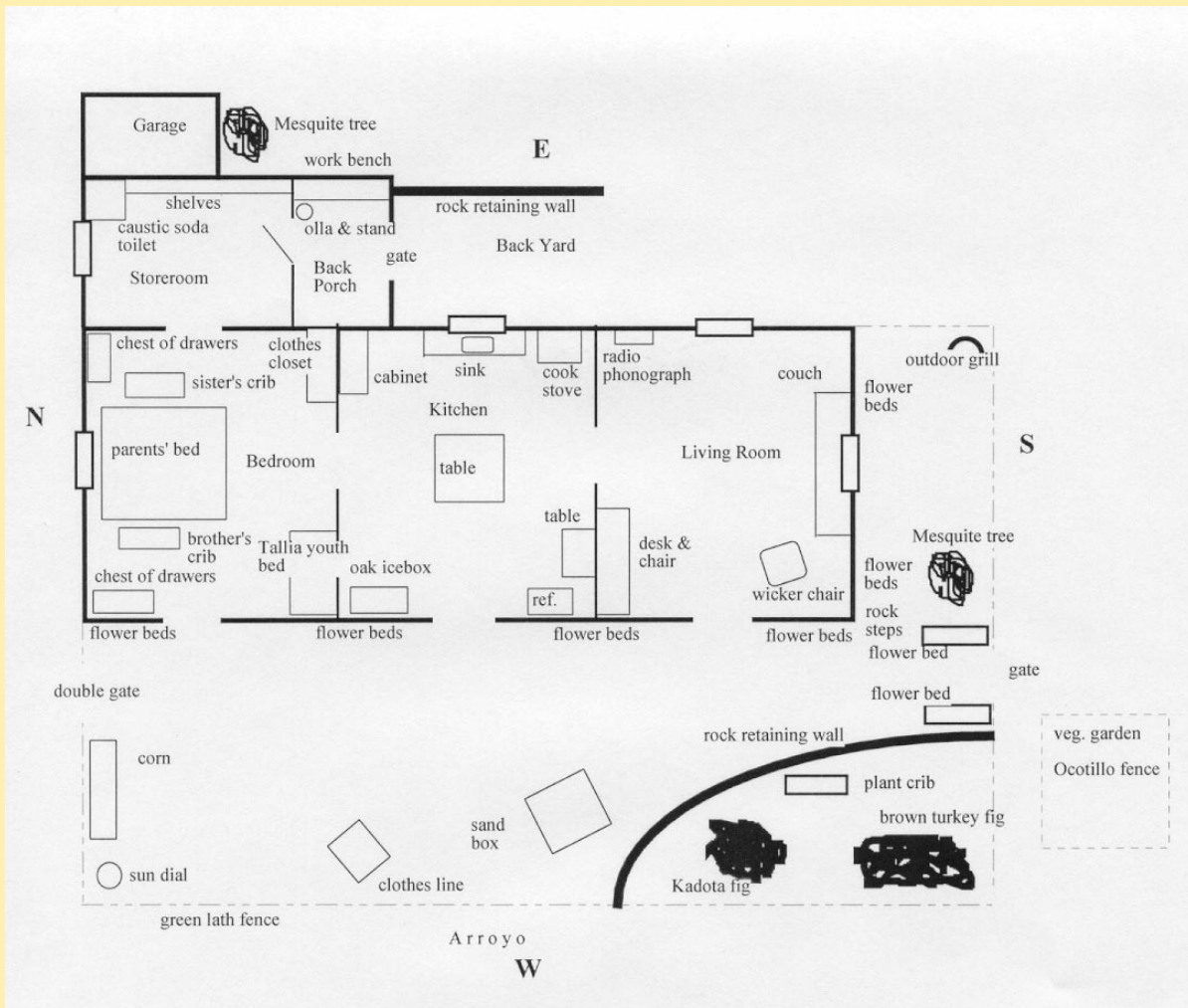
Both Mom and Dad had been raised in much more lavish surroundings, compared to our Ruby home. Nevertheless, neither complained and were happy where we lived. Of course, we children weren’t aware of anything different.



Our Ruby home was a three-room adobe structure with a large storeroom built of lumber.
(Photo by my sister, Mary Pfrimmer Walling, 1967. Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)

Dad built several pieces of furniture by hand before electricity had been wired into homes. He did this in his few “off” hours while living in Ruby before he was married. Some of the pieces included a desk for the living room, a kitchen table, a kitchen cabinet and a bedroom closet.

Except for the splintery wooden floor in the storeroom, all of the floors were concrete. The kitchen and bedroom floors were covered with colorful area linoleum.



*This floor plan of our home shows the layout of the rooms and the home's furnishings.
(Drawing by Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon and Al Ring, 2001)*

The living room was nicely furnished with a “raffia” rug, a day bed that not only served as a couch, but also opened up for overnight visitors. A straight wicker chair and matching rocker provided comfortable seating. We children also had a small wicker rocker, given to us by an aunt and uncle. Except for the storeroom, where all the walls were bare wood, the walls throughout the rest of the house had been calcimined (5) ivory in the living room and bedroom and very light peach in the kitchen. In the northeast corner of the living room was a combination record-cabinet and table that Dad had built. On top of this was a wind-up Victrola. The Victrola was later replaced with a combination radio-phonograph purchased in Nogales. Both the desk and the radio-phonograph remain in the family. Mother made curtains by hand for all of the windows in our home. Although the living room was ready to accommodate visitors, most company gathered at the ivory-with-brown-trimmed kitchen table. The kitchen cabinet stood in the northeast corner. It contained cupboards and drawers and was light blue with ivory trim. Our oak icebox was initially in the northwest corner.

Six diesel Fairbanks-Morse engines furnished electricity for the mill, the mine, the store, Dr. Woodard’s office and hospital, and for the school. In 1934, engine number four was designated to supply electricity to the camp

homes. Some residents began purchasing electrical appliances then. The Pfrimmers bought a Kelvinator refrigerator, a featherweight Singer sewing machine, and a Singer vacuum. Prior to having electricity in our homes, residents used kerosene lamps to provide light.



*These are some of my favorite family photos from Ruby.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)*

Other Living Accommodations

Boarding Houses

Mr. and Mrs. E. Albert Attebury arrived in the mining camp in 1927. Mr. Attebury had been sent by Eagle-Picher to help with remodeling the mill. A white-stuccoed adobe building, located just north of the mine pad and south of the hospital, became the Ruby Boarding House. Operated by Mrs. Attebury, it was here that many of the single employees, who resided in bunkhouses, ate their meals.



*Ruby residents surround Mr. and Mrs. Attebury (kneeling).
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)*

Harvey and Minnie Parrish replaced the Atteburys at the boarding house in 1935 or 1936. Harvey Parrish also drove a small school bus and served as Justice of the Peace.

An additional boarding house was across Ruby Lake. It was managed by a Ramona Badilla, who served three meals each day for the bachelors. Nineteen year-old (at the time) Leo Leal assured me that he ate very well for a mere fifty cents daily! Staples were frijoles and tortillas. Ramona prepared brown-bag lunches to sustain employees through the lunch hour and for the remainder of the workday.

Bunkhouses

Two large rectangular-shaped adobe bunkhouses, north of the mine pad, had been built in the late teens or early nineteen twenties. These housed the bachelors who worked at the mill and the mine. These very old structures still display the lovely bronze color of the earth from which the adobe bricks were made. Galvanized iron roofs glistened as a protector for the buildings.

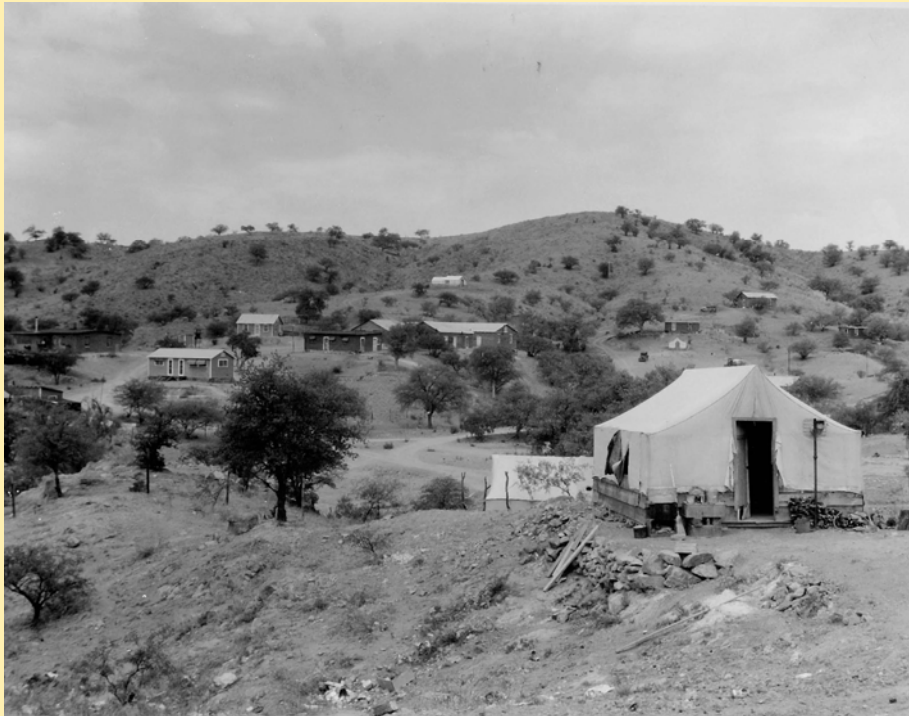
Tents

With the news of the increase in job availability, the population of the camp began to explode. Suddenly, there was a critical need for additional housing. Eagle-Picher ordered that tents would be the solution. A “new” industry was developed. Over a hundred very large tents were constructed all over Ruby, east of the school, on the hills above the tailings, on “Snob Hill,” and in “Hollywood.”

A tent foundation of unpainted lumber rose from the ground to approximately three feet. Steps of lumber led to the outside landing, as well as to the wooden flooring inside. The door was wood. From the wooden sides,

screen surrounded the four sides of the structure. Outside, heavy off-white canvas covered the screen and also served as the ceiling of the building. Rectangular-shaped frames on the two long sides of the tent were also covered with the canvas and served as window openings. Later tents had galvanized iron roofs. The tents were about thirty feet long and twelve feet wide.

Wood stoves were used for cooking as well as for heating. For the most part, residents curtained off a sleeping area. Double tents became residences for some of the larger families. For double tents, one tent would be placed behind the other, with an enclosed “breezeway” between. Usually, this area was used for storage.



Tents were the solution to Ruby's population explosion.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)

Ruby Mercantile

The most famous building in Ruby was the general store, which we called the Ruby Mercantile. In 1920, the store's proprietors, brothers Alexander and John Frasier, were killed in a robbery by Mexican bandits. Then in 1921, tragedy struck again, when the new proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Pearson, were also killed by Mexican bandits, in a second robbery at the store. (6)

To the left of the store in the circa 1920 photo below is the adobe building that was to become the Pfrimmer home in the late 1920's and the 1930's. Just to the left of the house is another adobe structure that served as a combination garage and barn. The people who managed the store parked their automobile in this garage. A room where ice was made protrudes out to the left foreground of the store. A gas pump can be seen at the right foreground of the store. The store's extreme right window area is where the Ruby Post Office was.

The Mercantile sold all kinds of goods. Vegetables were displayed in big containers in the center of the store. Canned goods filled the shelves along the walls. I remember a hanging scale in the middle of the store and an elaborate meat market, with a walk-in refrigerator. People lined up their purchases, to pay for them, on oak counters, with glass display-case fronts. When you entered the store, you were greeted by one of the proprietors to help you shop, and also the strong odor of ammonia used in the ice making process.

I remember when my sister Mary was born at home in Ruby in 1933, my Dad spirited me away to the store managers' living quarters in the back of the Mercantile, to keep me away.

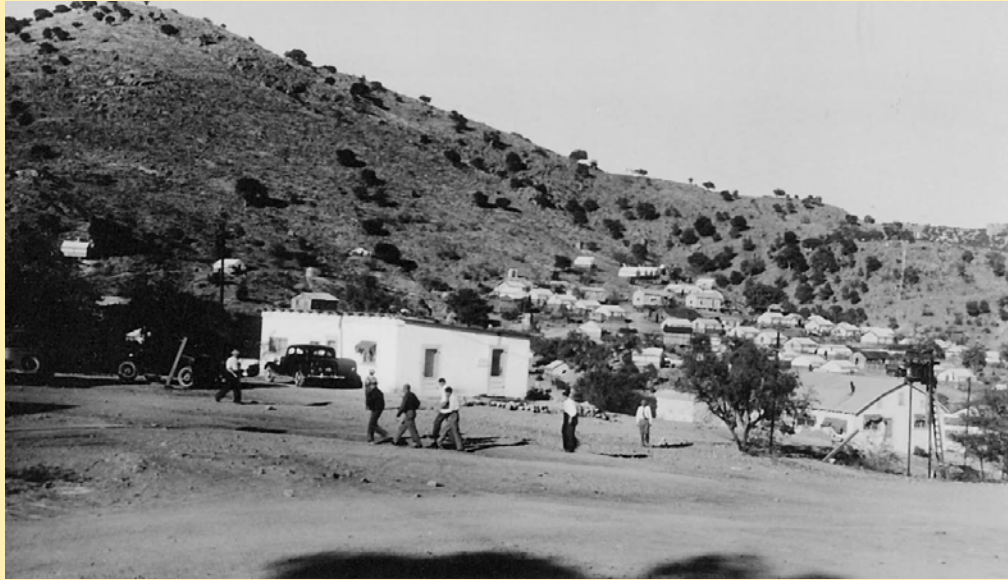


*The general store (right center), called the Ruby Mercantile in the 1930's, was the scene of gruesome murders in 1920 and 1921.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection, circa 1920)*

Health Care

Dr. Julius H. Woodward's office and hospital were just east of the bunkhouses. They were constructed of the same distinct bronze adobe material. The walls were later stuccoed white, inside and out. This building consisted of a waiting room, an examining room, a room where surgeries were performed, and another partitioned area where hospitalized patients recovered. Hospital floors throughout were concrete.

No appointments were necessary to see Dr. Woodard. Patients sat on long white benches while waiting their turn. Upon entering the waiting room from the outside, patients were met with the sharp, heavy odor of ether. Eight windows on the outside walls allowed for ventilation. Dr. Woodard's wife, Pauline, was his nurse. Later a diesel mechanic and his wife, Norman "Red" and Anna Worth, settled in Ruby. Mrs. Worth was also nurse and helped Dr. Woodard at the office and hospital.



*Ruby's hospital was run by the well-respected Dr. Julius Woodard.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection, 1935)*

Dr. and Mrs. Woodard were an attractive childless couple. Dr. Woodard was a tall, husky man with tight wavy blonde hair. As a tubercular patient, Dr. Woodard had been sent west to Tucson and then on to Ruby to find a warmer, drier climate than his hometown Joplin, Missouri. Now cured, Eagle-Picher hired this soft-spoken, knowledgeable, compassionate, and well-respected physician in 1930 to run Ruby's hospital. He healed the sick, delivered babies, performed surgery, set broken bones, and administered anesthesia. He was reportedly the last physician in Arizona to be licensed in multiple fields of medicine. (7)

In April 1937, this beloved doctor attended a ten year-old boy who nearly drowned in Ruby Lake, as well as the three boys who did not survive that Ruby tragedy.

Schooling

In the early days of the isolated Ruby settlement, children had to travel south about two and a half miles to the original Oro Blanco settlement for their education. Years later, Ruby needed a school of its own. About the same time, probably about 1915, an adobe general store in "new" Oro Blanco, about four-and-a-half miles west northwest of Ruby, was being dismantled. Since he owned a large amount of Oro Blanco property, Art Noon was approached about the possibility of using some of the remaining adobe bricks, still in good condition, for Ruby's new school building. Permission granted! (8) These adobe bricks, along with those made on site in Ruby, were used to build the first room of the Ruby school. The entrance door to this classroom faced south with windows on each side of the door.



*This Ruby school was expanded to accommodate eight grades and as many as 150 students.
(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)*

The second room, north of the original, was built of lumber. This was the my first and second grade room. Miss Edith Olson was our teacher. Each year we were packed in, seated on long benches, at equally long tables. First grade occupied one side of the room, with an aisle down the center, and the second grade on the other side.

Miss Olson should have been nominated for “sainthood” for accepting such a large group of young, wiggling school-age children, some of whom were non-English speakers. By today’s standards classrooms were austere. Only a few first graders knew how to count, knew their alphabet, or knew how to print their names. The school day began at 9:00 am with the sound of the school bell. Students lined up near the door of their respective rooms. After we students entered the room, roll call was taken. We then stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance and to sing:

“Good morning to you.
Good morning to you.
We’re all in our places
With sun-shiny faces.
Oh, this is the way
To start a new day.”

We were then seated. The first grade practiced printing the alphabet and numbers while the second graders learned words with Miss Olson. Tablet paper and “penny” pencils were distributed, as were books. Recesses at 10:00 am and 2:30 pm were about 20 minutes long. With the sound of the noon whistle at the mine, it was lunch-time, until 1:00 pm. Some children, who lived close-by, walked home for lunch, while those who lived farther away, brought their lunch to school.

I lived close-by, so I went home for lunch.

With another blast of the whistle at 4:00 pm, school was dismissed, and mill and mine employees had finished their shift.

Because of the influx of families, Ruby residents realized that a third schoolroom, and possibly a fourth, would be needed. Work was begun in 1937 on a new classroom adjacent to the west side of the original. To accommodate the abrupt increase in student enrollment, a tent was built only a few feet east of the original schoolroom. Grades three and four were assigned to this tent. Heat came from a wood stove. Mrs. Ferguson was the teacher. Her husband taught grades six, seven, and eight. He also served as the school principal. Mr. Ferguson was a very stern man with glasses, who wore a dark suit, starched white shirt, and dark tie everyday.

A new student from Mexico enrolled at school. Berta was much taller than the rest of the third graders, and probably older. She spoke no English, but we were impressed with her math skills, and used to go home and tell our parents about Berta's capabilities in this subject. While the class was still learning the multiplication tables, Berta was not only multiplying double and triple numbers, as they were called, but also was doing long division!

As advanced as she was in math, each day Berta struggled with reading and language art skills. Because so many of the children also labored with these skills, Mrs. Ferguson required each third grade student to stand and read the same paragraph. When this was completed, they would begin the next paragraph. Some students became very bored with Mrs. Ferguson's method and by the time it was their turn to read aloud, had the text memorized!

The new adobe school room was completed in time for classes to begin in September 1938. Grades four and five were here. By now I was in the fourth grade. Mrs. Ablonda McBeth, a widow, was the teacher. She lived in a tent on the west hills in Ruby.

Two "Ronstadt" prefabricated buildings, teacherages as they were called, were erected on the north end of the schoolyard. Some teachers lived here.

Playground equipment included maypole swings, a teeter-totter and a huge slide. The slide measured fifteen feet high and twenty-nine feet long! I remember my Mother cautioning me not to go on the slide. One day, I did try the slide, and the news beat me home that day. Remnants of the slide remain on the school ground today.

During recess, in addition to playing on the equipment, children jumped rope, and played hopscotch, tag, jacks, and kickball.

It was at school, in first grade, that I was nicknamed "gringa pecosa" (freckle face).

Confectionary

Some residents of Ruby operated businesses. One such establishment, Case's Place, was a confectionary at the center of the mining camp. The Confectionary also served as a meeting place at times for residents to visit with one another, while enjoying a cup of coffee or a frosty root beer. Patrons were welcomed inside not only by the operators of the enterprise, Forrest "Ma" Case and her husband, Charlie, but also by the warm atmosphere of the room, with its curtained windows and round wooden tables supported by looped metal tubular legs. Three or four matching chairs with round wooden seats were placed at each table. As patrons sat on stools at the counter paralleling the north wall, two windows framed the outside view.



Ruby residents gather around Mrs. Case in front of the Confectionary.

(Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon private collection)

Customers enjoyed generous pieces of homemade pies and cakes, as well as the sandwiches. Other selections included ice cream, thick malts and milkshakes, wonderful root beer floats and of course, candy. Coffee, tea and Delaware Punch, a grape-flavored, lightly carbonated drink, were also available. Ice cream cones could be purchased for a nickel!

Mrs. Case, a jovial woman about five feet two inches tall, had dark, wavy hair and wore glasses. Her favorite expression was, “Well, I’ll swan.” Her husband, Charlie, wore gold-rimmed glasses, was tall with a medium build, had sandy red hair, and was light complexioned. In addition to helping his wife at the confectionary, Charlie did carpentry work. And like Harvey Parrish, Charlie Case drove the small school bus some of the time, and acted as Justice of the Peace when the need arose. The Cases lived in an attached apartment, just behind their business. As with all other Ruby buildings, this structure was owned by Eagle-Picher.

Recreation

In our remote locale, we Ruby residents provided our own recreational activities. Families visiting with one another, picnicking, and/or wading in nearby streams, weather permitting, were forms of entertainment. Another activity, usually coupled with a picnic, was gathering bellotas, the acorns from the Arizona Oak Tree, or Scrub Oak as they are sometimes called. These matured in mid-summer. We filled gunny sacks to gather our edible treasures.

Some adults played cards, mainly bridge. Annie and Erle D. “Ed” Morton had bridge parties at their home, located up against “Snob Hill” on Ruby’s west side. Mr. Morton was the Montana mine’s general manager. I remember Mrs. Morton’s high-pitched voice and that she went around hugging all the kids, not necessarily what we kids enjoyed.

Baseball games, between teams that included men from the different mine and mill shifts, were held on the tailings, a huge area of mining refuse, that looks and feels much like sand. Families carried chairs and blankets to sit on while watching the bi-monthly games. Some enjoyed picnic lunches. A “Ruby Miners” baseball team was selected to play games with Tucson and Nogales teams. Eagle-Picher provided uniforms and equipment.

Ruby's Country Club, or Pool Hall, situated on a knoll just west of the cattle guard, was a place frequented mostly by men who lived in the camp. Besides playing pool, men enjoyed beer, wine, and mixed drinks. Sandwiches and hot dogs completed the menu. Ruby families were treated to movies once a month, costing ten cents.

Arivaca, about 11 miles northwest of Ruby, also had a Pool Hall, frequented by adults, not only from Ruby, but from the surrounding areas, including California Gulch, Warsaw Canyon, Oro Blanco, Sasabe, Tres Amigos, Las Guijas, and Calabasas. Pool tables were available for use and dances were held periodically. Soft drinks, tea and coffee, along with alcoholic beverages, were served to accompany meals. Also, some folks drove to Nogales or Tucson to spend a weekend.

Dad, though not a hunter, frequented a nearby rifle range. There, he and other men took the opportunity to sharpen their shooting skills through target practice. There was even a Ruby Gun Club and some members traveled the state of Arizona for shooting competitions.

Flying kites for the younger set was a popular form of recreation. Dad spent many hours making kites for us children and at one point, made a kite reel that, though it shows it's use, remains in the family today. We were able to wind several balls of string on this reel and from the top of a hill north of our house, were able to fly our kites way out over Ruby Lake and the tailings.



Besides pool, Ruby's Country Club provided food and drinks, plus monthly movies.
(Feldman Collection, Photo No. 76261, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, AZ, circa 1929)

Children's games played at school during recess continued away from the playground. These included marbles, jacks, tag, and hide-and-seek.

A Boy Scout troop was founded in Ruby in 1935. The troop was sponsored by Dr. Woodard and C. C. Parker, with Leland D. Wilson serving as the first Scoutmaster. (9)

Church Services

Sundays were like any other day of the week until about 1934, when church services were held at the Ruby School. Mass was offered in the first and second grade room. Sunday school, I think, was held once a month, as were Catholic services. Initially, Father Donahue, a Nogales priest would come to Ruby via the winding mountain road through the Atascosa Mountains. Two nuns accompanied him on the trip. After Mass at 9:00 am, these three would have breakfast with a Ruby family, then be on their way for the return trip to Nogales. Later, Fr. Don Hughes replaced Fr. Donahue and continued to offer monthly Mass at the school.

Transportation

Although life was difficult in these remote hills, and money was scarce, some Ruby residents did have automobiles. This mode of transportation was not used frequently within the camp, but used to reach areas beyond Ruby. Gasoline tanks could be filled from the pumps located in front of the Ruby Mercantile at a cost of less than 25 cents per gallon. Of course gasoline had to be trucked in from Tucson or Nogales.

Since most destinations in the camp were within walking distance, residents did just that. They walked to the store, to the school, to Case's Place, to Dr. Woodard's office, to the boarding house, to work, and to visit one another.

A dark green International pick-up truck, probably purchased by the company in Tucson or Nogales in the mid-nineteen thirties, was driven by employees for work-related tasks.

Some folks used horses or burros to ride to destinations not too far from Ruby. Children whose families lived outside of the camp rode burros to school, while some rode a small school bus.

Law and Order

In February 1935, as the population of Ruby approached 800, and the district population approached 1100, Mr. Morton, the mine General Manager, and Deputy Sheriff, Fred Pyeatt proposed to build a jail in Ruby, mostly to handle drunks. Asked what he does with drunks out there now, Deputy Pyeatt said: We tie them to trees and let 'em go the next morning." A jail was built for \$600. (10)

Memorable Natural Events

Two natural events stand out in my memory. The first was a fire in the early 1930's that swept around the Montana Peak foothills, greatly reducing the natural vegetation, but not reaching Ruby itself. The second was a heavy snow in January 1937. That was the one, big snow in my years in Ruby. I still remember making snow people!

Leaving Ruby

By 1938, the Montana mine's lead and zinc ore was beginning to give out. In addition, Dad had developed a heart problem. So our parents decided it was time for our family to leave Ruby to look someplace else for long term work and to find a place where Dad's heart condition could be treated. Other residents were reluctantly beginning to leave as well.

It was indeed a sad day in our life's journey in 1938 when we left our Ruby home and Dad drove us past the store, past the school on the road leading out of Ruby over the cattle guard. (Dad was driving our 1937 green Packard. The automobile remains in the family today.) I remember the Ruby years as such a peaceful time.

Pfrimmer Family Postscript

Our home for the next year would be in Linden, California, some 15 miles east of Stockton. Dad accepted a position with a placer-dredging company.

Dad suffered a stroke in Linden, but after receiving specialized medical care, he showed substantial improvement. My parents decided to return our family to Tucson. We arrived in November 1939 and my parents bought our home at 2748 East Drachman.

By now the Montana mine was nearing complete closure. Dad was unable to work, except for a relatively short time in the fall of 1940, when he was asked by Eagle-Picher to do some consulting work on extracting minerals from the tailings in Ruby. Dad did go to Ruby, stayed at the guest house, took his meals at the boarding house still operated by the Parrishes, and enjoyed being back in the area of southern Arizona that he loved. We children were attending Sam Hughes School in Tucson. Because of this, we, along with our mother, looked forward to visits with Dad on weekends in Ruby.

Ruby's altitude, however, proved to be too high for Dad to tolerate, so he soon returned to our Tucson home. He deteriorated rapidly, having difficulty breathing, and passed away on September 3, 1941. He was only 51 years old.

The three Pfrimmer children graduated from Tucson Senior High School. My college days were spent in Silver City at New Mexico Western College. I graduated in 1953 with a B.S. in Education.

Joe S. Cahoon, a soil scientist who would become my husband, held a position with the Soil Conservation Service in Silver City, where we met in November 1952. We were married at Saints Peter and Paul Church, Tucson on September 26, 1953. We began married life in Lordsburg, New Mexico with transfers that included Muskogee, Oklahoma (Joe's birthplace), Klamath Agency, Lakeview, Klamath Falls, Pendleton and Portland . . . all in Oregon. Joe retired early in 1981 and we returned to Tucson to live.

I taught 5th and 6th grades at St. John's School for six years until 1992, while Joe continued to using his skills as a soils scientist consulting with Tucson companies. After battling a heart problem for ten years, we lost Joe on May 4, 1997.

Return to Ruby

Ruby history has always been of interest to the Pfrimmer family. Mom and Dad were a significant source of the history of this once thriving mining camp and I have maintained a lifelong interest. I've done a great deal of historical research and maintained personal relationships from my years living in Ruby.

Pima Community College started tours of Ruby in 1984. I went on one of the tours and thought it was something I wanted to do someday. My opportunity came in October, 1994. Since then, I have hosted Pima Community College's public tours of Ruby.

I look forward to each trip with anticipation. Participants register for the Ruby trip because of their interest in the history of Arizona, and, more specifically, in the history of ghost towns. Being able to conduct these tours is a most rewarding and satisfying experience for a retired educator.

Ruby the Ghost Town

Today, Ruby is 300 acres of wonderful memories of gold, silver, lead, and zinc mining. Two lakes and 700,000 tons of mining tailings remind visitors of Ruby's unique history. Only about a dozen buildings remain and sadly, they are deteriorating rapidly. Now Ruby lies still, except for the wind-whipped clatter of aged, bent, pieces of rusted galvanized iron that once provided cover over the homes of Ruby residents.

The gate at the entrance to Ruby is often locked. The honk of an automobile horn will rouse the caretakers.

The major mining buildings still look out over the valley below. The warehouse is still in pretty good shape. The galvanized roof of the old mill building provides a shelter for Ruby's caretakers. Remnants of the assay office are still standing.

The lake is still there where I remember it. The size of the lake depends on the amount of local rainfall. The dam built in the late 1890's is still there, doing its job. I understand that the lake is stocked with bass, catfish, and bluegill.

The tailings pond, the fine-grain, sand-like remains of milling the ore from the mine, still covers a huge area. You would swear it was a white sandy beach.

Only the walls of the mercantile and post office, the scene of the infamous Ruby murders, still stand.



Ruby Entrance Gate



Mill/Assay Office/Headframe/Warehouse



Ruby Lake



Tailings Pond



Mecantile



School



Hospital



Bunk House #1



Bunk House #2



Jail



Mine Manager's House



Pfrimmer House

Ruby the ghost town is rapidly deteriorating.
(Photos by Al and Bob Ring, 2001)

The schoolhouse remains a whole structure. Books, pieces of furniture, and an old oil stove can be found inside. The teeter-totter board and the large slide are still there, outside the school.

Dr. Woodard's office and hospital building is still recognizable.

The two bunk houses remain in fair shape.

The concrete jail appears ready for use today. The outside wooden door is covered with metal. The inside door is entirely made of steel.

The mine General Manager's house, the home of hippie squatters in the 1970's, may be the building in the best shape, along with the school.

My old house is rapidly deteriorating and it is sad to see. Only a few adobe walls remain to remind me of my years in Ruby.

And perhaps saddest of all, there are piles of lumber, piping, and wire sitting in front of the old bunk houses. The material was delivered just a few year ago, when dreams of preserving or renovating Ruby were blooming. But these modern building supplies remain unused, apparently left to the same fate as Ruby.

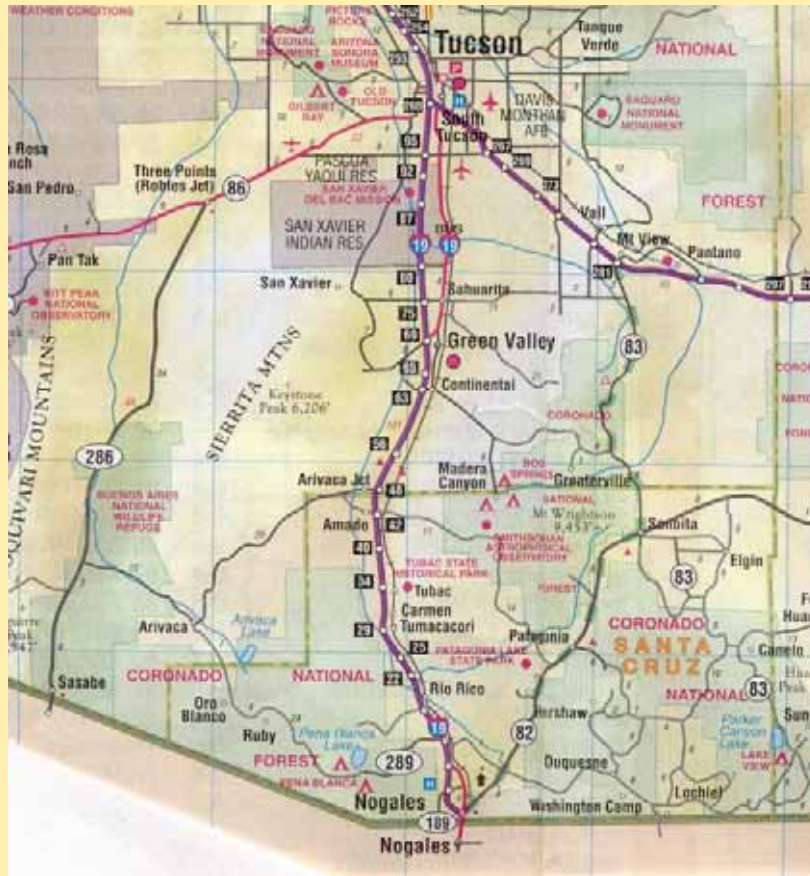
How to Get to Ruby

The mining ghost town of Ruby is accessible by automobile from two directions on Ruby Road. The first approach is through Arivaca, coming from the north on AZ 286 or Arivaca Junction on Interstate 19. About five miles south of Arivaca on AZ 289, at the Santa Cruz County line, the paved road turns to dirt and remain so for the six additional miles to Ruby. The terrain is relatively flat; the roadbed is sometimes graded and does not require a high clearance or 4WD vehicle.

The second approach to Ruby is from the southeast on AZ 289, which starts a few miles north of Nogales, off Interstate 19. AZ 289 is paved for about 10 miles, before becoming a dirt road for the remaining 14 miles to Ruby. This dirt road twists and turns through the Atascosa Mountains and offers a spectacular view of the Oro Blanco country. Though longer and somewhat more primitive than the approach from Arivaca, this road also does not require a high clearance or 4WD vehicle.

Tours of Ruby

Tours of Ruby are conducted by Pima Community College, Tucson, Arizona. The usual schedule is one tour per month, from September through May. The tour takes all day, from the 8:15 am departure from Pima Community College to the return around 5:30 pm. Pickups/drop-offs in Green Valley can be arranged. Cost is \$65 per person (2002). Your trusty van driver and tour director will be Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon. For arrangements, contact the Registration Office at Pima Community College.



*Ruby, the ghost town, is accessible by automobile from two directions on Ruby Road.
(Map courtesy Gousha)*

NOTES

1. See Bob Ring's 2002 History Convention paper, "Montana Camp: Gold and Silver Mining at the Montana Mine in the Arizona Territory Borderland." The paper covers the history of the Montana mine from the mid 1800's to 1912, when Montana Camp was renamed Ruby.
2. See Al Ring's 2002 History Convention paper, "Ruby: The Montana Mine Becomes the Largest Producer of Lead and Zinc in the State of Arizona." The paper covers the Montana mine's history from 1912 to the present.
3. Some of the information on the water line project, particularly the water tank arrangement, comes from several discussions, during the period 1992-1996, that I had with Fred Noon, third generation native of Oro Blanco area resident. Fred Noon (1908-1996) owned and managed the Noon Ranch, and wrote articles on Arivaca and Oro Blanco history in the local papers (*Connection* and *Arivaca Briefs*) from the 1940's through the 1990's. For several years in the 1970's, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Arizona Historical Society. He had an intense interest in local history and had a great memory for all those folks and stories from his childhood.
4. I am the eldest of three Pfrimmer children. I was born at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson in 1929. Next, my brother John, was born, also at St. Mary's Hospital, in 1932. My sister, Mary, was born at home in Ruby in 1933. She was delivered by Dr. Julius Woodard, assisted by his wife, nurse Pauline.
5. Calcimine is a white or tinted liquid containing zinc oxide, water, glue and coloring matter. It was used as a wash for walls or ceilings.
6. For additional details on these murders, see Al Ring's 2002 History Convention paper, "Ruby: The Montana Mine Becomes the Largest Producer of Lead and Zinc in the State of Arizona."
7. This is my understanding from discussions in 2000 with Dr. Woodard's former nurse, Maria Jackson.
8. The information about Art Noon's donation of adobe bricks comes from his son, Fred Noon. See note 3 above. Fred Noon was a Ruby School Board member for 12 years.
9. *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, Arizona, April 2, 1935).
10. *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, Arizona, February 9, 1935).

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. Carol Clarke Meyer, "The Rise and Fall of Ruby," *The Journal of Arizona History*, (Tucson, The Arizona Historical Society, 1974). *The daughter-in-law of Ruby store owner Phil Clarke recounts the colorful history of Ruby.*
2. Tom McCurnin, "Ruby Arizona," (University of Arizona, December, 1997). *A term paper from a University of Arizona graduate student who made numerous trips to Ruby. A copy of the paper can be found at URL: <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/az/rubypapers.html>.*
3. Dan B. McCarthy, "The return to Ruby – It was a prosperous little place," *Arizona Republic, Sunday Supplement* (Phoenix, October 1, 1972). *Recollections of Norman and Anna Worth, Ruby residents from 1933 to 1940.*
4. Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon and Bryan Lee, "Remembering Ruby," *Tucson Citizen*, (Tucson, April 23, 1999). *A Pima Community College tour guide recalls her days in the once-vibrant mining town of Ruby.*
5. "Ruby to Paradise – And the Legends In Between," Video Tape, 1995, Dragoon Productions, Tucson, Arizona. *A sixty-minute video featuring Ruby in a presentation of the history of Southeast Arizona. Includes an interview with Fred Noon.*
6. "Remembering Ruby, Ruby, Arizona – 1939 and 1993," Video Tape, 1996, Distributed by Anubis Productions International, PO Box 50859, Tucson, Arizona 85703. *A sixty minute video featuring archival Crabtree family movies from their life in Ruby in 1939, and video interviews with former residents conducted at the reunion in 1993.*
7. Ruby – Arizona Ghost Town Website, URL: <http://www.ghosttowns.com/states/az/ruby.html>. *Features Ruby history, a circa 1996 map, recent (ghost town) photos, and restoration plans.*
8. Howard and Pat Fredericks, 6202 West Ina Road, Tucson, Arizona 85743, 520-744-4471. *Contact for current owners of Ruby.*
9. Bob and Al Ring, "The Forgotten Gold Mines of Oro Blanco," publication in preparation. *The complete history of mining in Santa Cruz County's Oro Blanco Mining District.*