

Digging for the Truth:

ASARCO/Grupo Mexico Labor History Overview



ERICKA WILLS



erwills@ilstu.edu

ASARCO's "official" timeline



1942

Corpus Christi, Texas, zinc plant constructed.

1954

Production commenced at Silver Bell, Asarco's first open-pit copper mine.

1960

Southern Peru Copper Corporation opened the Toquepala mine and Ilo smelter.

1961

Mission copper mine in Arizona started up.

1967

Mexican mines and plants reorganized as Asarco Mexicana, S.A., and 51% interest sold to Mexican investors.

1971

Four Tennessee zinc mines purchased.

1973

San Xavier copper mine and leach plant in Arizona started production.

1974

Asarco Mexicana, S.A. reorganized as Industrial Minera Mexico, S.A. and 15% interest sold to Mexican investors reducing equity to 34%.



- ASARCO ie. GIMMEX ie. Grupo Mexico... has repackaged itself to divide up histories in different locations.
 - This is one method for avoiding certain legal structures and maximizing profit
 - It has also been used as a method to divide labor interests. Often ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural differences are used to turn groups with similar labor or class interests against each other
- We need to see the “whole” and “parts.”

What are “company” towns?



- **Then...**
- Company towns were touted as a “paternalistic” gesture of companies caring for workers...BUT...
- Towns were designed to create divisions among workers and inhibit organizing
- These towns allowed companies to exert control over not just workers’ professional lives...but also their home lives and families.



- Company housing was poor quality and company doctors and teachers were often underqualified and underfunded.
- The company even controlled the types of books and news publications (and by extension information and perspectives!) available in libraries, schools, and public spaces

Scrip

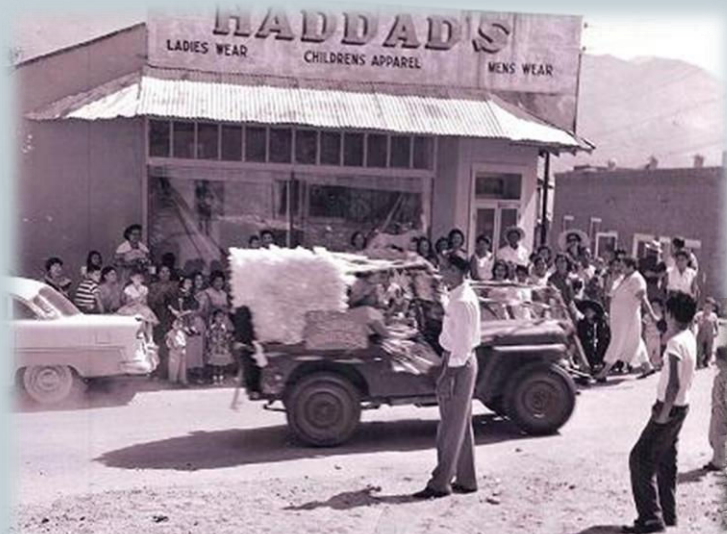


Some workers paid in “scrip” to be used at company stores with outrageously high prices!



- **Now...**
- In some areas of the world similar versions of these company towns still exist (will discuss Cananea later).
- Most U.S. company towns have either evolved into independent municipalities or turned into ghost towns
- Some towns were not designed by the company, but illustrate company's impact on health/living conditions.
- In the U.S. and abroad company towns DO NOT demonstrate “industrial paternalism” but rather “corporate neglect.”

Barcelona, Sonora, Ray, and Kearny



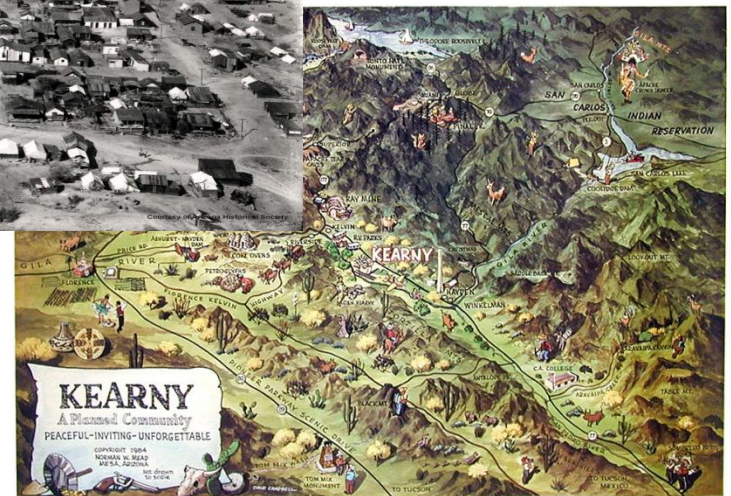
Barcelona, Sonora, and Ray were company towns for Spanish, Mexican, Anglo/Irish, respectively.

Ethnic segregation and discrimination plagued the towns

Old company towns were destroyed to create an expanded open pit mine in 1958-1964



Kearny was the “planned community” that replaced the company towns, but not everyone could afford to move there.



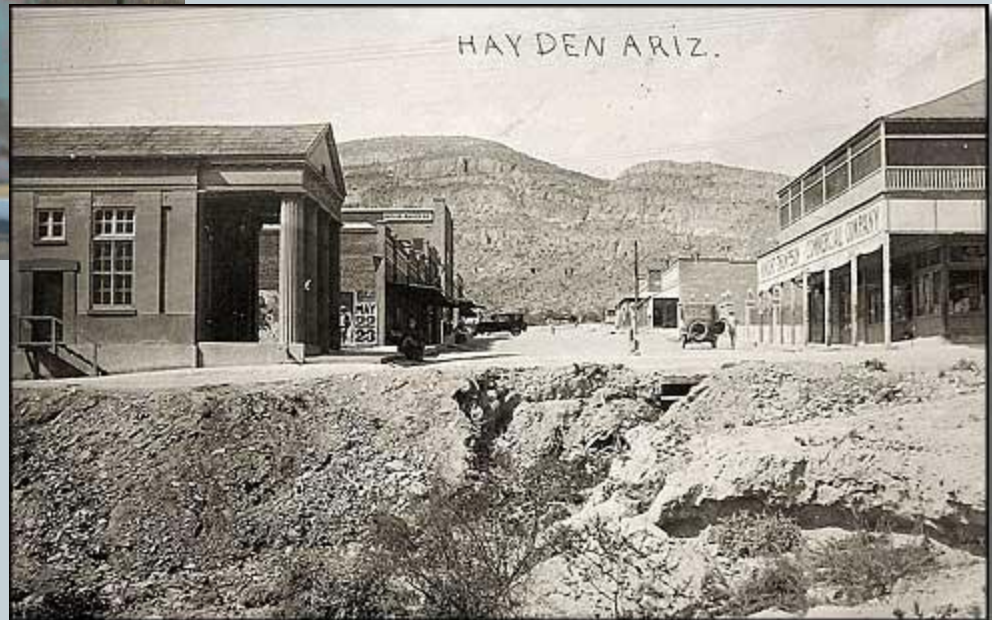
In 1986 ASARCO bought Kennecott Ray Mine

Hayden

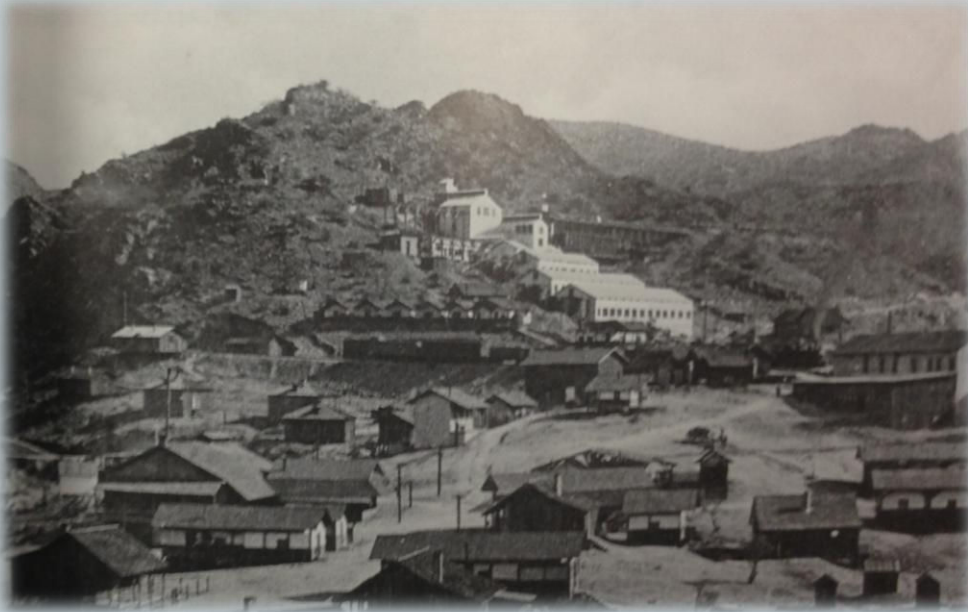


One of the first ASARCO company towns in the region (along with Kennecott interests)

1958, Hayden was incorporation as an independent township and won the All-American City designation of the National Municipal League



Silverbell



Now a ghost town, Silverbell was once a mining town that has been destroyed by ASARCO



El Paso



- El Paso was not designed as a company town, but exemplifies the lasting human and environmental scars of ASARCO ...