



Visual Field Guide
St. Thomas, Nevada

Explore the ruins of a real western town once underneath Lake Mead.



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EMERGENCY CALL 911

Safety

There are a few simple, and prudent, rules to make your visit to St. Thomas pleasant and safe.

Water

The ghost city of St. Thomas is located in the Lake Mead National Recreation Area. This region of the country is part of the Mojave Desert, one of the most arid and hottest places in the United States. Average Summer temperatures at the town site in the summer can rage from 95 to 115 degrees. It is important to keep hydrated with plenty of fluids. There are no services available at the town site and the parking area is approximately 1/2 mile from the town site entrance.



The best time to visit is before and after the summer heat arrives. This is generally between November and April.

Pets

DO NOT leave pets in parked vehicles. Temperatures can quickly rise to over 140 degrees in a closed vehicle. Pets are allowed at the town site while on a leash. Please pick up after your pets during your visit.



Artifacts

As you visit St. Thomas you will notice many artifacts left behind by the residents. These items—such as dishes, glassware, tools, engine parts, and more—are strewn about the town site. You will also notice some visitors have placed these items upon a building ruin or other grouping. For all to enjoy please do not move, or remove, any artifacts from the town site.



Archaeological Protection Act of 1979 protects these artifacts for the benefit

of all visitors. Any person who, without authorization, excavates, removes, damages, or otherwise defaces any historic or prehistoric site, artifact, or object of antiquity on this site is subject to arrest and penalty of law. If you see someone violating this act please contact the National Park Service at 1-800-680-5851.



Tamarisk Vegetation

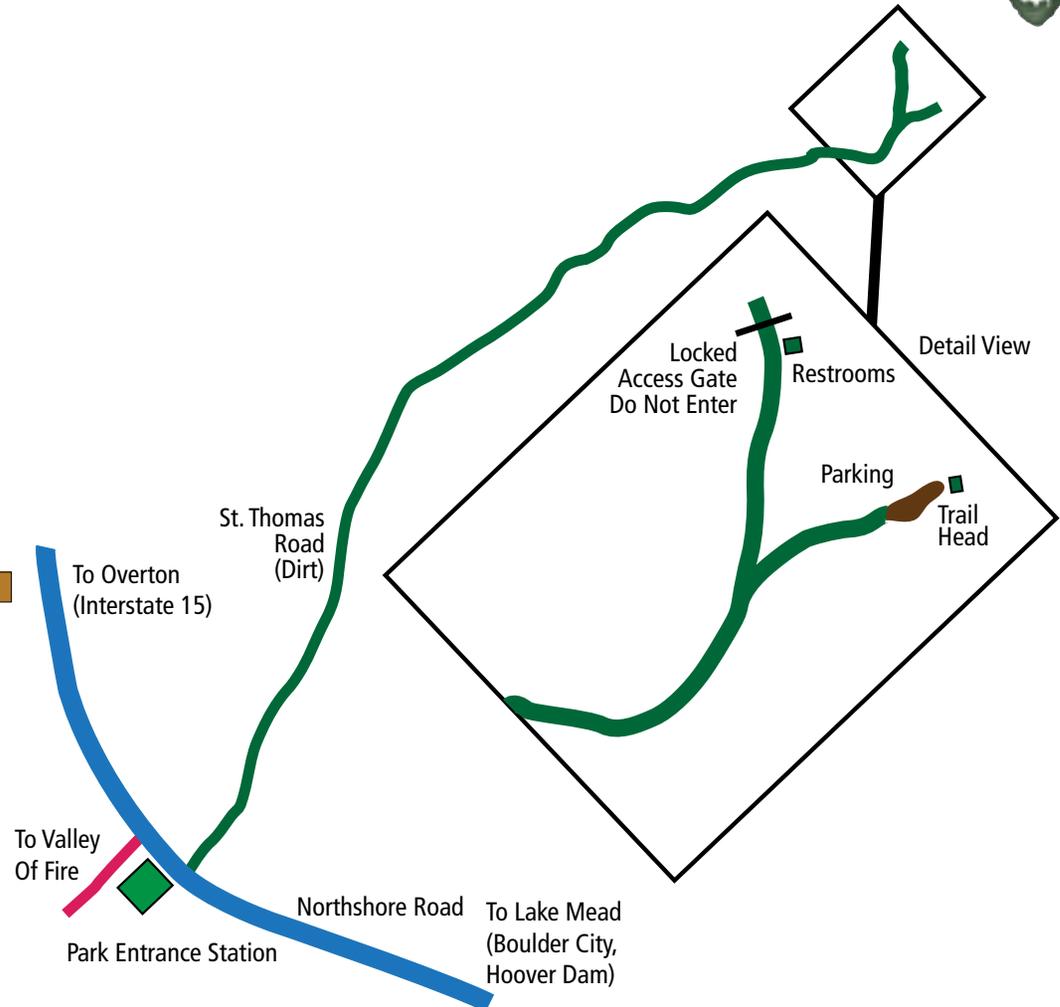
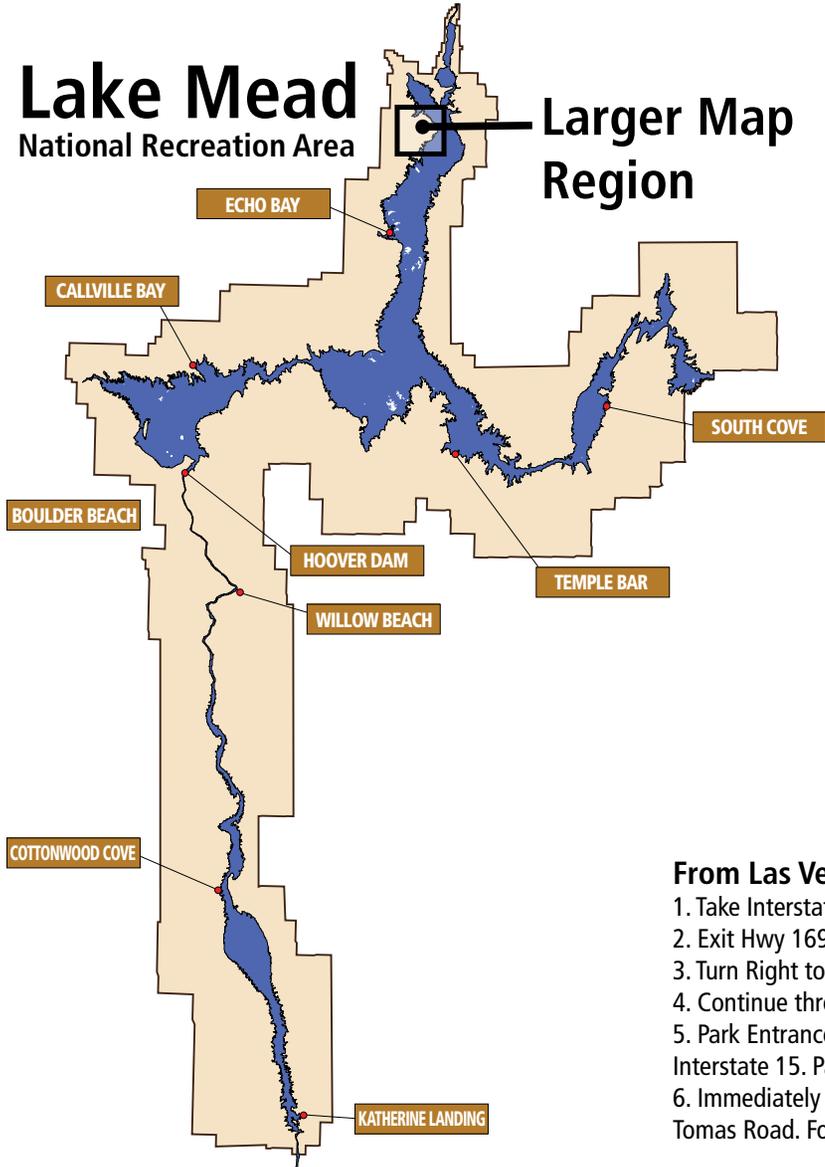
The town site has been over-run with an invasive plant species called Tamarisk. These hardy plants are both a nuisance and a potential safety hazard. The branches and leaves can produce cuts and bruising, while the trunks are very hardy and when cut to a stub can puncture the soles of your shoes. Never walk barefoot through the town site and be very careful if you are wearing sandals and other types of summer wear.

For more information on park rules and regulations please visit <http://www.nps.gov/lake/parkmgmt/lawsandpolicies.htm>



Directions to St. Thomas

Lake Mead National Recreation Area



From Las Vegas (North Route)

1. Take Interstate 15 North (to Salt Lake City)
2. Exit Hwy 169, N Moapa Vally Blvd.
3. Turn Right to Overton
4. Continue through Overton
5. Park Entrance is approximately 17 miles from Interstate 15. Park entrance fee is \$10 per vehicle.
6. Immediately past the entrance is a left turn onto St. Tomas Road. Follow approximately 3.25 miles.

From Boulder City (South Route)

1. Take Interstate 215 East, or State Routes 93/95 South to Boulder City
2. In Boulder City Follow 93/95 to Lakeshore Rd.
3. Turn left on Lakeshore; Park entrance fee is \$10 per vehicle.
4. Continue Lakeshore to Northshore (Hwy 169), turn Right
5. Approximately 50 miles right turn onto St. Tomas Road. Follow approximately 3.25 miles



History

Within the park boundaries lies a ghost town that was inundated when Lake Mead first filled up in the 1930's. Once a Mormon settlement, St. Thomas thrived as a stopping point between Los Angeles and Salt Lake along the old Arrow Highway (US 91).

Today, remnants of the town can now be seen thanks to the lowering water levels of Lake Mead, which is due to severe drought conditions. Once the town was flooded higher than 60 feet above the tallest structure, now visitors can roam the ghost remains of a true western town.

St. Thomas lies in the northern part of the park along the Overton Arm along the Muddy River, which feeds into Lake Mead. The access road is dirt and sometimes bumpy so visitors with low riding vehicles may want to be careful. However most vehicles should be able to handle the approximately 3 mile dirt road. There is a dirt trail leading to the town site from the parking area.

St. Thomas was founded in 1865 by Mormon settlers who mistakenly thought they were still in Utah(1). The location was a prime farming spot at the confluence of the Muddy and Virgin Rivers, which flowed to the Colorado River, 22 miles south.

However the Mormons were not the first inhabitants of the region. The Anasazi and the Basket-Makers made their home in the area. In fact, located across the river from St. Thomas was an Anasazi settlement that become known as the "Lost

City", which has been recreated in the town of Overton at the Lost City Museum.

One of the reasons this location was important was the abundance of salt in the region. From the Anasazi to the Mormons and beyond, salt mining was important to the life and economy of the town site.

The Mormons settled here until it was discovered that they actually settled in Nevada. Nevada officials demanded three years back taxes which the Mormons refused to do. So after a vote they decided to abandon the town, save for one family, the Bonelli's. The Mormons burned down their homes and abandoned their crops and moved to Salt Lake City.

Around 1880's new settlers began to arrive at the town site. These settlers discovered that the soil was good for farming. The peak population of St. Thomas was around 500 people. There was a school, post office, grocery stores, church, ice cream parlor, and several garages for the new invention of the automobile. What St. Thomas didn't have was indoor plumbing or electricity. But memories written by the former townspeople were of fond memories and a simple life.

While St. Thomas was a prime farming location, it was poorly located when it came time to ship perishable foods to market. The Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad extended a branch of the Oregon Short Line Through Southern Nevada in 1905, and a

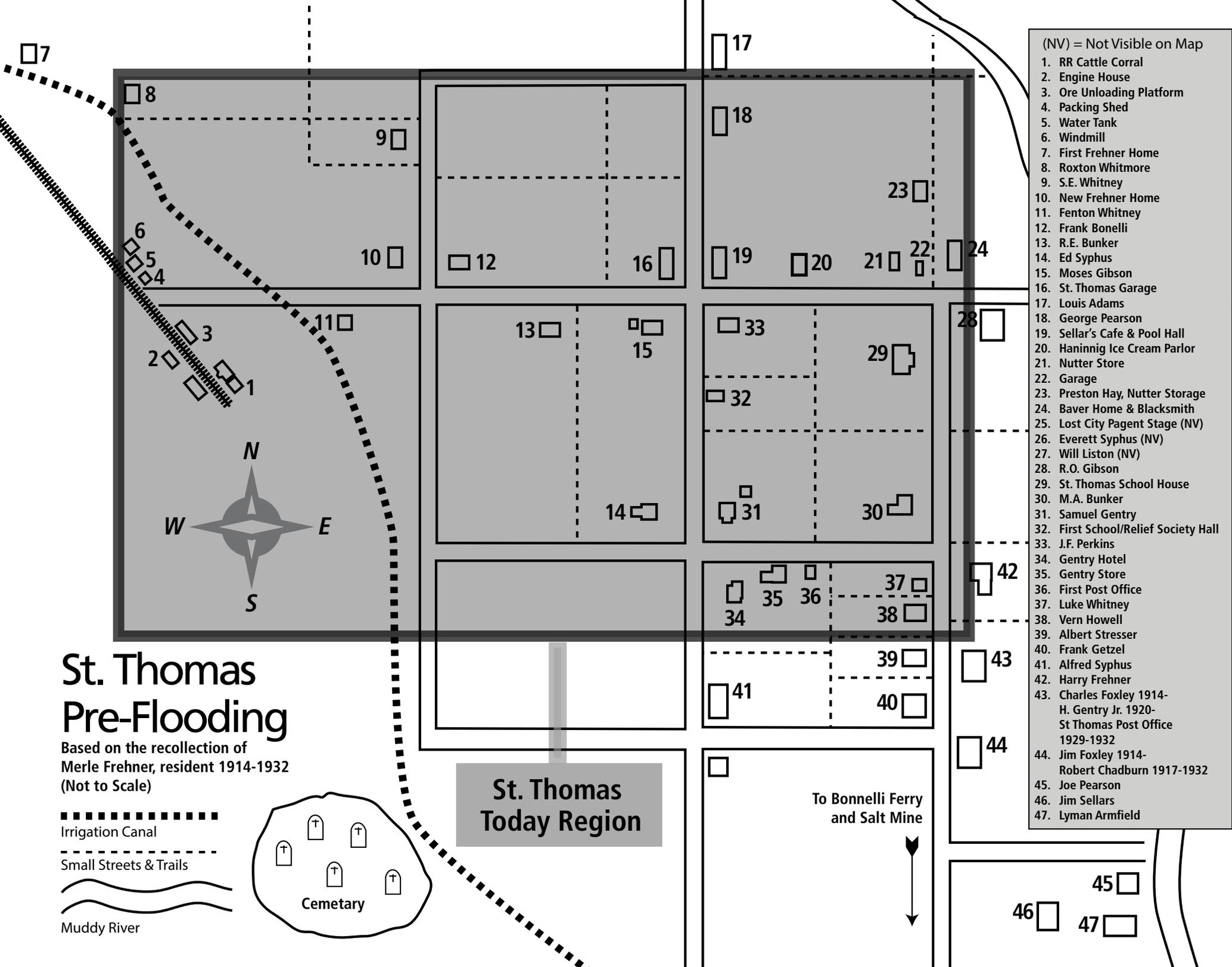
spur of that line went to St. Thomas.

Throughout the town site you will notice square or round hollowed cement structures in the ground. These are known as cisterns and they were the water storage facilities of the day. Some are small, and some are large.

In 1928, President Calvin Coolidge signed the bill authorizing the building of Hoover (Boulder) Dam. This dam would create a large lake behind it, Lake Mead, and as the waters rose areas that had been high and dry along the Muddy and Virgin Rivers would be inundated by the lake.

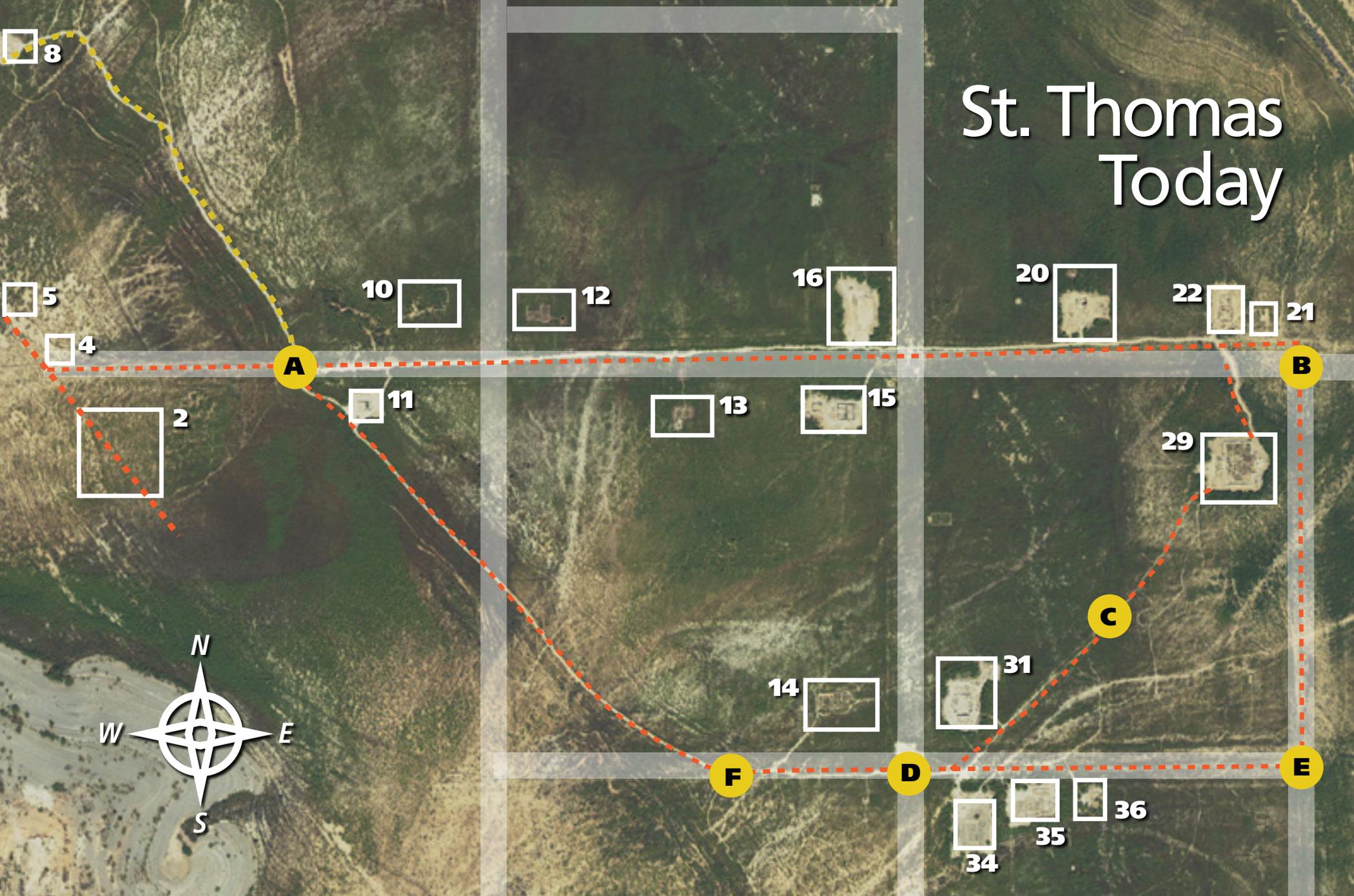
The residents of St. Thomas were told they would have to relocate, and that the government would reimburse them for their property. The completion of the dam in 1936. As the waters rose, slowly the town was overtaken by Lake Mead. According to folklore, the last resident to leave was Hugh Lord, who paddled away from his home when the rising waters reached his home in 1938. When the lake reached it's high water mark, St. Thomas was sixty feet below the surface.

With the fluctuations of the lake water levels, St. Thomas has arisen from the depths several times since 1938. In 1945, 1963, and 2012 there were reunions of former residents and family members. Today the town is still exposed and visitors can roam the roads and trails that were once a thriving wild west town.



- 1. RR Cattle Corral
- 2. Engine House
- 3. Ore Unloading Platform
- 4. Packing Shed
- 5. Water Tank
- 6. Windmill
- 7. First Frehner Home
- 8. Roxton Whitmore
- 9. S.E. Whitney
- 10. New Frehner Home
- 11. Fenton Whitney
- 12. Frank Bonelli
- 13. R.E. Bunker
- 14. Ed Syphus
- 15. Moses Gibson
- 16. St. Thomas Garage
- 17. Louis Adams
- 18. George Pearson
- 19. Sellar's Cafe & Pool Hall
- 20. Haninnig Ice Cream Parlor
- 21. Nutter Store
- 22. Garage
- 23. Preston Hay, Nutter Storage
- 24. Baver Home & Blacksmith
- 25. Lost City Pagent Stage (NV)
- 26. Everett Syphus (NV)
- 27. Will Liston (NV)
- 28. R.O. Gibson
- 29. St. Thomas School House
- 30. M.A. Bunker
- 31. Samuel Gentry
- 32. First School/Relief Society Hall
- 33. J.F. Perkins
- 34. Gentry Hotel
- 35. Gentry Store
- 36. First Post Office
- 37. Luke Whitney
- 38. Vern Howell
- 39. Albert Stresser
- 40. Frank Getzel
- 41. Alfred Syphus
- 42. Harry Frehner
- 43. Charles Foxley 1914-H. Gentry Jr. 1920-St Thomas Post Office 1929-1932
- 44. Jim Foxley 1914-Robert Chadburn 1917-1932
- 45. Joe Pearson
- 46. Jim Sellars
- 47. Lyman Armfield

St. Thomas Today



Legend

A Visual Way Points

10 Accessible Structures

Original Roads

Town Trail

Parking Trail



Parking Lot/Trail Head

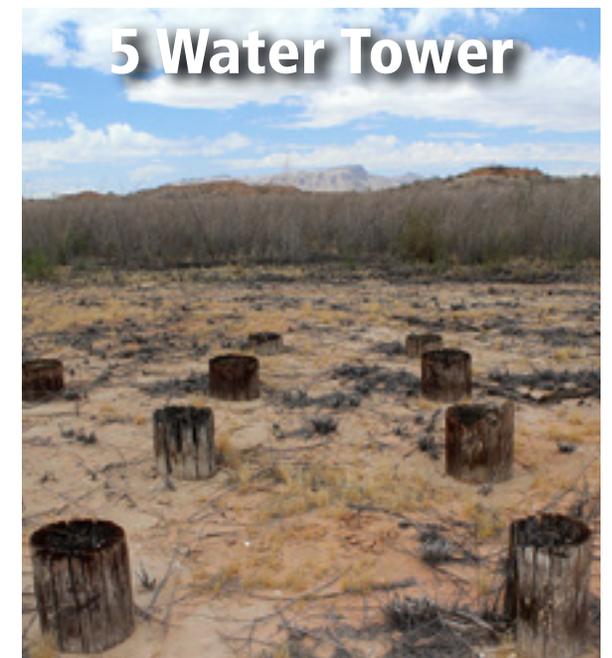
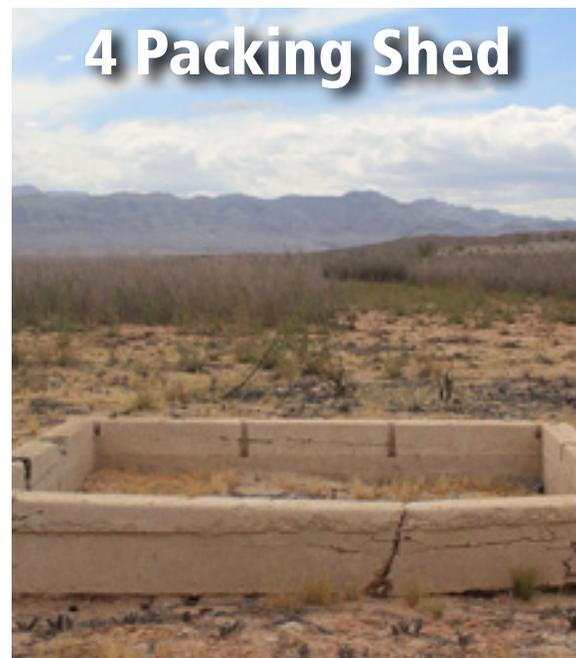
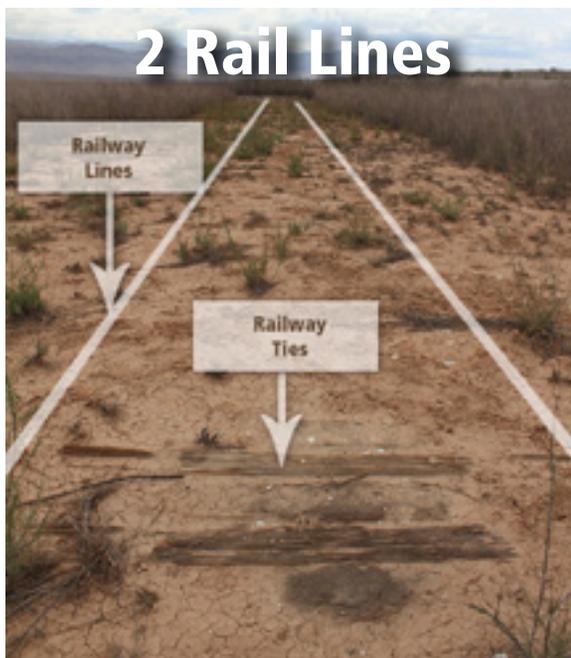
Looking Southeast
See on Map

Trail



8 Whitmore Home Looking Southeast



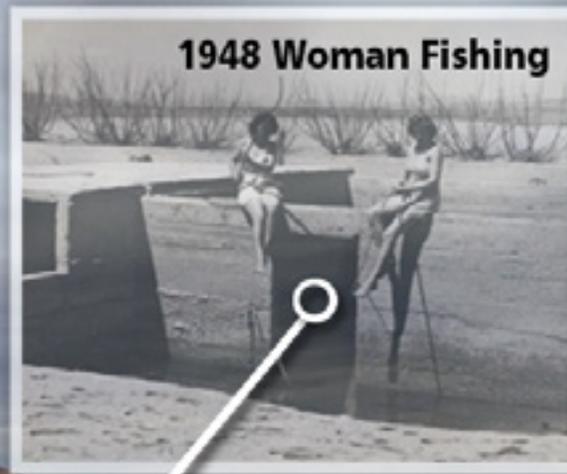




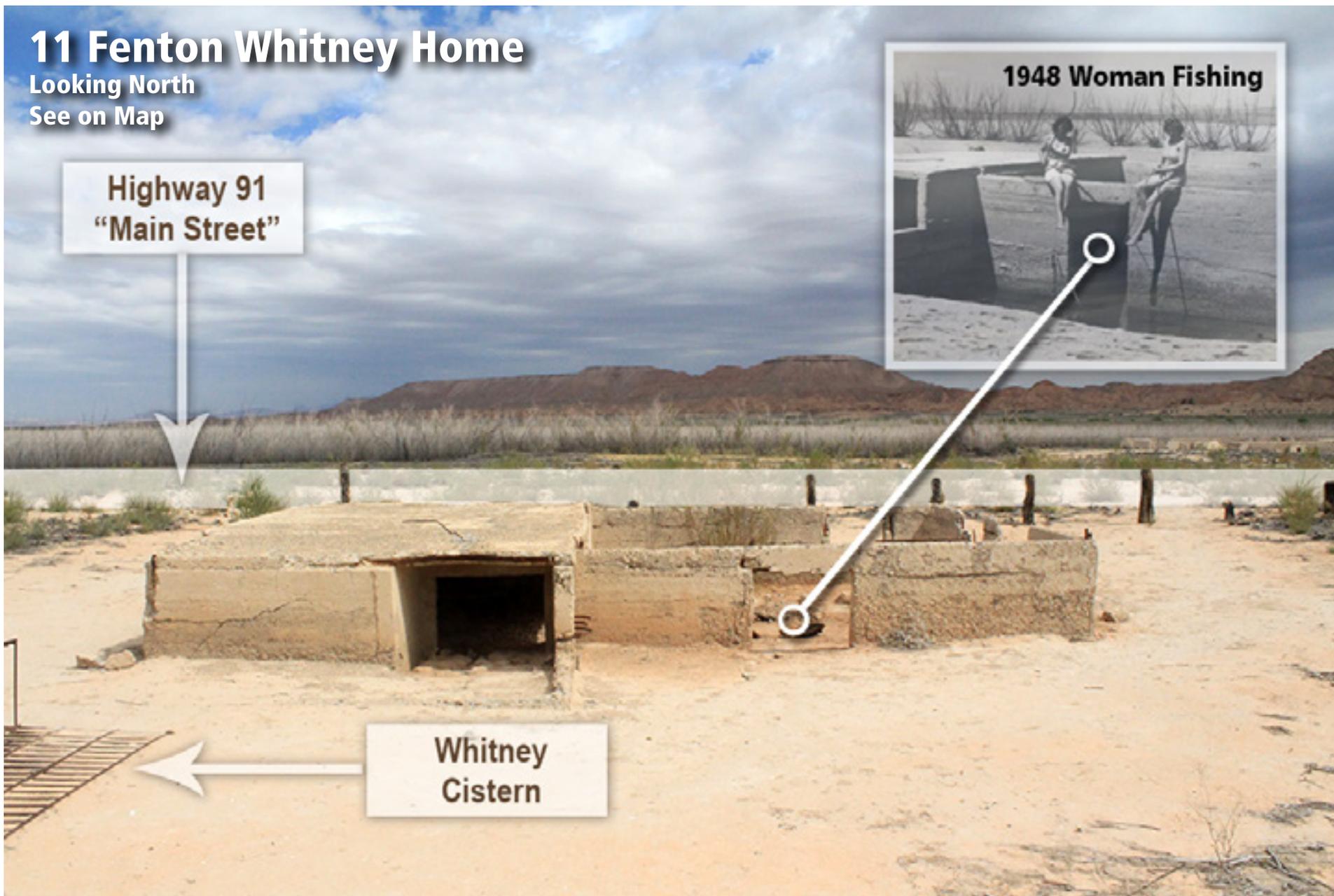
11 Fenton Whitney Home

Looking North
See on Map

Highway 91
"Main Street"



Whitney
Cistern





10 New Frehner Home

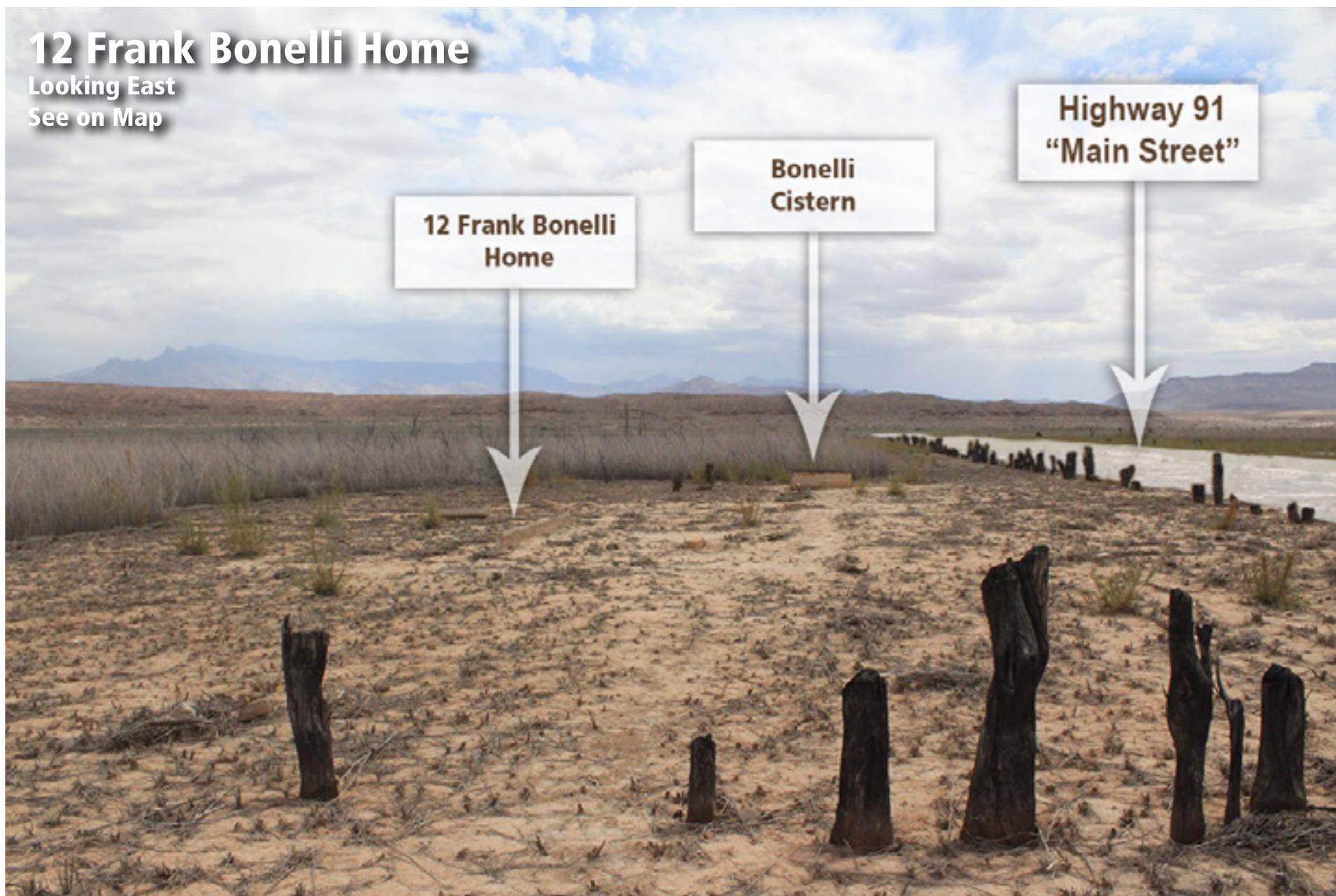
Looking West
See on Map

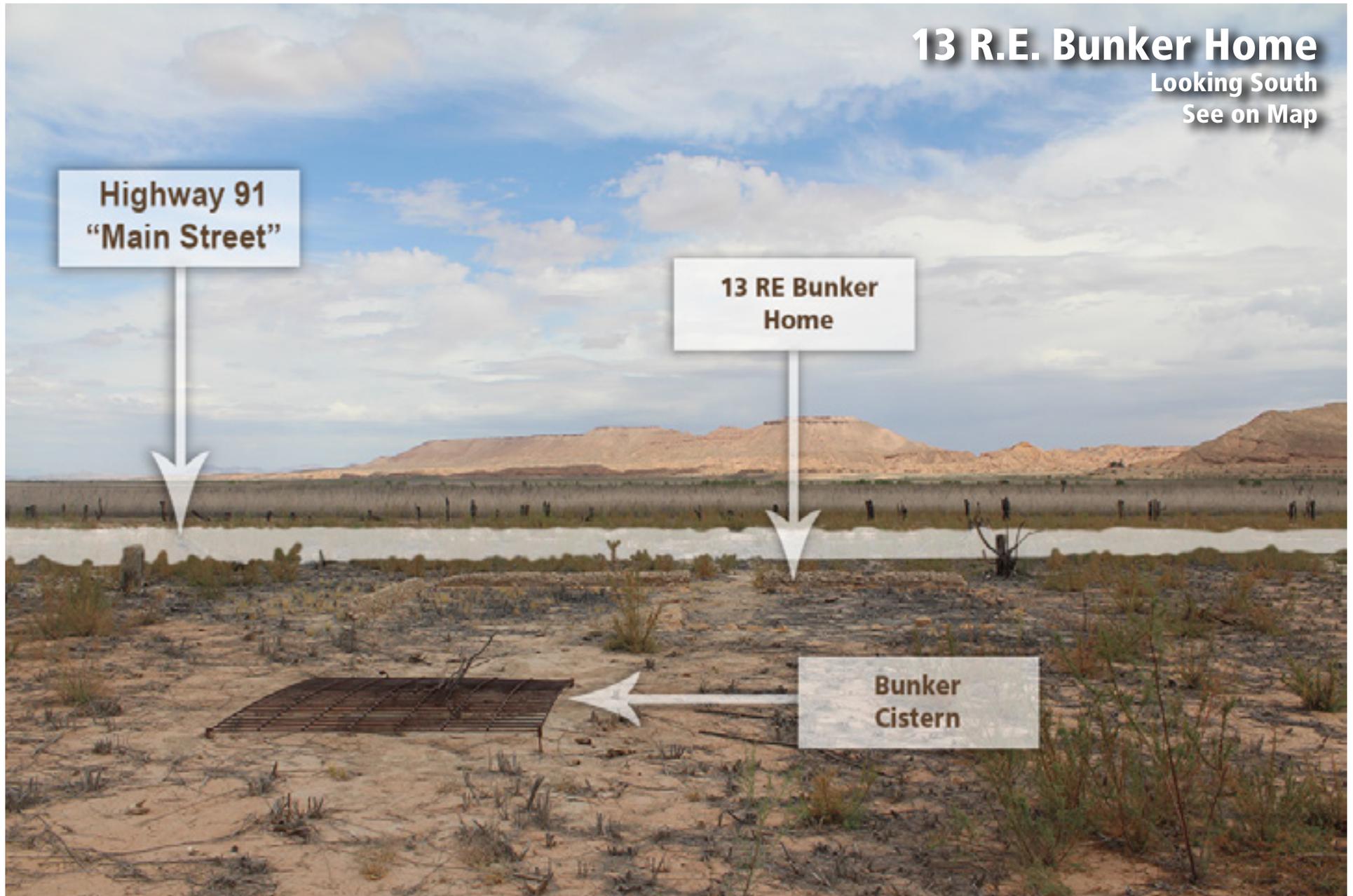




12 Frank Bonelli Home

Looking East
See on Map





13 R.E. Bunker Home

Looking South
See on Map

Highway 91
"Main Street"

13 RE Bunker
Home

Bunker
Cistern



15 Moses Gibson Home

Looking East
See on Map



Fallen Tree Above
in 1945

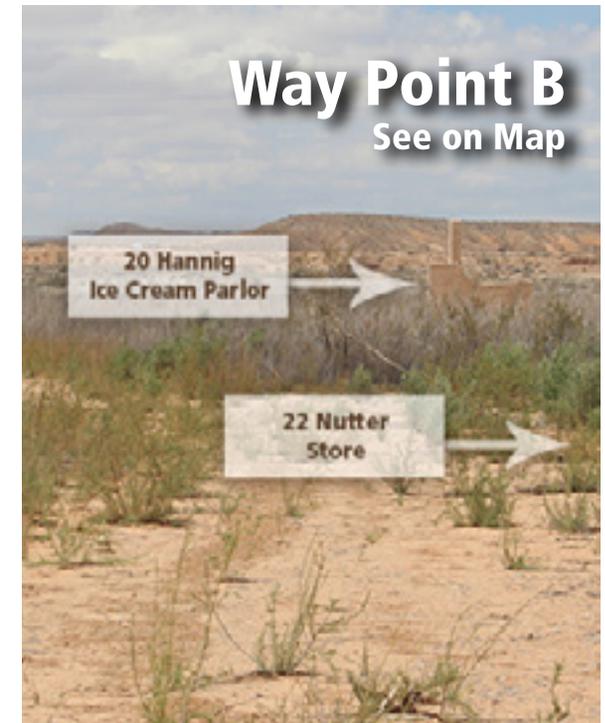




20 Hannig Ice Cream Parlor

Looking North
See on Map







29 St. Thomas School House

Looking West
See on Map





St. Thomas, Nevada, Visual Field Guide, Lake Mead NRA





Artifacts Around St. Thomas

Note: Artifacts are protected by Federal Law and may not be removed without permission.



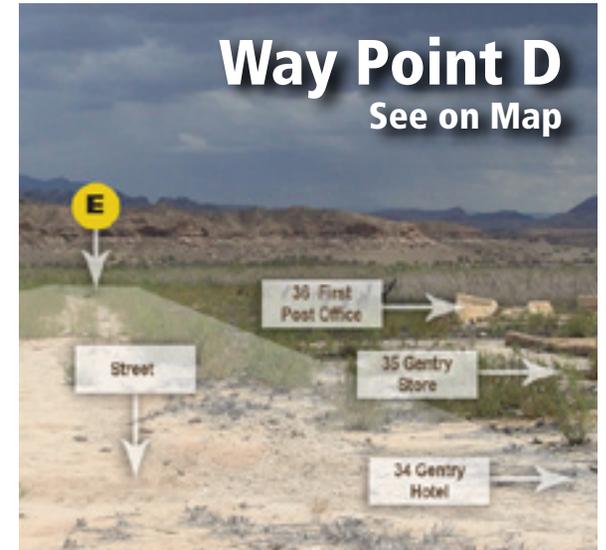




34 Gentry Hotel

Looking South
See on Map





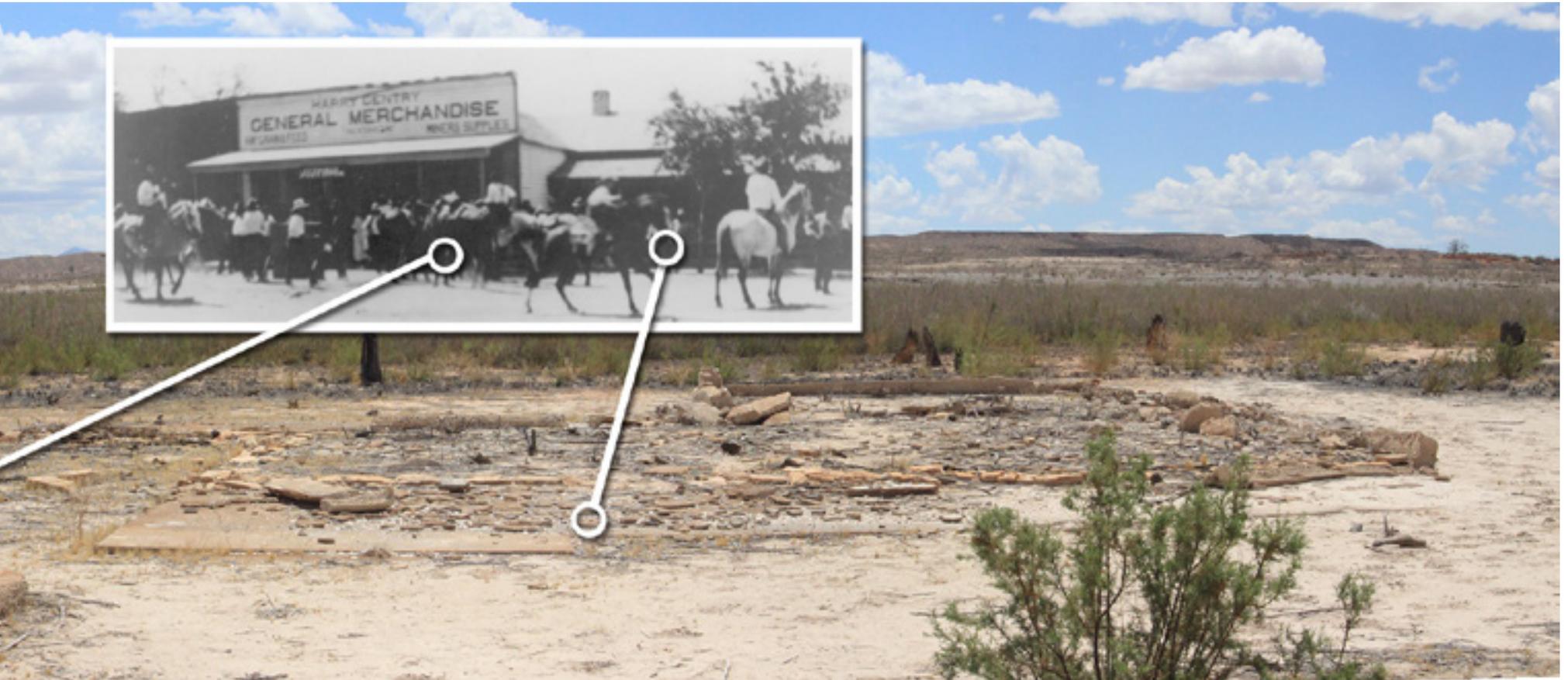


35 Gentry Store

Looking South
See on Map

36 The First
Post Office

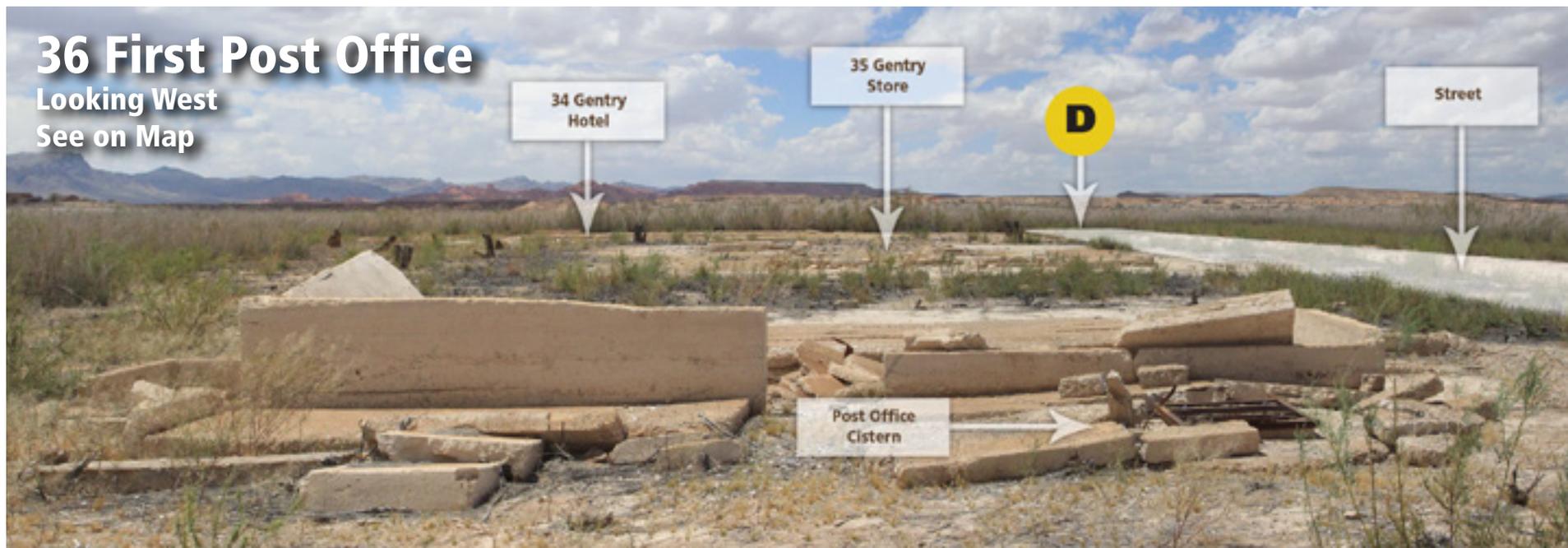






36 First Post Office

Looking West
See on Map







14 Syphus Home

Looking South
See on Map



Front Entrance
Seen Below



Front Entrance
in photo at left



