

SUNNYSIDE

LOCATION: The ghost town of Sunnyside Arizona is located in Sunnyside Canyon on the western slope of the Huachuca Mountains. It can be reached by taking AZ-83 south from Sonoita to Parker Canyon Lake and then taking FR-48 south to Sunnyside Road. Follow Sunnyside Road east to the ghost town. As of 2011, town access is no longer restricted.

HISTORY: The town of Sunnyside was founded in the mid-1880s by Samuel Donnelly. Samuel was from Barrhead, Scotland and had immigrated to the United States through the port of San Francisco. Some accounts of Donnelly portrayed him as being a drunkard until he stumbled into a Salvation Army meeting, stopped drinking and became a Salvation Army preacher. According to his family, though, this was merely a myth. He was never associated with the Salvation Army. Shortly after his arrival in San Francisco, he experienced a religious conversion and became affiliated with the Methodist Church. He first took a post preaching in Methodist Churches in Los Angeles but soon began developing his own religious ideas that did not set well with mainstream Methodists.

He moved to Tombstone in 1886 to bring salvation to the rowdy miners as a street preacher. He continued to develop his own ideas of what a religion should be and often criticized the major religious denominations of the day. He became interested in mining, acquired an interest in a mining claim and co-founded the Copper Glance Mine on the western slope of the Huachuca Mountains. Some of Donnelly's converts followed him to work the mine and listen to his sermons. While continuing to prospect along the slopes of the Huachuca Mountains, Donnelly found the perfect place to establish the mining camp he was to call Sunnyside. It was remote (about 8 miles from the nearest wagon road) and near the Lone Star Mine that would provide work for his followers. He soon led a group of 20 or 30 followers to this new place in the wilderness and established a mining town like no other in the west.

Sunnyside was founded on Donnelly's strict religious principles and initially was run like a commune. It had a common kitchen, dining hall, barn and a one-room schoolhouse. His followers ate, lived, worked and worshipped together. What his town did not have were saloons, "camp followers" or lawlessness. The town gradually grew to about 80 inhabitants and then surged some more during the depression of 1893. Sunnyside quickly became controversial because of the way it was run by Donnelly. An article printed in the Bisbee Weekly Orb on 27 February 1897 was entitled: "A False Report. A Man Who Claims To Be A Devine Teacher Sent By God. He Rules By Hypnotism. An Investigation Needed". In 1898 he was accused of child abuse in a case that went all the way to the Arizona Supreme Court which found the charges baseless. The case was returned to Cochise County where it was dismissed.

Sunnyside started going downhill in 1898. The mine had barely produced enough to support the town and in 1898, the miners inadvertently opened an underground spring. Efforts to clear the mine of water were unsuccessful and miners gradually began to drift

away. Samuel Donnelly fell ill with Bright's disease in late 1900 and died on 14 April 1901. By 1903, everyone had abandoned Sunnyside with the exception of one man.



Remains of an Early House
Picture taken July 2011



Remains of an Early House
Picture taken July 2011

Around 1912, Sunnyside experienced a revival as a ranching community. A post office was established on 16 July 1914 and continued in operation until 15 March 1934. The closing of the post office was an indication that the town was starting another downhill slide. Very little information is available depicting the history of Sunnyside after the closing of the post office.



Remains of the Corral and Cattle
Loading Ramp



Ruins of what appears to be a Hot
House

Summary prepared by T. Johnson in August 2011. Photos by T. Johnson

Additional Material: GVHC Library File 94



A More Modern Home – Abandoned
and Falling into Ruin

