The Historic Big Rock Candy Mountain in Marysvale Canyon

The song “Big Rock Candy Mountain” is generally recognized as a depression era, hobo ballad, rendering harmless, all that a down-trodden fellow could fear. The police have wooden legs, jail bars are made of tin, and cigarettes grow on trees. After the 1928 release of the song, some local residents placed a sign at the base of the bright yellow hills in Marysvale Canyon, proclaiming it to be “The Big Rock Candy Mountain”. The spring trickling down the yellow rocks looked just like lemonade and thus the spring was named. These names stuck, and the mythical Big Rock Candy Mountain of the song, became one of the most recognized geologic sites in west-central Utah.

Geologic Information

Located 5 miles north of Marysvale, in the Marysvale Canyon, Big Rock Candy Mountain consists of altered volcanic rock in various shades of yellow, orange, red and white. Approximately 22 to 35 million years ago, a cluster of stratovolcanoes (volcanoes similar to Mount St. Helens) erupted, depositing large volumes of lava and ash. Known as the Bullion Canyon Volcanics, these volcanic rocks are more than 3,000 feet thick. Approximately 21 million years ago, at least six magma bodies intruded the overlying Bullion Canyon Volcanics. Through a complex chemical process involving hydrogen sulfide, steam, ground water, and oxygen, the original volcanic rock was partially altered or totally replaced. The vivid colors that one sees at Big Rock Candy Mountain are the direct result of this mineralization. The yellow, orange, and red colors are from the presence of iron minerals, such as jarosite, hematite, and pyrite. The white color is due to the presence of alunite and kaolinite, minerals rich in potassium. Over the past 15 million years, erosion has removed the distinct shapes of the former volcanoes, and within the past several million years has exposed the altered volcanic rocks in Marysvale Canyon along the Sevier River. (Taken from Utah Geological Survey)
Today the Candy Mountain Resort sits at the base of the famous Big Rock Candy Mountain in Marysvale Canyon. Visitors can still hike to the Lemonade springs, and enjoy the marvels of this unique geological site. The Big Rock Candy Mountain is located 5 miles north of Marysvale, Utah on Hwy 89. OHV enthusiasts may enjoy a ride from Marysvale to Big Rock Candy Mountain via the Paiute Trail #02 to Trail #22 side trail to Trail #74 continuing on past Hoovers on the old rail grade at the point Trail #74 crosses the Sevier River.

Harry McClintock (aka Haywire Mac)

Song Lyrics

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain,
It's a land that's fair and bright,  
The handouts grow on bushes  
And you sleep out every night.  
The boxcars all are empty  
And the sun shines every day  
I'm bound to go  
Where there ain't no snow  
Where the sleet don't fall  
And the winds don't blow  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain  
You never change your socks  
And little streams of alkylol  
Come trickling down the rocks

O the shacks all have to tip their hats  
And the railway bulls are blind  
There's a lake of stew  
And ginger ale too  
And you can paddle  
All around it in a big canoe  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain  
The cops have wooden legs  
The bulldogs all have rubber teeth  
And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs  
The farmer's trees are full of fruit  
And the barns are full of hay  
I'm bound to go  
Where there ain't no snow  
Where the sleet don't fall  
And the winds don't blow  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain,  
The jails are made of tin.  
You can slip right out again,  
As soon as they put you in.  
There ain't no short-handled shovels,  
No axes, saws nor picks,  
I'm bound to stay  
Where you sleep all day,  
Where they hung the jerk  
That invented work  
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain.