

The Black Range

700 Years Ago, Apaches inhabited vast lands that include this mountain range. They stayed in a place as long as it suited them, hunting and gathering, moving with the seasons. They had many favorite places, which were visited for different reasons. In summer the mountain ranges—with swimming holes, shady spots, cool heights, long-distance views, and abundant fish and wild-life—were a favorite place.

In the Time Before the Apaches, the Mimbres called this land home. The Mimbres settled near rich river-bottom soil and a river, creek, or dependable spring, for they were gardeners. When traveling to trade or hunt, they would have also enjoyed the creek here, with its pleasant trails, herbs, and promise of good hunting. Along trails, they looked for white clay deposits for forming the useful pots onto which they painted poetic representational designs. It is not known for sure why the Mimbres left.



Only an Echo remains of the Kingston that once was—an optimistic, sometimes violent, frequently celebratory town. In 1882 miners dug into the mountains, hoping for silver, and found bucketfuls. Then came banks, assay offices, smelters, saloons, groceries, barber shops, drug stores, newspapers, laundries, hotels, restaurants, a dress-making shop, a water reservoir, a brick factory, an ice house, a school, churches, and an opera house.

Town planners planted young trees along Main Street to provide a future shady avenue. Pat Garrett, Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, Black Jack Ketchum, Lillian Russel, and Mark Twain spent time in Kingston, the biggest town in New Mexico, written up in newspapers as far away as Chicago and New York City. Oxen, horses, mules and burros were employed daylong and well into the night at times, oxen in teams of two or four pulling loads of cut stone, horses as fleet transport for riders carrying messages or keeping appointments, horses in teams of four or six powering the stagecoach from Lake Valley to Kingston, bringing fresh oysters daily from San Francisco, along with passengers, or the little burro, carrying all that could be loaded onto him, for the building of Kingston.

But then, only 11 years later, silver lost value. Folks had to leave. They took what they could, including the nails from their houses in some cases. Without a blacksmith, there would be no more nails. Some moved only as far as Hillsboro, a lovely, shaded village nine miles down the road and an important county seat at the time.

A few stayed here. Folks could still garden and raise livestock, hunt and find water. It had become quiet then, like it is now. Building materials waited for salvage.

Today

Become still, and turkeys may parade past you. Same with deer. Don't approach javalinas—they're defensive. Same with snakes. Avoid skunks using sense of smell. Do stay on roads and pathways, enjoy the scenes, and respect all private property. Often at dusk, there is a "double sunset," with colorful clouds both to the West, behind the Black Range, and to the East, in the direction of the Rio Grande and the Caballo Mountains. After sunset, about 56 buzzards settle into treetops above the creek. At night, the Milky Way spans distant outer space, temperatures drop, and nocturnal animals move about, often using the same streets and pathways.

Kingston

New Mexico Walking Tour



Local knowledge:

kingstonnewmexico.com
blackrange.org

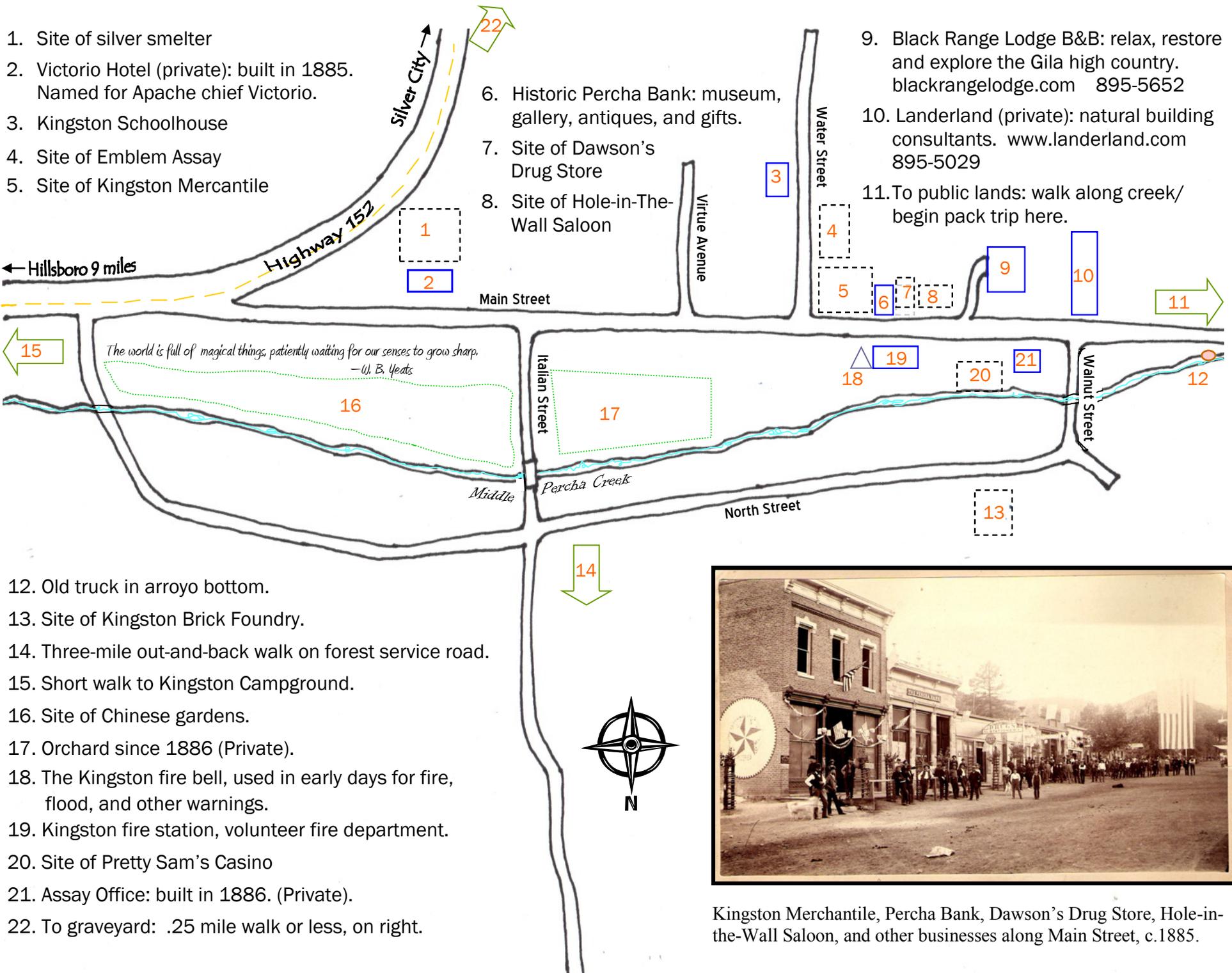


Backpacking and horse-packing into the Aldo Leopold and Gila from Kingston—referrals, trails and details: contact silverzinnia@hotmail.com

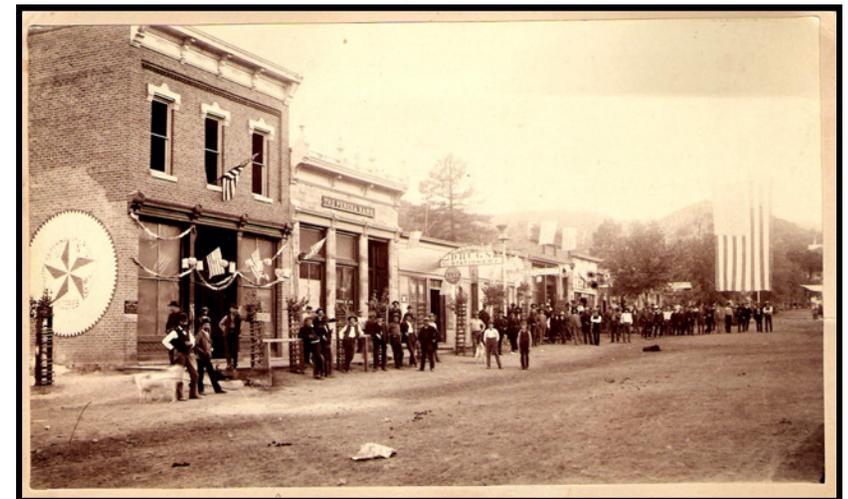
1. Site of silver smelter
2. Victorio Hotel (private): built in 1885. Named for Apache chief Victorio.
3. Kingston Schoolhouse
4. Site of Emblem Assay
5. Site of Kingston Mercantile

6. Historic Percha Bank: museum, gallery, antiques, and gifts.
7. Site of Dawson's Drug Store
8. Site of Hole-in-The-Wall Saloon

9. Black Range Lodge B&B: relax, restore and explore the Gila high country. blackrangelodge.com 895-5652
10. Landerland (private): natural building consultants. www.landerland.com 895-5029
11. To public lands: walk along creek/ begin pack trip here.



12. Old truck in arroyo bottom.
13. Site of Kingston Brick Foundry.
14. Three-mile out-and-back walk on forest service road.
15. Short walk to Kingston Campground.
16. Site of Chinese gardens.
17. Orchard since 1886 (Private).
18. The Kingston fire bell, used in early days for fire, flood, and other warnings.
19. Kingston fire station, volunteer fire department.
20. Site of Pretty Sam's Casino
21. Assay Office: built in 1886. (Private).
22. To graveyard: .25 mile walk or less, on right.



Kingston Mercantile, Percha Bank, Dawson's Drug Store, Hole-in-the-Wall Saloon, and other businesses along Main Street, c.1885.