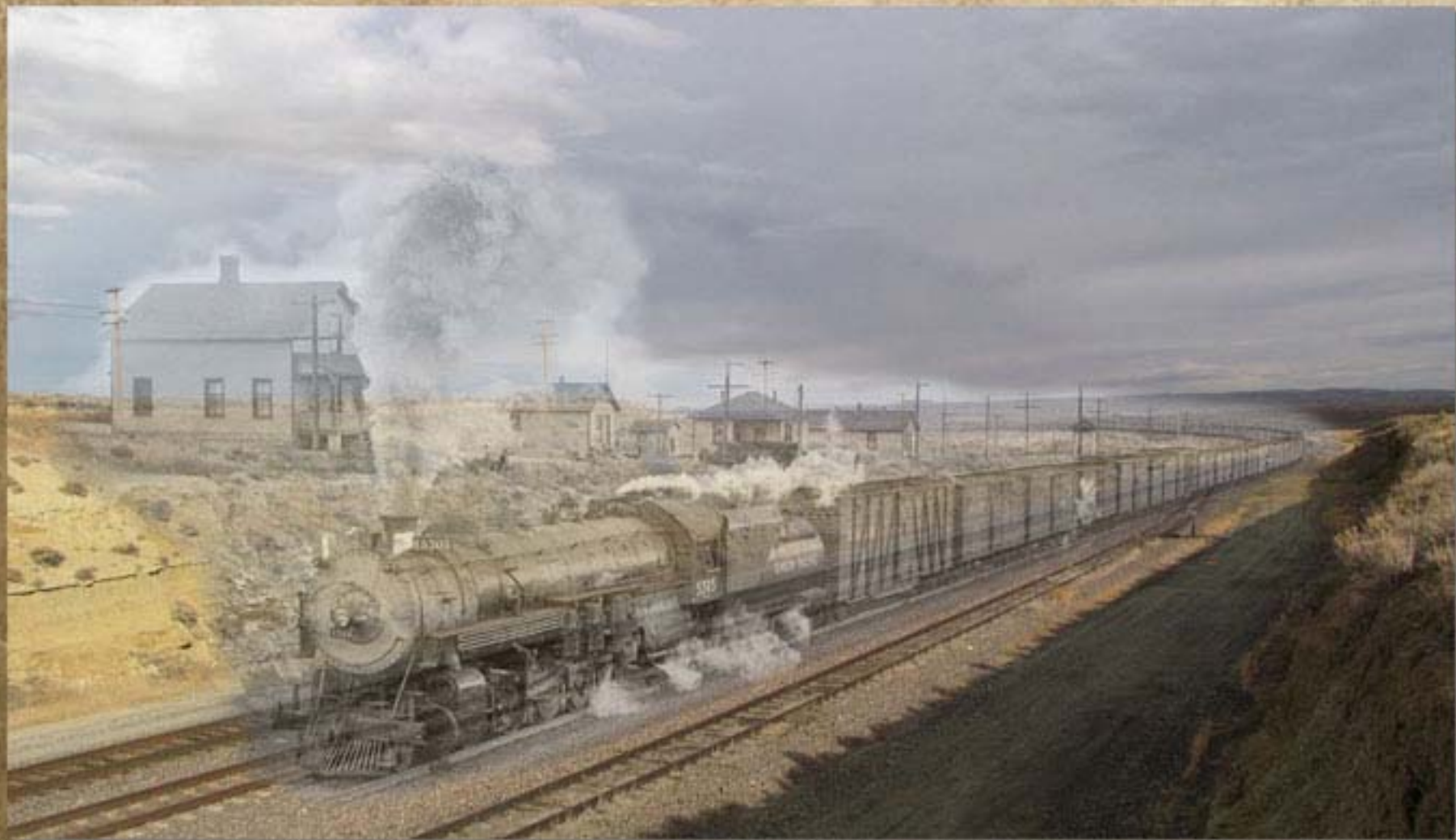
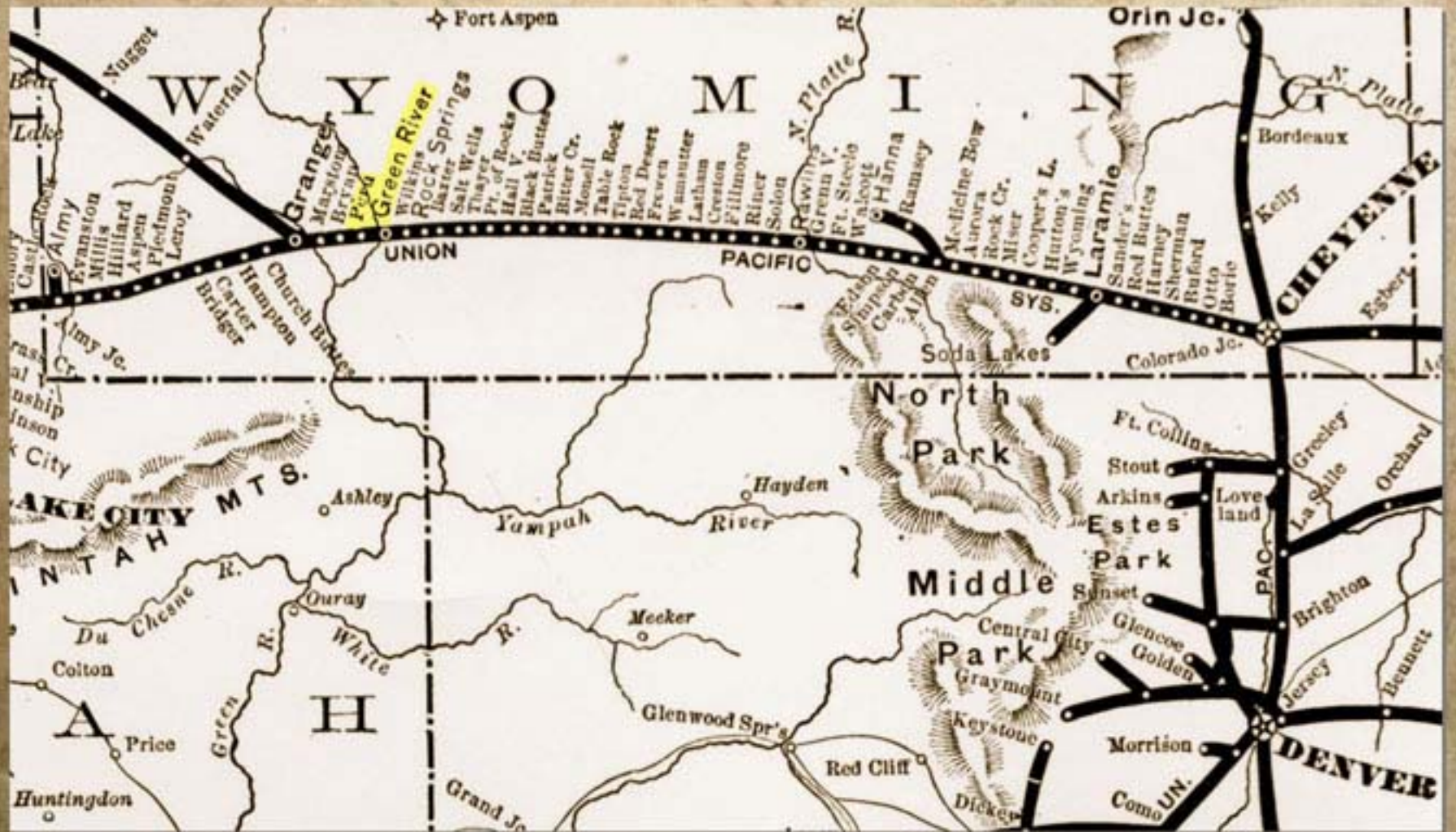
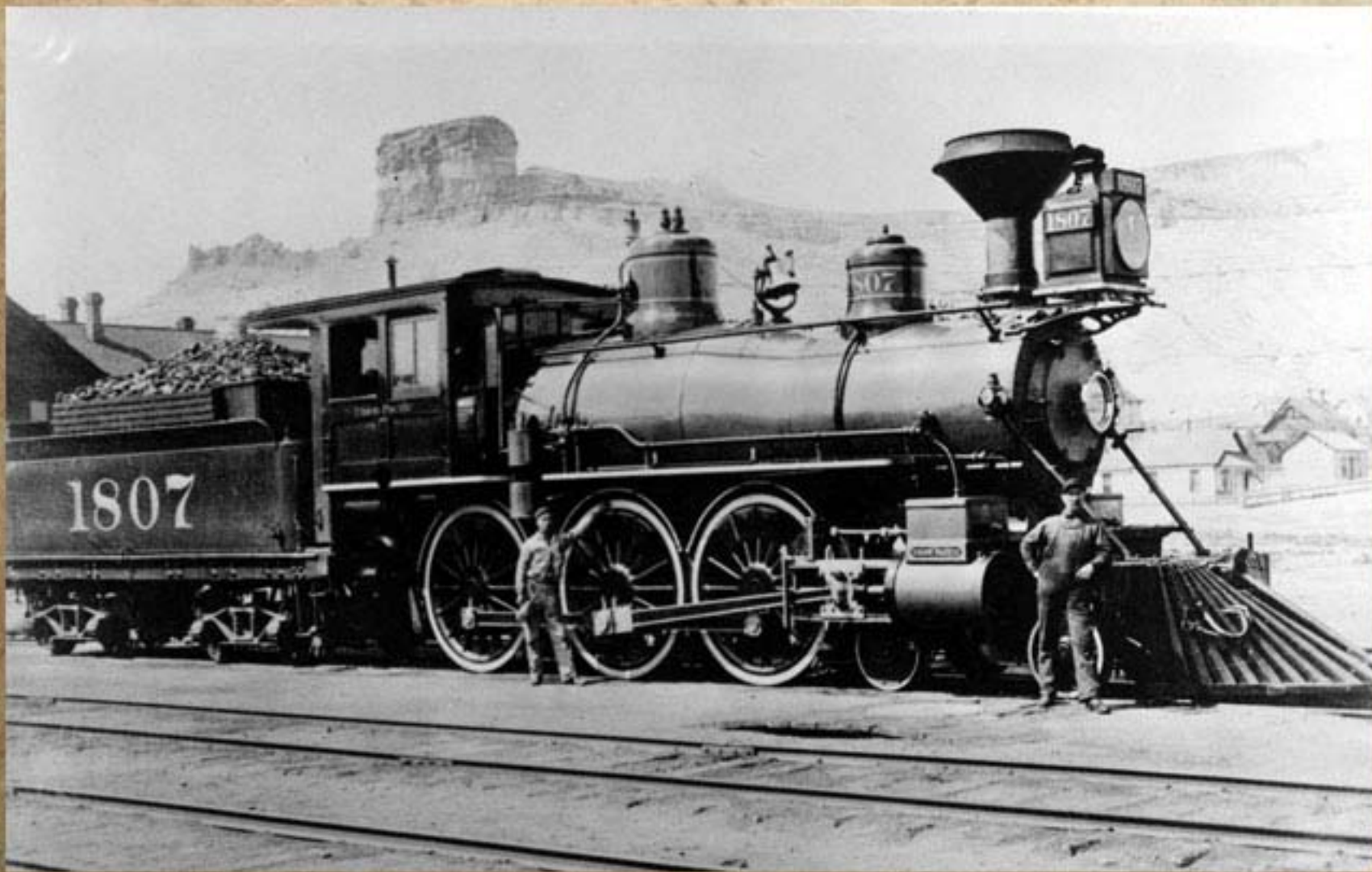


Peru: Tracking Down a Lost Railroad Camp





The Union Pacific Railroad laid the foundations for many of the railroad towns in Sweetwater County.



Green River, Bryan, and Granger were three of the largest railroad towns in Sweetwater County .



In between the larger towns, there were many smaller towns, railroad stations, construction camps, and section camps. Wamsutter was an important rail station on the early UP.



Livestock was loaded at Wamsutter and shipped out in rail cars.



Carmichael's construction camp was next to Bitter Creek between Rock Springs and Green River in 1868. The Overland Trail is visible in the upper right of the photograph. Interstate 80 was built through the same valley.



From Green River, the railroad crossed the river on the west end of town and proceeded up the south bank along the bluffs.



When cutting the rail bed into the side of the bluffs along the Green River, workers found numerous fish fossils, hence its name "Fish Cut".



Four miles west of Fish Cut a worker dropped a lantern that ignited the oil shale. The fire burned for days and filled the valley with smoke. The railroad men named that area "Burning Cut".



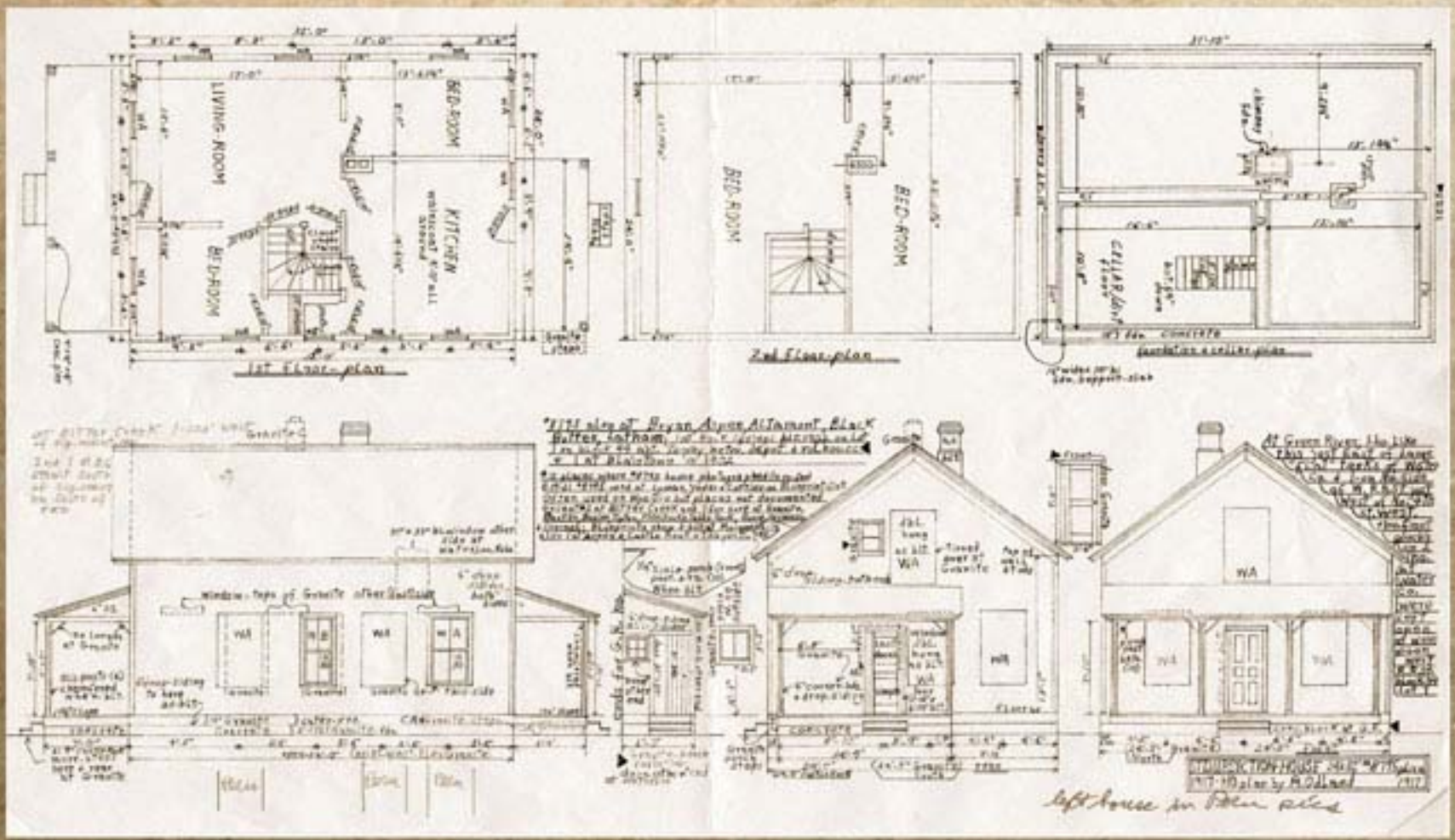
Burning Cut became the site of Peru, a section camp where workmen lived while building and maintaining the railroad. There were many section camps along the UP route in Sweetwater County during the late 1800's.



Section camps usually consisted of a small cluster of buildings including a section house, one or more bunkhouses, outhouses, and occasionally other structures. The foreman and his family lived in the section house, like this one at Wamsutter, that had a kitchen, four bedrooms and a porch.



Section camp buildings, such as these bunkhouses, were sometimes brought in via rail car, and moved to other locations once their usefulness expired. The bunkhouses had two rooms, separated in the middle by a wall, and bunks in either room.



The buildings in most section camps looked very similar, as they were all patterned after the same basic UP plans. Peru burned down in 1887 but was rebuilt shortly thereafter. When it burned, the only buildings in Peru were a section house and an outhouse. *Drawing by Bob Odlund of Hastings, NE.*



Although Peru was a section camp until the 1940's, residents came and went with the railroad. There were 176 people in Peru on the 1900 Census Record when Peru Hill was graded and cut for the railroad. Such an undertaking could explain the large population at the time.



Peru now: What happened to it? Peru burned down on January 27th, 1887, but it was later rebuilt and was known to have lasted until the 1940s. However, we don't know what happened after that.



A team of archaeologists, led by Dr. Gardner of WWCC, conducted research in 2009-2010 to find out. Pictured above is museum intern Kirsten Petersen surveying the site before excavation.



After conducting surface surveys, archaeologists dig test excavations to see what is underground.



Archaeological excavations are conducted very carefully and precisely.



Archaeologists are a bit like detectives, using what they find at a site to piece together the “who” and “when”. Clues that they find help to learn more about the past, so knowledge can be preserved for the future.



Unfortunately, the archaeologists found only broken evidence; no building foundations were discovered--just some old cans and jars, broken pottery and dishes.



Today, Peru is a mysterious place; the empty site of a lost railroad camp.



The Museum thanks intern Kirsten Petersen for her research on Peru.