

# A very alive ghost town

## Living ghosts of Gilpin County

**N**evadaville is a ghost town. Sort of. The official population is zero, yet in a brick and stone building on what used to be Main Street, things are very much alive, if only for a few times a year. Ghosthunters won't find phantoms, but may run across the modern-day Masons of Nevada Lodge No. 4.

The town sprang to life in 1859, mere weeks after gold was discovered nearby, and the first meeting of Freemasons followed a few months later. Nevadaville quickly boomed, reaching its peak in the 1890s before just as rapidly going bust. As the gold became increasingly more expensive to get to, mine-generated pollution made unpoisoned drinking water harder to find. The population plummeted to just two by 1930; during the Great Depression, many houses were dismantled for the lumber.

As the town declined, it's no surprise fewer and fewer gatherings were held at Nevada Lodge No. 4. Following a string of robberies, where treasures like swords, jewels and globes were lost, meetings were moved to Central City. But as the remaining Nevadaville buildings began



Harry Lake/Denver Public Library

The Kansas Mine and Mill stands in the foreground of this view of Nevadaville, looking toward Bald Mountain. This sort-of ghost town is near Central City in Gilpin County.

to crumble, rubble disappearing into the dizzying grade, the fraternity returned to begin restoring and reclaiming their building in the 1960s. Why reopen in a deserted place? One very big, very destructive force: A bulldozer. According to lodge Senior Warden Patrick Dey, once talk of demolishing the building began, a passion for preservation took hold.

In the 50 years since, Nevadaville is momentarily resurrected whenever the

lodge holds meetings, typically once a month if it doesn't snow. Curious roadtrippers can pay a visit on the second Saturday of the month, before the private meetings begin. The 100-member fraternity also hosts an annual pancake breakfast, which benefits continued restoration, on the first Sunday after the second Saturday of July. Such a strange calendar seems fitting considering the rest of Nevada Lodge No. 4's peculiar history. – Leah M. Charney