

## The Heiress and the Ghost Town

Written by Death Valley Videos

Monday, 06 June 2011 11:50 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 June 2011 12:07

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# THE HEIRESS AND THE GHOST TOWN

What do these two have in common?



The picture on the left shows a high society woman from the 1930s. The image on the right is of an abandoned railroad station at the ghost town of Rhyolite, Nevada on the edge of Death Valley. The woman on the left died in a New York City hospital on May 24, 2011 at the age of 104. The train station was only used as a railroad terminal from 1906 to 1911. The woman was

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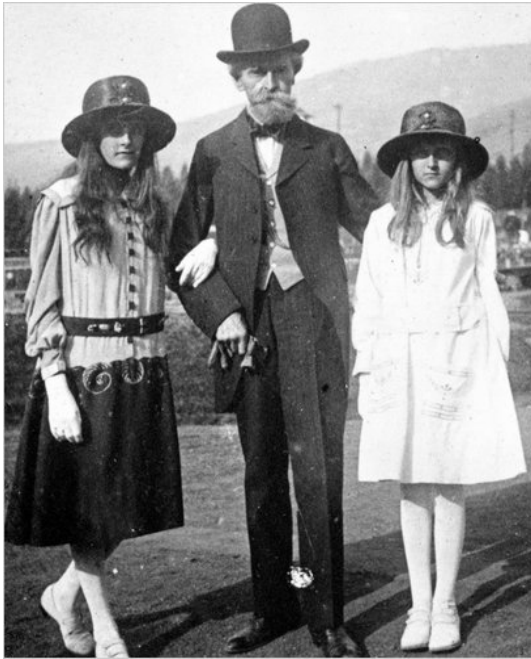
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a reclusive heiress to one of America's wealthiest men. The abandoned train station belonged to that same man!

The headline on the New York Times article read simply: [\*\*Huguette Clark, Reclusive Heiress, Dies at 104\*\*](#). But Huguette Clark was a direct link (and possibly the last living one) to the heady days of the Bullfrog Gold rush to the Death Valley country. Her father was Senator William Andrews Clark who made his fortune in the copper mines of Butte, Montana. But in 1905 Clark had other plans: railroads. He had built the Los Angeles, San Pedro and Salt Lake Line and with the new mining boom taking place in Tonopah, Nevada, Goldfield and Rhyolite he wanted to build a line to the gold country. He decided to build the Las Vegas and Tonopah Railroad. While construction was well underway Huguette was born in Paris in June, 1906.



Montana Historical Society Photo

Huguette (R) with her father William Andrews Clark (C) Sister Andree' (L)

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But Clark was a tough businessman - and some claim scandalous - as he literally bought his Senate seat in 1898. In those days US Senators were elected by state legislators, so Clark showered the legislators with thousand dollar bills and his seat was assured! In his railroad dealings he pulled back on a deal he had made with Francis Marion Smith to provide a railroad connection for his Tonopah and Tidewater Railroad. And that's what led to the building of the Las Vegas and Tonopah Railroad.

Building out of the tiny town of Las Vegas in 1905 Clark stretched his line across miles of desert to reach the booming town of Rhyolite! He built one of the finest depots anywhere on the desert - a depot that was made to last - just like the town. And the Las Vegas and Tonopah railroad depot, at the top of the hill in the ghost town of Rhyolite - still stands today. And as an additional sidebar, Clark County - the county where Las Vegas resides - is named for her father, William Andrews Clark. But the living link - Clark's daughter Huguetta - has passed away. And with her - the last living link to the extraordinary days of the Bullfrog/Rhyolite mining boom!

For the entire story of William Andrews Clark and the railroad see [THE GREAT DESERT RAILROAD RACE!](#)