

Graham County
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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NEWS RELEASE

For release: Upon receipt

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Explore the mystery, intrigue of Graham County's ghost towns

GRAHAM COUNTY, ARIZ. – As one of the wildest states in the Old West, Arizona's history lives on in its abandoned ghost towns, many of which are tucked away in Graham County.

Experts consider ghost towns to be “any place where people once lived, or are still living, that is a shadow of its past glory.”

Southern Arizona is littered with the remains of mining towns and settlements built near water sources that have since dried up. Experts have named several ghost towns in Graham County including: Aravaipa, Bonita, Eden, Geronimo, Klondyke and Sanchez.

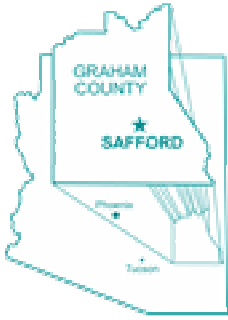
Perhaps the biggest Old West ghost town in Graham County is Klondyke. One version of the area's history states Klondyke was founded in the early 1900s and named for its Canadian counterpart. According to one version of the town's history, the founders couldn't spell very well, and the town wound up with a "y" instead of an "i" in its name.

Silver and lead were mainstays of the mines, and Klondyke's population peaked at about 500. Today, there are about a dozen residents that could tell any curious traveler the stories and glories of the town's past.

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Other versions say Klondyke was founded around the turn of the century by gold diggers who returned after gold rush in Klondike, which was in the Yukon Territory of Alaska. Settlers believed

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it would bring luck to name their new home after the big gold found in Klondike. To give the place some individuality, the settlers used "y" instead "i".

In 1904, the John F. Greenwood store and a United States Post Office opened. The town also had a school and a church. During the Depression, half of the town's residents left for greener pastures, and the post office closed in 1955.

Though its population is small, the curious and imaginative explorer will enjoy nosing around the old town.

Klondyke is located west of Graham County on Aravaipa/Klondyke Road.

Neighboring Klondyke is the town of Aravaipa, which had a post office from 1883 until 1893. For nine of those years, the town was known as Dunlap – after Burt Dunlap, a local rancher. The town was renamed after the Aravaipa Indians when the residents discovered another town by the same name.

There was also a school, store and even a pool hall in this mining and ranching town. Today, several buildings are left to explore.

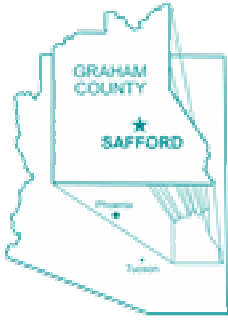
Aravaipa is located west of Graham County on Aravaipa/Klondyke Road.

Bonita was the town that catered to the soldiers and ranch hands who inhabited in the area. Fort Grant was a well-known outpost in the Old West, and many soldiers lived within its walls. The

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Post Office was established in 1884 and lasted until 1955.

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According to local legend, one of the Old West's most notorious troublemakers has ties to Bonita. Many believe Bonita was where Billy the Kid killed the first of many in his legendary lifetime.

Fort Grant has since been converted into a state prison that is still operational today.

Fort Grant is about 15 miles northwest of Safford off State Route 266.

Eden was an agricultural town established by Mormon settlers in the 1880s and named after the town of the same name in Utah. Though scattered, residents still remain in this town. Eden is about 15 miles northwest of Safford on Eden Road.

Geronimo was named after the famous Indian chief and used to be a station on the Arizona-Eastern railroad. The post office was established in 1896 and closed shortly thereafter. Because few structures are left standing, the rolling hills are all that's left to whisper the stories of the past. Geronimo is on Highway 70 between Bylas and Fort Thomas, west of Safford.

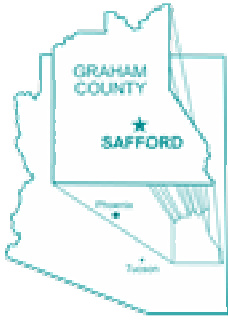
Sanchez was a small farming settlement along the Gila River which had a post office from 1901 to 1903. Sanchez is about five miles east of Safford.

Though many towns have few structures left, the imaginative explorer can piece the beautiful landscapes together with legends and history – much of which can be found at two local museums.

The Eastern Arizona Museum and Historical Society in Pima, which is open Wednesday through
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Thursday from 2 to 4 p.m. and Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m., and the Graham County Historical Society Museum in Thatcher, which is open Monday, Tuesday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4

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p.m., can offer stories, pictures and other signs of the past from the Prehistoric Era through the 20th century. Both museums are within driving distance of Safford, as are the county's ghost towns.

Safford is a central hub, allowing visitors to stay in one place for several days while exploring the outlying areas for the ghosts of the past. While in Safford, travelers can continue their journey to the past by taking a walking and driving tour of Graham County's historic buildings.

The drive to Safford is a short two hours from Tucson or three hours from Phoenix, and there are plenty of accommodations for weekend visitors, including primitive campgrounds, state-of-the-art RV parks, major hotel and motel chains, conference facilities, a bed and breakfast, a guest ranch and more.

Travelers can also enjoy the best Sonoran-style Mexican food in the state.

For driving directions or more information about the walking and driving tour, museums or Graham County, contact the Graham County Chamber of Commerce at (928) 428-2511, toll-free at 1-888-837-1841, email for information at info@graham-chamber.com or visit the Web site at www.visitgrahamcounty.com.

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