

# Digging for the Truth:

## ASARCO/Grupo Mexico Labor History Overview



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# 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

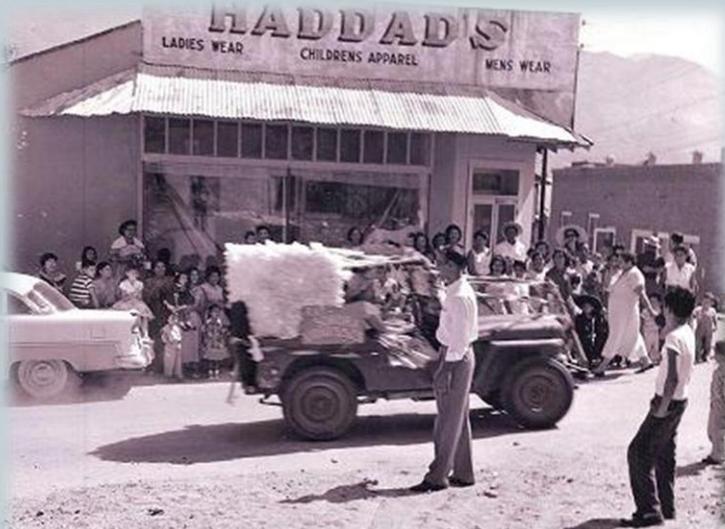


Some workers paid in “scrip” to be used at company stores with outrageously high prices!



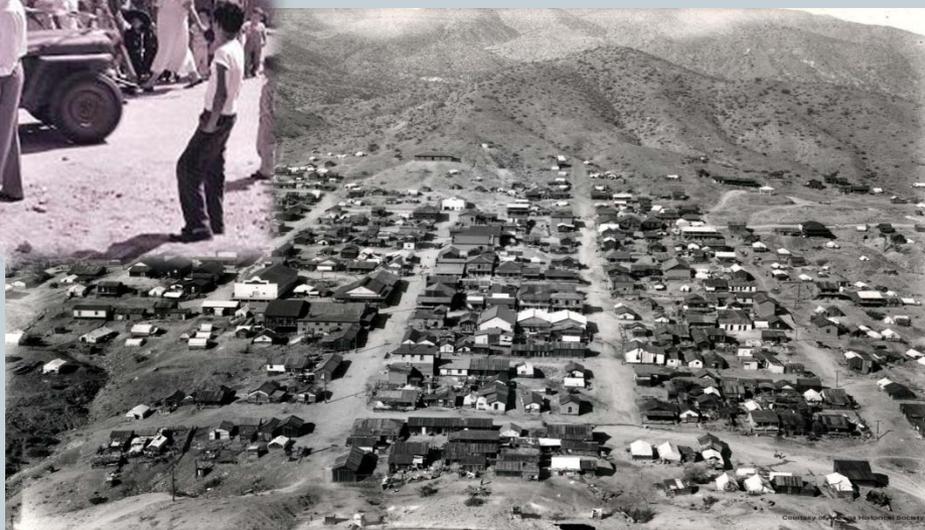
- **Now...**
- In some areas of the world similar versions of these company towns in still exist (will discuss Cananea later).
- Most U.S. company towns have either evolved into independent municipalities or turned into ghost towns
- Some towns were not designed by the company, but illustrate company's 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



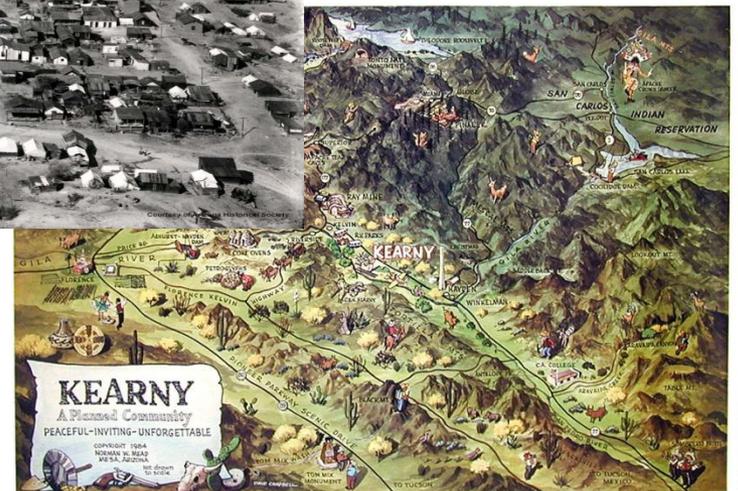
Barcelona, Sonora, and Ray were company towns for Spanish, Mexican, Anglo/Irish, respectively.

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.



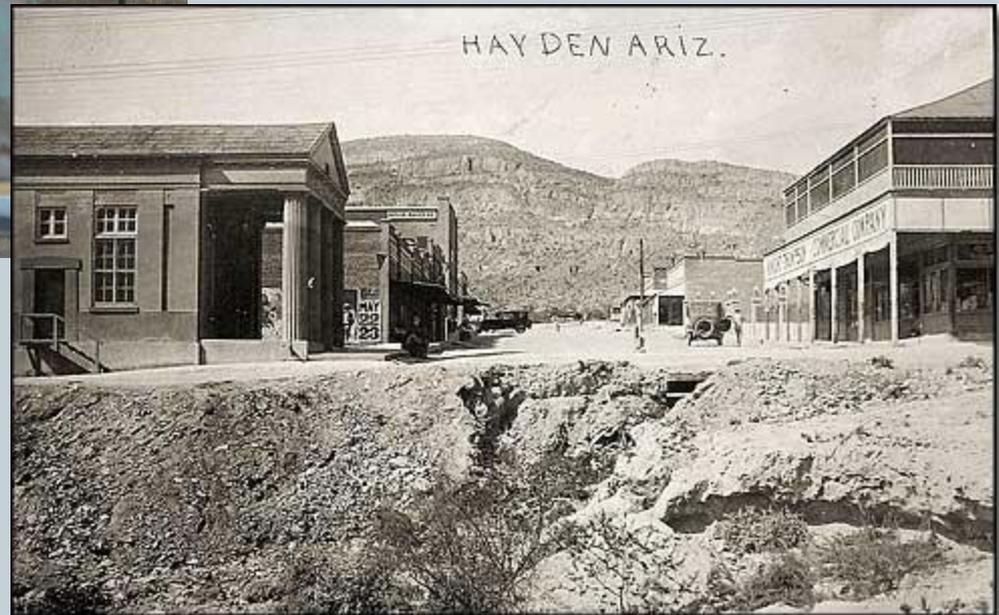
In 1986 ASARCO bought Kennecott Ray Mine

# Hayden

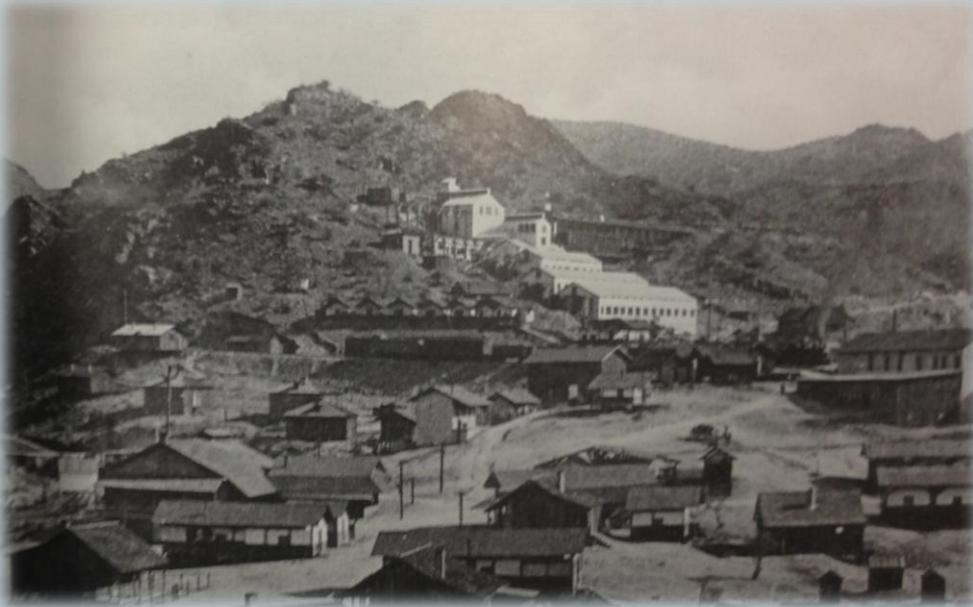


One of the first ASARCO  
company towns in the region  
(along with Kennecott interests)

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 ...