

Clarkdale, ARIZONA

A Historical and Industrial Study
Railroads, Smelting, and Community Development



View of downtown Main Street, Clarkdale, Arizona (c. mid-20th century)

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1. Introduction

Clarkdale, Arizona occupied a singular place in the history of the Verde Valley as a planned company town built to serve the copper smelting operations of the United Verde Copper Company. Unlike the organic growth that shaped many of its neighboring communities, Clarkdale emerged from deliberate design, conceived by mining executive William A. Clark and his engineers as an efficient, orderly settlement to support the relocation of smelting operations from Jerome to the valley floor. Its growth was inseparable from the fortunes of copper, from the railroads built to move ore and supplies, and from the social and civic institutions established to sustain a stable workforce and their families. Over time, Clarkdale evolved from a raw industrial camp into a distinctive community of upper and lower districts, a defined Main Street business core, and neighborhoods, schools, and churches that gave the town its lasting character even as the smelting industry that created it eventually declined.

This paper examines Clarkdale's development through a series of focused historical periods and themes, beginning with the business and residential history of the town, including the distinct character of Upper and Lower Town, the growth of Main Street commerce, and the civic and religious institutions that anchored community life. Subsequent sections trace the survival, preservation, and tourism efforts that sustained the town from the 1930s to the present. Top-level sections also explore the railroad history that made Clarkdale possible, from the United Verde & Pacific Railway to the Clarkdale Arizona Central Railway and its later legacy, followed by an examination of the smelter mining era that gave the town its founding purpose. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive narrative that traces how Clarkdale was built, sustained, and ultimately preserved as one of the Verde Valley's most historically significant communities.

1.1. Beyond this Paper

For readers who want to experience Clarkdale beyond these pages, the Central Arizona Research [website](#) offers an immersive [virtual tour](#) with narrated flyovers to historic sites and landmarks, alongside a curated [photo album](#), and interactive maps of the area's [railyards](#) and [railroads](#).

2. Business and Residential History

The business and residential history of Clarkdale illustrated how a planned company town matured into a self-sustaining community with its own social and economic character. From its earliest years, the town's layout reflected the deliberate hand of its corporate founders, with distinct districts established to house workers according to occupation and status, even as commercial activity along Main Street developed to serve the daily needs of a growing population. As Clarkdale matured beyond its origins as a smelter camp, these foundational divisions gave rise to a defined business core, established neighborhoods, and civic and religious institutions that anchored community life independent of the company that had built it.

This section examines the progression of Clarkdale's business and residential landscape through a series of focused subsections, beginning with the contrasting character of Upper and Lower Town and the social distinctions embedded in the town's original design. It explores the growth of Main Street as the town's commercial and civic heart, followed by an overview of the schools, churches, and other institutions that served residents and fostered a sense of permanence beyond the smelter's operations. The section concludes with an examination of Clarkdale's survival, preservation, and tourism efforts from the 1930s to the present, tracing how the town adapted and endured after the decline of the industry that had created it. Together, these topics illustrate how business activity and residential development were shaped by Clarkdale's origins as a company town, even as the community forged its own lasting identity.

2.1. Town Park

The park belonged to Clarkdale from the outset. When the United Verde Copper Company laid out the town in 1912, the plan provided residences, a business district, a hospital, schools, and a town park as parts of a single design, and the park was placed to separate the residential streets from the commercial strip rather than tucked onto whatever ground was left over. That siting is the clearest surviving expression of what the company meant by a model town. A visitor standing in it today occupies the seam the planners drew between where people worked and where they lived. The Sanborn Fire Insurance surveys record something further about how the ground came to be used. In October 1915 the block was marked as reserved for stores, platted for commercial building that never came, and by the December 1938 revision the same block carries the label PARK. Whether the change reflects a deliberate decision or an admission that the company's commercial ambitions had outrun what the town could support, the result was the same: land set aside for business became the place where the town gathered.

The gazebo has anchored the park for generations and remains its focal point, though the present structure is a rebuilding rather than the original, and the Town revisited its condition again in 2023. Around it the park now offers a playground, a turf field, ramadas, picnic tables, and restrooms, and it carries the civic calendar much as it always has. Free concerts run at the gazebo through the summer months, and block parties, festivals, and seasonal celebrations fill it through the rest of the year. That continuity is worth noting in a town that lost its smelter, its principal employer, and much of its population within a few years of 1953. The commercial row emptied and refilled, the depot burned, the smelter came down to slag and foundations, but the open ground at the center of the original town site has served the same purpose for more than a century.

Historic Town Park



2.2. Upper Town, Lower Town, and Patio Town

Clarkdale's original master plan divided the town into three residential districts, Upper Town, Lower Town, and Patio Town, each built to house a distinct segment of the smelter workforce along lines of both occupation and race. The following sections examine the history, purpose, and present-day character of each district.

Upper Town:

Upper Town is the oldest part of the historic town site, laid out as the more privileged of Clarkdale's residential districts under the master plan William A. Clark commissioned for his employees. Housing here was reserved for engineers and other salaried supervisory staff of the United Verde Copper Company, a distinction that shaped both the quality and character of the neighborhood from its earliest construction. Many of Upper Town's homes, built in the Craftsman style, were among the first constructed in Clarkdale, and the district became closely associated with this architectural tradition as the town developed through the 1910s and into the 1940s.

Fifty-five Bungalow-style homes, built between 1915 and 1917 using brick produced at Clarkdale's own brick plant, were concentrated largely in Upper Town, reflecting both the practical, cost-effective construction favored for the district and its intended occupants' relatively stable middle-class status. These homes, with their broad front porches and efficient interiors, were well suited to the Arizona climate and became a defining visual feature of the neighborhood. Today, Upper Town retains much of this architectural character, its wide streets and Craftsman and Bungalow homes forming a significant part of the Clarkdale Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Lower Town:

Lower Town lies east of Upper Town along Main Street and was designed under the original master plan to house the town's working-class employees, a population distinct from the engineers and management housed above. Although company promotional literature published in 1917 claimed free mobility between Upper and Lower towns, the disparity in housing stock, pricing, and layout told a different story. The 1920 census recorded Lower Town's residents as the smelter's mechanics, clerks, and general laborers, drawn from fifteen different nations across Asia, northern and southern Europe, and Canada, making it a notably diverse working-class community within the segregated framework of the company town.

Of the roughly 100 families recorded in Lower Town at that time, only four were of Mexican origin, as the majority of Clarkdale's Mexican and Native American workers instead lived in the separate Patio Town district built adjacent to the smelter. Following the closure of major mining operations in 1953, abandoned houses in Lower Town were heavily remodeled as Clarkdale's population began to expand again in later decades, altering some of the district's original housing stock even as its street layout and historic core endured. Lower Town remains part of the Clarkdale Historic District today, its more modest homes standing as a counterpoint to Upper Town's Craftsman residences and a lasting record of the social divisions built into the town from its founding.

Patio Town:

Patio Town was where the company put the workers it valued least. Built between 1916 and 1929 on low ground across Bitter Creek, north of Lower Town and beside the smelter itself, it was the last of Clarkdale's three residential districts to be laid out and the only one placed in the plant's own smoke. Its three streets carried names that made the intent plain, Fiesta and Siesta among them, and it was set aside for the Mexican and Native American men who worked the smelter. The housing matched the siting. Where Upper Town received individual homes on generous lots with sidewalks and fenced yards, and Lower Town standardized brick cottages, Patio Town got duplexes and fourplexes divided by a breezeway in which two households shared a single bathroom and laundry. A surviving example on Fiesta Street dates to 1917. Segregation extended past housing to recreation, the town swimming pool being marked for whites only while Patio Town made do with a pool and park of its own, and the 1920 census bears out

how firmly the lines held: of the hundred families living in Lower Town, four were of Mexican origin. Company literature published in 1917 advertised free movement among the three districts, a claim the rents, the lot sizes, and the plat itself contradict. The neighborhood survives today as the Patio Park Subdivision, its early houses still standing, and the Town adopted a revitalization strategy for it in 2024.

Historic Upper Town, Lower Town, and Patio Town



2.3. Main Street

Main Street formed the commercial spine of Clarkdale from the town's earliest planning, a single row of storefronts on Upper Town's principal block that was built to hold everything a self-contained company town required, from groceries and banking to entertainment and civic administration. Fire insurance surveys taken in October 1915 and again in December 1938 preserve a detailed record of this row's occupancy across more than two decades, capturing a commercial district that grew and reconfigured through the smelter's boom years and into the Depression rather than simply declining. What follows traces each address along this block, from the company store and bank near Ninth Street to the theater, lodge hall, and service station further west, drawing on the Sanborn surveys, the National Register nomination, and oral histories to document what is confirmed and, where the record is incomplete or contradictory, what remains open to question.

890 Main Street:

The building originally functioned as Clarkdale's administrative offices, grouped within the public complex alongside the Clark Memorial Clubhouse and St. Cecilia's Catholic Church at the eastern end of Upper Town. No confirmed construction date survives, though its architectural kinship with the Clubhouse (1926–1927) and Clarkdale High School (1927–1928), both designed by Fitzhugh and Brown, suggests a similar late-1920s construction date. Town literature identifies the building as a former post office, but the 1915 Sanborn survey places the post office in rented storefront space elsewhere in the commercial row, and by 1938 that office had moved again, so any postal use here should be treated cautiously. The building continues to serve as Clarkdale's town hall today.

903 Main Street:

The company store, operated by T.F. Miller, occupied this corner address from Clarkdale's earliest commercial development, and it is the one business in the row whose early occupancy is confirmed independently of the Sanborn surveys, through the National Register nomination's account of Miller's 1919 warehouse. By December 1938, the store had modernized with an electric refrigeration plant, absorbing the meat market recorded here in 1915 into its expanded operation. Oral histories collected by the Clarkdale Historical Society identify Selna's Grocery as the business that carried this location through

the years following the smelter boom, though that identification remains unconfirmed for this specific address.

907 Main Street:

A bank occupied this address as early as the October 1915 Sanborn survey and remained unchanged through the December 1938 revision, one of only two occupancies in the row to show that continuity across boom, contraction, and Depression. Oral histories name the Bank of Arizona as Clarkdale's banking house during this period, pointing to this location, though the surveys themselves record only the function rather than the institution's name. A conflicting date of 1918 for a brick building at this address appears in the Wikipedia list of historic Clarkdale properties, but that source contains known errors and should not be relied upon without corroboration.

909 Main Street:

Clarkdale's post office occupied this frontage as of the October 1915 Sanborn survey, notable because the town was not yet incorporated at the time, making the federal post office a rare civic anchor within an otherwise company-administered settlement. By December 1938, the post office had relocated, and the space had been subdivided and relet to needle trades, tentatively identified as a tailor and either a jeweler or a second tailor, with a dry cleaner operating behind them. The 1938 trade identifications remain provisional given the small scale of the survey's lettering, but the post office's departure by that date is clearly established.

913 Main Street:

This address held Clarkdale's densest cluster of small trades from the outset, recorded in the October 1915 survey as a cigar stand, a barber, and a pool hall sharing the frontage, businesses characteristic of a mining town's off-shift social life. By December 1938, the cigar stand and pool hall both persisted in their original form, while the barber's unit had been reconfigured. The pool hall's twenty-three-year survival through both the boom years and the Depression suggests its enduring place in the town's daily routine.

915 Main Street:

A dry goods store with an adjoining unit occupied this address as of the October 1915 survey. By December 1938, the listing had expanded to dry goods and gentlemen's furnishing goods, a standard Sanborn pairing for a store selling both yard goods and ready-made menswear, while a grocery had been added at the rear, evidence that Upper Town's commercial district was still adding retail capacity into the Depression years. Both the 1938 expansion and the added grocery require confirmation against a higher-resolution copy of the survey, and a separately reported "old sidewalk café" dated 1914 at this address, found in the Wikipedia list of historic properties, is unsupported by either survey and should be treated cautiously.

917 Main Street:

A drug store occupied this address in identical form in both the 1915 and 1938 Sanborn surveys, one of only two businesses in the row to show that continuity, consistent with a druggist's role as both dispensary and informal gathering place in a company town. Oral histories name a proprietor recalled with uncertainty as Harrah's among the businesses that survived into the years following the boom. That name and any associated dates warrant further pursuit through the Clarkdale Historical Society's oral history transcripts, since no proprietor or ownership date range is confirmed in the cartographic record.

919 Main Street:

This building housed the Grand Theatre, a moving-picture house, together with a lodge and dance hall beneath it, recorded unchanged in both the October 1915 and December 1938 Sanborn surveys, concentrating Clarkdale's entire evening social life at one address. A construction date of 1917 is sometimes given for the theater in oral histories and published property lists, though the building and its use already appear in the earlier 1915 survey. In 2015, the property was purchased together with 921 Main Street from Searchlight Minerals by Albert M. and Jodie S. Filardo and absorbed into Clarkdale LLC,

with Craig and Becky Backus later joining as partners; the two parcels were divided in 2018, after which 919 passed to a separate, undocumented history through the 1938–1980s period when Searchlight Materials held the property.

921 Main Street:

The corner building at Main and Tenth Streets opened in 1915 as the W.P. Scott Furniture Store, sharing the building with the W.P. Scott Undertaking Parlor facing Tenth Street and the offices of Upper Verde Public Utilities, despite blueprints from 1913–1914 having designated the structure the Bank of Jerome. Following a 1927 renovation by the United Verde Copper Company, the furniture store left for Cottonwood in 1932 and was replaced by Miner's Hardware, while a succession of tenants including Lindner's Showroom (1946–1957), Charlotte's Beauty Shop (1940–1968), and an Econowash laundromat (1960–1979) occupied the space through the mid-twentieth century. Later tenants included law offices, a video store, and an art gallery in the 1980s, followed by a coffee shop, Salsa de Border, Alcora Marble, and the e-Go Gallery between the 1990s and 2009. Since 2020 the corner has housed Smelter Town Brewery, making it the only address in the row in continuous documented commercial use from 1915 to the present.

910 Main Street:

Situated across Main Street from the primary commercial row, this building held a confectionery and a bakery side by side as of the October 1915 Sanborn survey, one of the few developed lots on a side of the street otherwise platted for stores but left largely vacant. By December 1938, the operation had grown into a bake house with ovens and refrigeration alongside an adjoining restaurant, though whether this represented one continuous business or two separate operations cannot be determined from the surveyors' occupancy labels. A bar was added to the building in the 1950s, extending its service of food and drink into the years surrounding the smelter's closure.

924 Main Street:

Clarkdale Classic Station, a Texaco service station designed by industrial designer Walter Dorwin Teague, was built at this address around 1939 according to the National Register nomination, though the station's present operators date construction to 1942, a discrepancy that remains unresolved. Its copper-clad exterior, a deliberate substitution for Teague's standard porcelain enamel design, tied the building directly to the smelting industry that built the town. The station has operated continuously since construction and has run as Clarkdale Classic Station under Mike Hensley since 1989, who has progressively restored its copper cladding.

Historic Main Street Clarkdale





2.4. Schools, Medical Clinic, Lodges, Etc.

Beyond its commercial core, Clarkdale's master plan provided for the civic and social institutions expected of any established town, including schools, a medical clinic, cemeteries, and the lodges and churches that anchored community life outside of work at the smelter. These institutions, several of which trace back to the town's earliest years, mark Clarkdale's evolution from a company camp into a settlement built to sustain itself. What follows traces the founding and development of each, along with what became of them as Clarkdale grew beyond its origins as a smelter town.

Schools:

Clarkdale's first public school opened in February 1913, barely a year after the town's founding, beginning with twenty pupils; enrollment had grown to nearly a hundred by the start of the following school year, a pace that reflected the smelter's rapid buildup of workforce and families. Clarkdale High School followed later in the town's development, built in 1927–1928 by the Phoenix architectural firm of Fitzhugh and Brown, the same partnership responsible for the Clark Memorial Clubhouse. The high school operated until 1951, when it was consolidated with Jerome High School into the newly formed Mingus Union High School. Today, Clarkdale's younger students attend school within the Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary School District, while high school students continue to attend Mingus Union High School.

Medical Clinic:

Clarkdale's clinic was constructed during the influenza pandemic of 1918–1919, a period of acute urgency for a company town whose entire workforce lived in close company housing. The clinic dispensed medicine and treated minor injuries for smelter workers and their families on a 24-hour basis, functioning as the town's primary medical facility through the following three decades. It closed in the early 1950s, coinciding with the broader decline of the smelting operations that had justified its founding. The building survives today as the home of the Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum, which has occupied the former clinic since its 2008 opening.

Lodges and Churches:

Beneath the Grand Theatre at 919 Main Street, a purpose-built lodge and dance hall operated from at least 1915 to 1938, serving as a gathering space for an unidentified fraternal order that provided fellowship, sickness, and burial benefits to the local mining community. Nearby, St. Thomas Episcopal Church opened in 1917 after receiving major financial backing from Mary Clark Kling, daughter of Senator William A. Clark, in memory of her son Gerald, with the Phelps Dodge Corporation later donating the church land in 1958 alongside a historic Clarkdale to Jerome locomotive bell that still rings at services today. To round out Upper Clarkdale's civic center, St. Cecilia's Catholic Church was established nearby through a 1920 land lease from the Bishop of Tucson and constructed in 1924 by Claretian missionaries, giving the town center a Catholic counterpart to St. Thomas alongside the existing Clark Memorial Clubhouse and administrative building.

Cemetery:

Valley View Cemetery was established and platted as part of Clarkdale's original town site, with its first recorded burial, that of Cornelius G. Shea, a native of Ireland, taking place in August 1913. The cemetery remained under company oversight until 1959, when management was transferred to the Town of Clarkdale, which continues to operate it today with plots still available for burial and cremains interment. A second burial ground, the Jerome Valley Cemetery, also known as the Old Pioneer Cemetery, lies within Clarkdale's boundaries but is owned and operated by the neighboring Town of Jerome; it was established in 1917, also in response to an influenza outbreak.

Historic Clarkdale

			
Gas Station	Lodge	Bakery / Restaurant	Administrative
			
Church	High School	Elementary School	Cemetery
			
Down Main Street	Main Street Corner	Clark Clubhouse	Medical Clinic

2.5. Survival, Preservation, and Tourism

Clarkdale's fortunes shifted decisively in the mid-1930s, when Phelps Dodge Mining Corporation purchased the United Verde operation following the deaths of several members of the Clark family, operating the company and the town under a markedly different management style than the original founders. The smelter continued processing ore from Jerome until its closure in 1953, ending four decades of copper production that had given the town its purpose. Facing the loss of its sole industry and employer, Clarkdale incorporated as an independent municipality in 1957, a transition that placed the town's future in the hands of its own residents for the first time. The arrival of the Phoenix Cement Company west of town in 1959 helped offset the smelter's absence, providing a new industrial base even as many of Lower Town's vacated houses were remodeled to accommodate a slowly rebuilding population.

Clarkdale's modern era of preservation and tourism took shape gradually across the following decades. The original town site, including both Upper and Lower Town, was formally recognized as the Clarkdale Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 and 1998, protecting the Craftsman and Bungalow homes, the Clark Memorial Clubhouse, and the Main Street commercial row that had defined the town since the 1910s. The former rail line that once carried ore and supplies to the smelter

found new purpose as the Verde Canyon Railroad, a scenic excursion train offering passengers a four-hour round trip along the Verde River into the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Area, while its parent company, Arizona Central Railroad, continued shipping materials to the Phoenix Cement Company's successor operations. The Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum, established within the town's former medical clinic, opened to the public in 2008, followed in 2012 by the Arizona Copper Art Museum, which opened its doors during the joint centennial celebrations of Clarkdale and Arizona statehood and later expanded into the former Miller's Market building on Main Street in 2022.

Today, Clarkdale is largely a retirement and arts community, its population of roughly 4,200 to 4,400 residents supported by tourism, small business, education through the Yavapai College Verde Campus, and continued rail freight service, a striking contrast to its origins as a single-industry company town. The Clarkdale Downtown Business Alliance and roughly \$1.5 million in streetscape improvements completed in 2005 have helped sustain Main Street as a functioning commercial district rather than a static museum piece, with restored storefronts now housing restaurants, galleries, and shops alongside the town's historic civic buildings. From a planned smelter town built to serve a single corporation to an independent municipality defined by heritage tourism and small-town character, Clarkdale's history since the 1930s reflects a community that not only survived the loss of its founding industry but built a deliberate, preservation-minded identity from what remained. This balance between historical authenticity and modern reinvention continues to define Clarkdale today, distinguishing it within the Verde Valley as a town whose planned origins remain visible in nearly every street and building that survives.

3. Railroad History

There were three railways in the Verde Valley built to support the smelters located in Clemenceau and Clarkdale, and together they formed a network that moved ore, freight, and passengers across a landscape shaped entirely by copper.

3.1. The Verde Tunnel & Smelter Railway

The first railway was the Verde Tunnel & Smelter Railway (VT&S), a standard-gauge line financed by William A. Clark and built beginning in 1911 to eventually carry ore from the United Verde Mine in Jerome down to the new smelter at Clarkdale. Construction was part of a broader series of projects Clark undertook that year to relocate his surface operations off the unstable, fire-damaged ground above the Jerome mine and consolidate them on the valley floor. The new Clarkdale smelter was not blown in until 1915, and it was only at that point, once the smelter itself was operational, that the VT&S began hauling ore on the route it had spent the preceding years being built to serve.

The line reached the Jerome mine through the Hopewell Haulage Tunnel, a bore roughly 7,200 feet long (reported elsewhere as approximately 1.25 miles) driven beneath Cleopatra Hill to connect the mine's underground workings directly to the rail line below. Ore reached the tunnel's portal by electric haulage, with 25-ton electric locomotives pulling 40-ton bottom-dump ore cars, a notably advanced setup for its time; Clark had electrified operations at Jerome as early as 1909, well ahead of larger rivals such as Phelps Dodge, which was still relying on mules to haul ore underground. By 1916, ore was passing through the Hopewell Tunnel to the Clarkdale smelter on a regular basis. The line was extended to Jerome by 1919, at which point it rendered Clark's original narrow-gauge line, the United Verde & Pacific Railway, completely obsolete; the UV&P, chartered in 1894, ran its last train in May 1920 after roughly a quarter-century of service.

West of Cottonwood, the VT&S met a wye that connected it to the Arizona-Extension Railway's eastern branch, allowing ore and freight to be routed between the Clarkdale and Clemenceau smelters as operational needs required. This junction underscores how closely the Verde Valley's rival mining interests, Clark's United Verde Copper Company and Douglas's UVX operation, were bound together by shared infrastructure even as they competed underground. The VT&S remained in service for decades, continuing to move ore from Jerome to the Clarkdale smelter until it shut down alongside the mine and smelter closures of 1953. Little physical evidence of the line survives today, though its general route through the Verde Canyon corridor overlaps with track still used for freight and excursion service.

3.2. The United Verde Extension Railway

The second railway was the Arizona-Extension Railway, incorporated by James Douglas Jr. on September 15, 1916, to serve his United Verde Extension (UVX) Mining Company, and sometimes referred to locally as the United Verde Extension Railway. Douglas's original ambitions for the line were considerably larger than what was ultimately built: the incorporation described a proposed 160-mile route connecting Clarkdale to Mesa, linking with the Arizona Eastern Railroad and Douglas's own Tucson, Phoenix and Tidewater Railroad. Only the local segment serving the UVX operation was completed. Construction of the smelter town of Verde, later renamed Clemenceau in 1920, began around January 1918, and the smelter itself was operating by 1917 to 1918, meaning a functioning rail connection was in place to support it by that time.

The completed railway operated in two branches radiating from Clemenceau. The western branch ran to the eastern portal of the 2.5-mile Josephine Tunnel, a separate bore from the Hopewell Tunnel, driven to reach the UVX mine workings near Jerome from a different point on the mountain. This routing let Douglas's operation avoid Jerome's difficult terrain and congested surface trackage entirely, much as Clark's Hopewell Tunnel had done for the United Verde Mine; ore emerging from the Josephine Tunnel's portal continued on by rail to the Clemenceau smelter for processing. The eastern branch connected Clemenceau directly to Clarkdale, tying the UVX smelter operation into the broader rail network Clark had

built for the United Verde Copper Company and enabling the interchange traffic that passed through the wye west of Cottonwood. The Arizona-Extension Railway operated for roughly two decades, closing alongside the Clemenceau smelter in 1937 and the exhaustion of the UVX ore body the following year.

Between them, the Hopewell and Josephine tunnels represented the two rival companies' independent solutions to the same underlying problem: Cleopatra Hill's ore bodies sat beneath a mountain too steep, too built-up, and too geologically unstable to move ore across by ordinary surface track. Each company bored its own tunnel through a different face of the same ridge rather than sharing infrastructure with a competitor, even as their railways ultimately interchanged with one another at the wye west of Cottonwood.

3.3. The Clarkdale Arizona Central Railway

The third railway was the Clarkdale Arizona Central Railway, originally built in 1911 and 1912 as the Verde Valley Railway to link Clarkdale with the Santa Fe Railway system at Drake. The Santa Fe began grading the standard-gauge, 38-mile line in 1911, and construction crews, numbering several hundred men by various accounts, completed the route using picks, shovels, and dynamite within about a year, finishing the same year Arizona achieved statehood. The line's most demanding stretch ran roughly 18 miles between Perkinsville and Clarkdale, following the twisting course of the Verde River through Verde Canyon so closely that in places the river and the tracks share only a few feet of space, and it required boring a significant tunnel through a rock promontory along the way.

Unlike the Verde Tunnel & Smelter Railway and the United Verde Extension line, which existed primarily to move ore, this railway also carried passengers, connecting Clarkdale residents to Drake and the wider Santa Fe railway system beyond the Verde Valley. Its purpose shifted after the Clarkdale smelter closed in 1953: freight traffic that had once supported ore and copper shipments largely disappeared, and the line's survival was secured instead in 1959, when the Phoenix Cement Company began operations and became its principal remaining customer. Its successor, the Arizona Central Railroad, continues to operate along much of the original route today, hauling materials for the cement plant's successor operations while also running the Verde Canyon Railroad, a scenic excursion service launched in November 1990 that now carries tens of thousands of passengers annually through the same canyon the original grading crews carved out more than a century earlier.

The line has been served by several successive depots. The line's first depot came with the railroad itself: the Verde Valley Railway, chartered in November 1911 as a Santa Fe subsidiary, reached Clarkdale on delivering the coke, limestone, and supplies the smelter depended on alongside outbound copper, mail, and passengers. That original depot was built in 1912, a modest board-and-batten frame building bearing the Santa Fe herald, stood near the present-day Verde Canyon Railway depot. The original depot burned down sometime prior to 1932. A second depot was built at the same location but was dismantled and moved near Miller Road in 1932. This depot burned down in the 1970s. All passenger service to Clarkdale ended in 1955. Clarkdale then went without a station for nearly twenty years, until Utah short-line operator David L. Durbano purchased the branch in 1988 and, as the Arizona Central Railroad, restored both freight and, on November 23, 1990, passenger service under the name Verde Canyon Railroad. The current depot, and Clarkdale's second depot, sits at 300 North Broadway. The depot is a Southwest-style building housing the John Bell Railroad Museum, that now anchors a line carrying roughly 100,000 excursion passengers annually alongside freight still moving coal, coke, lime, bauxite, and cement to and from the plant occupying the old smelter ground.

Historic Railroad

			
1st Train Depot	1st Train Depot Ruins	1st Train Depot Ruins	2nd Train Depot
			
Abandoned Train Trestle	Abandoned Train Tracks	T.F. Miller Warehouse	Smelter Superintendent's House

3.4. Connecting Jerome to Cottonwood and Clarkdale

By the early 1920s, the Verde Valley's two competing copper operations, William A. Clark's United Verde Copper Company and James Douglas Jr.'s United Verde Extension Mining Company, were bound together by a single interconnected rail system, even though the two companies mined the same ore body from opposite sides of Cleopatra Hill and answered to entirely different owners. At the system's northern end, ore left the United Verde Mine in Jerome by two separate routes carved through the mountain itself: the Verde Tunnel & Smelter Railway reached the mine through the 7,200-foot Hopewell Tunnel, hauling ore down to the Clarkdale smelter, while UVX ore reached the Arizona-Extension Railway's western branch through the shorter 2.5-mile Josephine Tunnel, emerging at Clemenceau without either line ever entering Jerome's congested townsite. Two tunnels, bored on either side of the same ridge, solved the same basic problem for two rival companies: how to move ore off a mountain too steep and too built-up to carry it any other way.

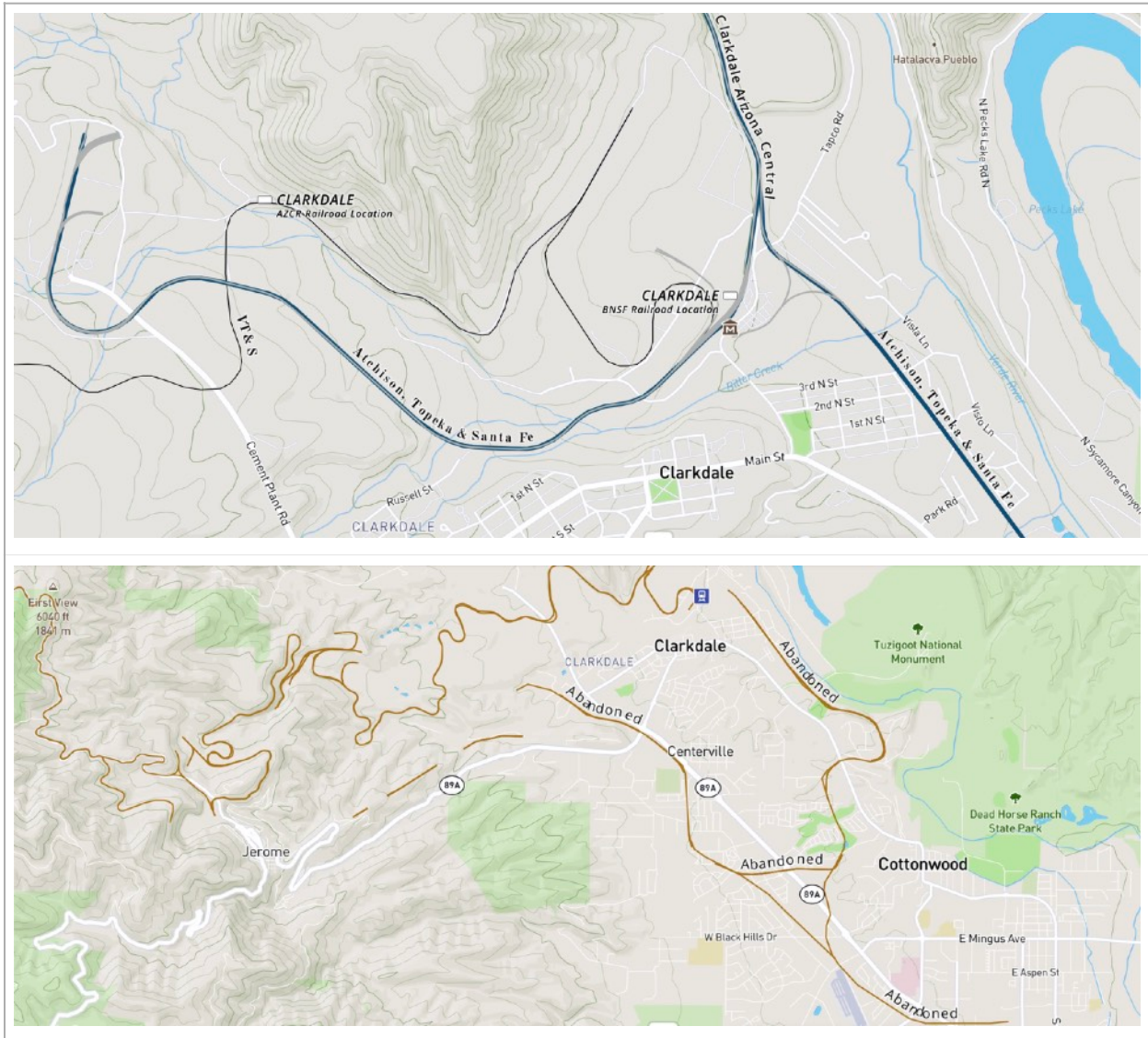
South of Jerome, the system's two branches came together at the wye west of Cottonwood, the physical point where the VT&S met the Arizona-Extension Railway's eastern branch running from Clemenceau to Clarkdale. This junction meant ore, coke, limestone, and general freight could be routed between either smelter as operational needs required, rather than each company operating in complete isolation; the Clarkdale and Clemenceau smelters, though owned separately and located roughly four miles apart, functioned as two ends of one interconnected industrial corridor rather than as truly independent operations. The Clarkdale smelter, blown in in 1915 and expanded through the 1920s with its distinctive steel and brick smokestacks, was by far the larger and longer-lived of the two, while the Clemenceau smelter, operational by 1917 to 1918, processed UVX ore until its closure in 1937, a year ahead of the exhaustion of the UVX ore body itself in 1938.

A fourth line completed the network by connecting it to the outside world. The Verde Valley Railway, built in 1911 and 1912 as the Clarkdale Arizona Central Railway's predecessor, ran west from Clarkdale to Drake, where it joined the Santa Fe's mainline system, giving both smelters, by way of the wye and the Clarkdale yard, their only outbound connection to national rail traffic. Coke, machinery, and supplies came in along this same route from Drake, while finished copper went out. Taken together, these four railways and two tunnels functioned as a single system engineered to solve one problem from multiple directions:

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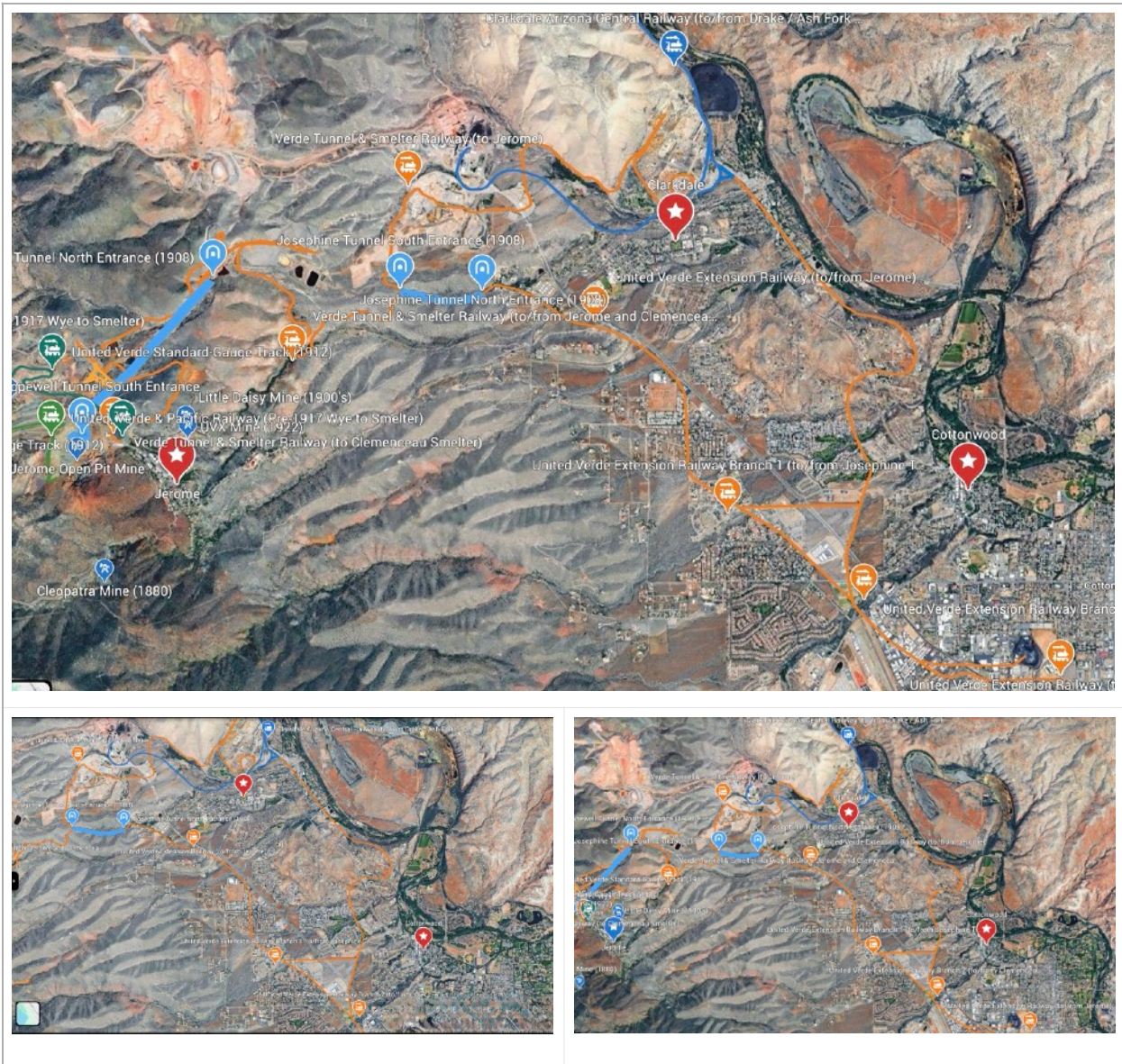
moving ore off Cleopatra Hill, through two competing smelters, and out to the rest of the country, regardless of which company's name was on the ore car.

Historic Clarkdale Area Railway Connections



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Historic Verde Valley Railway Connections



4. Smelter Mining Era

Clarkdale exists because of a single industrial decision: William A. Clark's choice to relocate the United Verde Copper Company's smelting operations away from Jerome and onto the floor of the Verde Valley. That decision was not a matter of preference but of necessity. Unquenchable fires, burning in the United Verde mine's high-sulfur ore since 1894, had made continued underground mining beneath Jerome increasingly untenable, and the surface plant itself sat directly above the ore body Clark needed to exploit. Converting to open-pit mining required clearing that ground entirely, which meant the smelter, the rail lines that fed it, and eventually an entire company town had to be built anew in the valley below.

The result was the Clarkdale smelter, blown in during 1915 and, at three times the size of its Jerome predecessor, one of the largest copper-processing facilities in the region. For the next thirty-eight years, it stood at the center of Clarkdale's economy and identity, processing ore hauled down by the Verde Tunnel & Smelter Railway and drawing the workforce that filled Upper and Lower Town homes and Main Street's storefronts. What follows examines the smelter's construction, operation, and eventual closure in 1953, the industrial engine that made every other aspect of Clarkdale's history, its neighborhoods, its railroads, its churches and schools, possible in the first place.

4.1. Clarkdale Smelter

Smelting was the essential final step in the underground mining economy that Clark had built in Jerome, transforming the sulfide-rich copper ore drawn from the United Verde's deep shafts into usable metal. By 1911, that mine had outgrown its Jerome smelter, a facility hemmed in by steep terrain, scarce water, and a location sitting directly atop the ore body Clark needed to exploit through open-pit methods. The solution was to move the entire smelting operation off the mountain and onto the flat, well-watered ground of the Verde Valley below, a decision that required building not just a new smelter but the railroads, utilities, and company town needed to support it.

Construction of the Clarkdale smelter began in 1912, alongside temporary frame structures erected nearby to house a store and post office in what became known as Patio Town; a fire in 1914 destroyed most of these early buildings, leaving only the jail and the Loftus Pool Hall standing. The permanent smelter took shape over the following three years, and on May 26, 1915, the first furnace was blown in, sending sulfur-laden smoke skyward from a 400-foot steel stack visible for miles across the valley. At three times the size of its Jerome predecessor, the new smelter was built to process 3,000 tons of ore daily through four blast furnaces and four stands of converters, and by its peak year of 1929 it was handling 1.75 million tons of ore annually and producing roughly 12 million pounds of copper bullion each month.

Because the Clarkdale smelter could not tolerate losing power the Arizona Power Company built TAPCO in 1917 because water had proven unreliable: its hydroelectric stations at Childs and Irving on Fossil Creek failed repeatedly during washouts and lightning storms, and the interruptions fell hardest on its largest customer, the United Verde Copper Company. The steam auxiliary was sited for that customer's convenience, about three miles up the Verde River from Clarkdale on twelve acres of irrigated farmland bought from the Verde Fruit Farms Company and enclosed in a bend of the river, drawing boiler water from the river and receiving coal over a 2,800-foot standard-gauge spur off the Verde Valley Railroad.

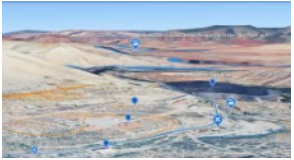
The complex grew further in 1922 with the addition of a Cottrell electrostatic precipitator plant, designed to capture flue dust and reduce sulfur emissions, paired with a second, even taller smokestack: a 430-foot brick tower built with more than two million pounds of brick. For the next several decades, these two stacks, one steel and one brick, stood side by side as Clarkdale's defining silhouette, visible from Cottonwood, Jerome, and much of the surrounding valley. The smelter's operational buildings extended along the ridge above the Verde River, with the Smelter Superintendent's House built in 1916 positioned between the smelter complex and the T.F. Miller Warehouse, placing the site's senior on-site manager

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within immediate reach of both operations. The T.F. Miller Warehouse itself, a four-story reinforced concrete building raised in 1919 to 1920 just north of Upper Town beside the railroad and the smelter, served as the company store's supply depot, replacing an earlier company store location on Main Street's east corner at Ninth Street. Clark's own family maintained a further presence nearby: the Clark Mansion, a Spanish Colonial Revival residence designed by Fitzhugh and Byron, the same architects behind the Clark Memorial Clubhouse and Clarkdale High School, was built near Peck's Lake in the late 1920s and became home to William Clark III in 1928.

Phelps Dodge Corporation purchased the entire operation, smelter, mine, land, and town, from Clark's heirs in 1935 for \$21 million, following the deaths of several Clark family members in rapid succession earlier that decade. The smelter's furnaces were shut down around 1950 to 1951 as the minable copper in Jerome ran low and postwar demand softened, though final closure of both the smelter and the Jerome mine is generally dated to 1953, the point at which Clarkdale's identity as an active company town effectively ended. Both smokestacks continued to stand as landmarks for roughly a decade after operations ceased, until they were demolished in the 1960s. Little of the smelter complex itself survives today, but its former site, along with the historic core it built around it, remains the anchor of Clarkdale's identity and the subject on which nearly every other section of this paper depends.

Historic Smelter

			
View from Warehouse	Smelter	Smelter	View from Marker
			
Smoke Stack	View from Railroad	Down Smelter Road	TAPCO Power Plant

Today, there is not much currently that is still visible or standing from the Clarkdale smelter.

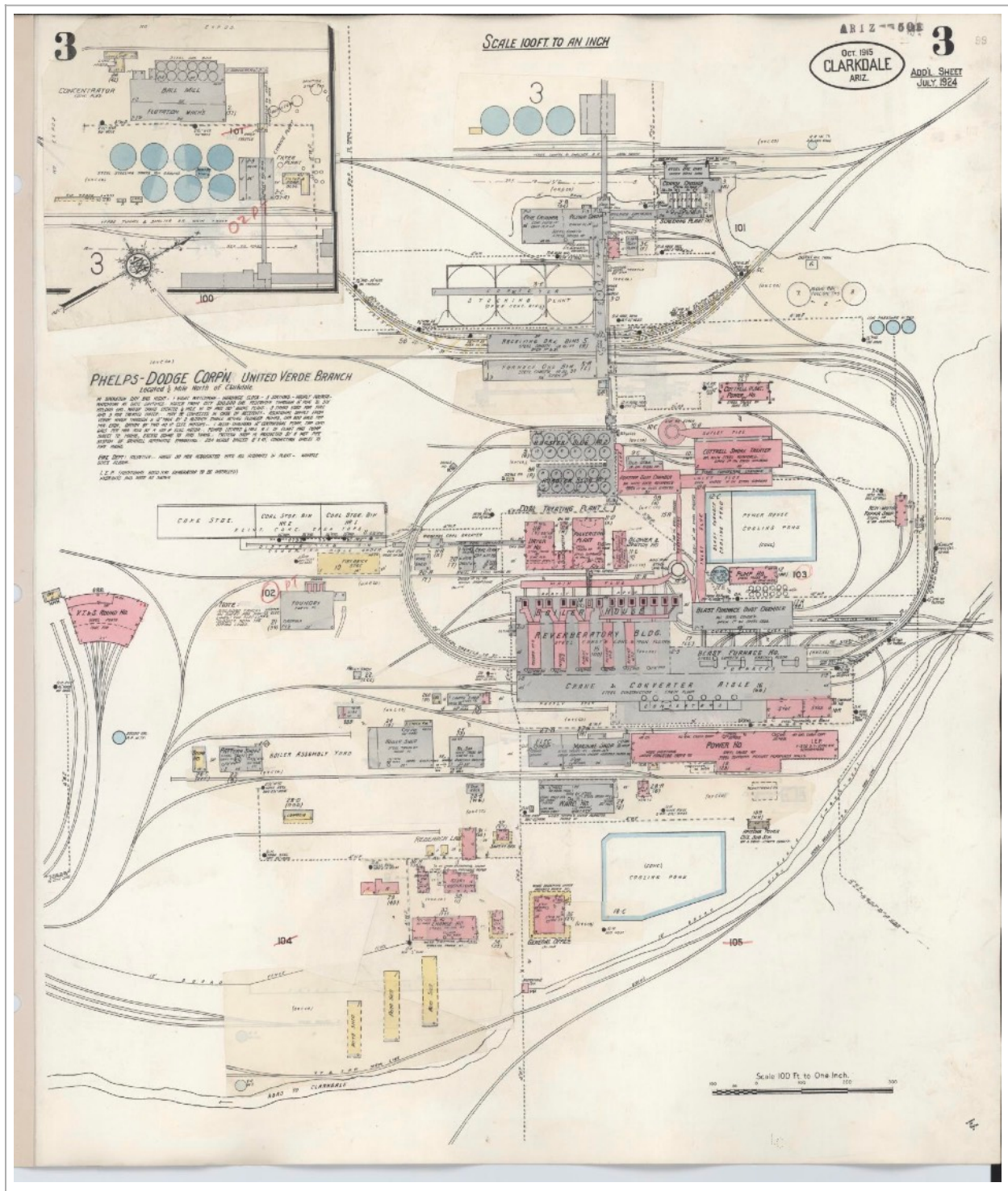
The following buildings or ruins of buildings are still visible:

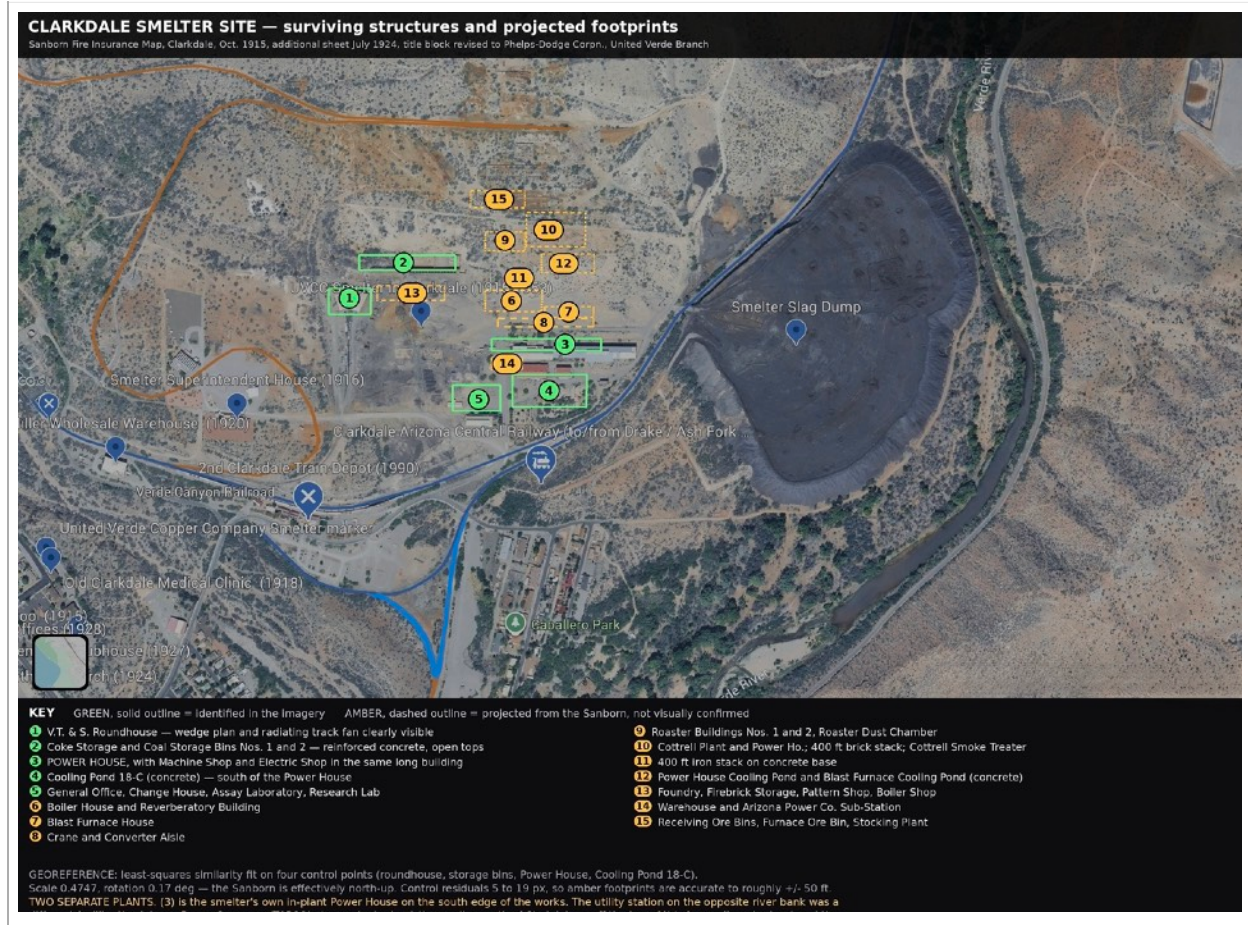
- Railroad Roundhouse
- Coke Storage / Coal Storage Bins
- Power House
- General Office
- Cooling Pond

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Reference the following Sanborn Map and the Google Earth view of the Smelter Site. Notice the key on the Google Earth view, as the green labels are the buildings that are still standing and visible.

Historic Smelter Map and Current View





5. Conclusion

The history of Clarkdale is defined not by gradual growth but by deliberate creation, by industrial necessity translated into a fully planned community unlike anything else in early twentieth-century Arizona. From the moment William A. Clark decided the United Verde Copper Company's smelting operations could no longer remain in Jerome, every element of Clarkdale, its residential districts, its Main Street commerce, its schools and churches, its railroads, existed to serve a single industrial purpose. Unlike towns that grew organically around a crossroads or a river crossing, Clarkdale was engineered from a master plan before a single home was built, and that origin shaped the town's character for the whole of its company-town era.

Clarkdale's growth through the 1910s and 1920s followed directly from the smelter's construction and expansion. Upper and Lower Town developed as distinct, socially stratified neighborhoods housing engineers and laborers respectively, while Main Street grew into a self-contained commercial district supplying groceries, banking, entertainment, and civic services to a population that existed almost entirely because of the smelter payroll. Three railways, the Verde Tunnel & Smelter Railway, the Arizona-Extension Railway, and the Verde Valley Railway, bound Clarkdale to Jerome, to Clemenceau, and to the wider rail network beyond the Verde Valley, moving the ore, freight, and passengers that sustained the town's daily life.

The mid-twentieth century marked Clarkdale's turning point, beginning with Phelps Dodge's 1935 purchase of the United Verde operation and culminating in the smelter's closure in 1953, an event that

ended Clarkdale's identity as an active company town almost as abruptly as its founding had begun it. Yet Clarkdale endured by redefining itself beyond industrial dependence. Incorporation as an independent municipality in 1957, the arrival of the Phoenix Cement Company in 1959, and the gradual remodeling of Lower Town's vacated houses allowed the community to rebuild around a different economic base. From the 1990s to the present, historic preservation and heritage tourism, anchored by the Clarkdale Historic District's 1998 National Register listing, the Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum, the Arizona Copper Art Museum, and the Verde Canyon Railroad's scenic excursions along the same tracks that once hauled copper ore, have allowed Clarkdale to become something its founders never intended but likely would have appreciated: a town whose planned origins are now its primary attraction. Taken together, Clarkdale's story is one of purpose fulfilled and then transformed, a company town built for a single industry that outlived that industry by finding new value in the very structure, streets, and buildings that industry left behind.

6. Historic Timeline

The following is a historic timeline of the business, railway, and mining events outlined in this paper.

Date	Category	Event Description
1910	Town Planning	William A. Clark began purchasing roughly 1,200 acres of ranch land and water rights in the Verde Valley in anticipation of relocating his smelting operations.
1911	Town Planning / Railroad	Clark began a series of projects to move United Verde Copper Company operations off Jerome's unstable, fire-damaged ground, financing three new standard-gauge railroads, including the VT&S and the Verde Valley Railway.
November 17, 1911	Railroad	The Verde Valley Railway was chartered as a non-operating subsidiary of the Santa Fe Railway.
1912	Town Planning / Smelter	Construction began on the Clarkdale smelter and on temporary frame structures in the area later known as Patio Town, including an early store and post office.
February 13, 1912	Railroad	Construction began on the Verde Valley Railway line west of Drake.
February 8, 1913	Town Planning	Clarkdale was officially founded with the establishment of its post office, LaMont Coleman serving as postmaster.
February 1, 1913	Railroad	The Verde Valley Railway reached Clarkdale, completing the 38-mile branch at a reported cost of \$1,286,061.
February 1913	Civic	Clarkdale's first public school opened with twenty pupils.
1913	Town Planning	United Verde transferred nearly 1,200 acres of land to the Clarkdale Improvement Company.
August 1913	Civic	Valley View Cemetery recorded its first burial, Cornelius G. Shea.
1914	Town Planning	A fire destroyed most of Patio Town's temporary buildings, leaving only the jail and the Loftus Pool Hall standing.
1915	Business	The corner building at 921 Main Street was completed, opening as the W.P. Scott Furniture Store, Undertaking Parlor, and Upper Verde Public Utilities offices.
May 26, 1915	Smelter	The first furnace was blown in at the Clarkdale smelter, sending smoke from its 400-foot steel stack.
1916	Smelter	The Smelter Superintendent's House was built between the smelter complex and the T.F. Miller Warehouse site.
September 15, 1916	Railroad	James Douglas Jr. incorporated the Arizona-Extension Railway to serve the UVX Mining Company.
1917–1918	Smelter	The smelter town of Verde (later Clemenceau) was constructed, and its smelter began operating to process UVX ore.

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1918–1919	Civic	Clarkdale's medical clinic was built during the influenza pandemic, dispensing care to smelter workers and families around the clock.
1919	Business / Smelter	The T.F. Miller Warehouse, a four-story reinforced concrete building, was raised north of Upper Town beside the railroad and smelter.
1919	Railroad	The VT&S was extended to Jerome, rendering the original United Verde & Pacific Railway obsolete.
May 1920	Railroad	The United Verde & Pacific Railway ran its last train after 25 years of service.
1920	Smelter	The smelter town of Verde was renamed Clemenceau.
1922	Smelter	A Cottrell electrostatic precipitator plant and a new 430-foot brick smokestack were added to the Clarkdale smelter.
1922	Railroad	One source dates completion of the Arizona-Extension Railway's Josephine Tunnel branch to this year (unconfirmed against the earlier 1917–1918 operational date).
1926–1927	Civic	The Clark Memorial Clubhouse was constructed, designed by Fitzhugh and Brown.
1927	Business	The United Verde Copper Company renovated 921 Main Street, converting its second floor into apartments.
1927–1928	Civic	Clarkdale High School was built and opened on March 2, 1928.
Late 1920s	Smelter / Family	The Clark Mansion was built near Peck's Lake for William Clark III, who moved in during 1928.
1929	Smelter	The smelter reached peak production, processing 1.75 million tons of ore and producing roughly 12 million pounds of copper bullion monthly.
1932	Business	The W.P. Scott Furniture Store relocated to Cottonwood; Miner's Hardware took its place at 921 Main Street.
1932	Family	William Clark III was killed in an airplane crash.
1934	Family	Charles Walker Clark died of pneumonia, and William Clark Jr. died of a heart attack.
1935	Ownership	Phelps Dodge Corporation purchased the United Verde Copper Company, its smelter, mine, land, and the town of Clarkdale, for \$21 million.
1937	Smelter	The Clemenceau smelter closed.
1938	Smelter / Railroad	The UVX ore body was exhausted, and the Arizona-Extension Railway ceased operations.
1940–1968	Business	Charlotte's Beauty Shop operated at 921 Main Street.

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1943	Business	Dr. George McMillan's dentistry practice at 921 Main Street ended.
1946–1957	Business	Lindner's Showroom sold Oldsmobiles and Chevrolets at 921 Main Street.
1950–1951	Smelter	The Clarkdale smelter's furnaces were shut down as Jerome's minable copper ran low.
1953	Smelter / Railroad	The Clarkdale smelter and Jerome mine closed permanently, and the VT&S ceased operations alongside them.
1955	Railroad	The last Santa Fe mixed passenger train ran on the Clarkdale branch.
1957	Town Planning	Clarkdale incorporated as an independent municipality.
1959	Business	The Phoenix Cement Company began operations near Clarkdale.
1959	Civic	Management of Valley View Cemetery was transferred to the Town of Clarkdale.
1960s	Smelter	Both smelter smokestacks were demolished, roughly a decade after operations ceased.
1960–1979	Business	Econowash laundromat operated at 921 Main Street.
1970s	Railroad	The original Clarkdale train depot was destroyed by fire.
1977	Business	Land surveyor George Blount's office at 921 Main Street closed.
1988	Railroad	The Santa Fe sold the Clarkdale branch line to Utah shortline operator David L. Durbano.
1989	Business	Mike Hensley began operating the Clarkdale Classic Station.
November 23, 1990	Railroad	Passenger service resumed as the Verde Canyon Railroad, running from Clarkdale to Perkinsville.
January 8, 1998	Preservation	The Clarkdale Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
2008	Preservation	The Clarkdale Historical Society and Museum opened in the former medical clinic building.
2010	Smelter / Family	The Clark Mansion was destroyed by fire.
2012	Preservation	The Arizona Copper Art Museum opened during Clarkdale and Arizona's joint centennial celebrations.
2015	Business	919 and 921 Main Street were purchased together from Searchlight Minerals by the Filardo family.
2018	Business	The 919 and 921 Main Street parcels were divided, with the Backus family taking 921.
2020	Business	Smelter Town Brewery opened at 921 Main Street.

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2022	Preservation / Business	The Arizona Copper Art Museum expanded into the former Miller's Market building at 901 Main Street.
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7. References

Maps and Cartographic Sources:

- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Clarkdale, Arizona (October 1915 and December 1938 surveys)
- Author-compiled GPS/Google Earth overlay map of Clarkdale's smelter complex, railway corridors, and associated structures

Newspapers and Contemporary Accounts:

- Tucson.com (Tucson, AZ)
- Verde Independent / VerdeNews.com (Verde Valley, AZ)
- The Daily Courier (Prescott, AZ)
- Journal AZ

Government and Institutional Records:

- National Register of Historic Places Inventory–Nomination Forms and Supplementary Listing Records, National Park Service (Clark Memorial Clubhouse; Clarkdale Historic District; Cottonwood Multiple Resource Area, including the Superintendent's Residence and Master Mechanic's House)
- Town of Clarkdale, official municipal website ("Clarkdale's History")
- United Verde Copper Company Smelter Historical Marker (erected by the Town of Clarkdale and the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus)

Cemeteries and Genealogical Sources:

- Valley View Cemetery burial records (source not fully confirmed — recommend verifying directly with the cemetery, the Town of Clarkdale, or Find A Grave)

Books and Scholarly Works:

- Society of Architectural Historians, SAH Archipedia (entry on Clarkdale)
- Dedman, Bill, and Paul Clark Newell Jr., *Empty Mansions: The Mysterious Life of Huguette Clark and the Spending of a Great American Fortune* (referenced secondhand via a newspaper review, not consulted directly — recommend citing the book itself if used further)
- An unidentified local/pictorial history volume on Clarkdale encountered via an online bookseller listing; title and author unconfirmed and not suitable for citation as-is

Local History and Archival Sources:

- Clarkdale Historical Society & Museum
- Experience Clarkdale (Town of Clarkdale tourism site)
- Arizona Copper Art Museum (institutional history materials)
- Smelter Town Brewery (building history page)
- Verde Canyon Railroad / Arizona Central Railroad (company history materials)
- Arizona Memory Project, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records
- Wikipedia (used for cross-referencing dates on the Clarkdale Historic District, the United Verde & Pacific Railway, and the Verde Canyon Railroad; a tertiary source that should be verified against primary materials before formal citation)
- Various independent travel and local-history blogs describing the Verde Canyon Railroad and the Clark Mansion fire (lower-reliability sources used only for supplementary detail — recommend corroborating before citing formally)

Notes on Methodology:

Where exact dates or facility names are not supported by primary documentation, this paper relies on date ranges, contemporary descriptions, and corroboration across multiple source types. Oral traditions and secondary accounts are identified as such and are not used as sole evidence for factual claims.