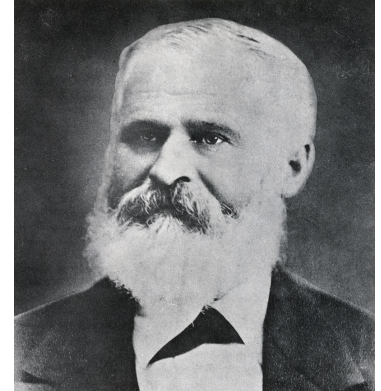


Hauling It In & Hauling It out : Anecdotes of the Old Time Packers

by Friends of Cerro Gordo

Part 1 – Remi Nadeau

In February 1872, the Los Angeles News reported “To this city, the Owens River is invaluable. What Los Angeles now is, is mainly due to it. It is the silver cord that binds our present existence.” The freighter responsible for this was Remi Nadeau, whose blue painted wagons and long strings of mules traversed the Yellow Grade Road from the Cerro Gordo Mines across the desert to Los Angeles and on to the port of San Pedro. Nadeau’s wagons transported silver-lead bullion for later refining in San Francisco and returned to Owens Valley with all manner of supplies, including bales of hay, casks of wine, potatoes, frying pans, and crates of live chickens.



In reality, while Nadeau probably had the largest contract and largest route, there were many other brave and rugged men who packed mules and wagons in the Owens Valley, the Sierras and Inyo Mountains.

Part 2



Pictured is a portion of an 1895 Railroad map of California. As rail service improved, many freighters went on to other enterprises or relocated to areas well removed from railroads.

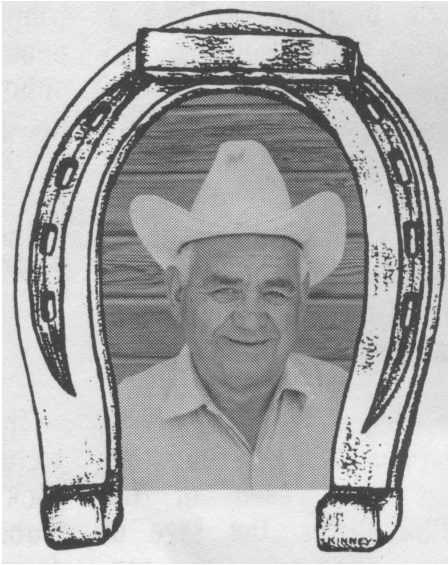
Ironically, some rail lines, such as Southern Pacific's Jawbone Line that connected Lone Pine (Owenyo) with Mojave, later fell victim to modern day freighters in the form of big rig highway trucks.

Nadeau left the freighting business in 1883. He built the Hotel Nadeau on the site in downtown Los Angeles that was his mule stable and headquarters. He also became involved in diversified agricultural enterprises.

Today Owens Valley is dotted with location names that tie in with many of the nineteenth century freighters.

Part 3 - Carmen and Henry Olivas

Carmen Olivas was born in 1869 and died in 1939. During his lifetime of packing that lasted until his retirement in 1930, he took supplies of groceries, lumber, rails, machinery explosives, and drinking water to the mines and camps of Beveridge, Keynot, McElvoy Canon, Cerro Gordo, Burgess, Hunter Canyon, Bunker Hill, and Louis Camp on the Kern, as well as many others. On his way out he brought highgrade ore and pinon firewood.



The sheep herders and cattle grazers of the Sierra Nevada were supplied with salt and wine by the Olivas outfit. In 1916, Carmen and his son, Henry, who was 10 or 11 years old, were sent up to the last of the sheep camps at Rock Creek Lake. The herders had left the sheep in the mountains too long and the snows came. Carmen and Henry went in with their pack train of mules burdened with two bales of hay apiece. They trekked through three feet of snow to get to the sheep. The morning after they reached them the mules were driven out of Diaz Pass first so they would pack the snow down enough the sheep could follow.

The owner of the Burgess Mine that straddles New York Butte in the Inyo Mountains, was a woman named Kate Wells. As Carmen and Henry packed high grade ore down the rugged road to the Lone Pine Railroad Station, Kate would come along with a shotgun to make sure they weren't hijacked by bandits. Two years after their ore contract, Kate herself was packed over the crest to the salt tram station and loaded on the tram to Swansea. Kate and a miner named Smalley had been loading timber at the mine, when a mule whirled around and the timber on his back caught her on the side of the head, breaking her neck.

From 1912 to 1923, Carmen ran trains of 8 to 10 mules carrying pinion pines "5 mules to a cord" from the mountains above Swansea. The wood was cut by one of his employees, then cut in to 4 foot lengths which Henry would spend school weekends sawing into stove lengths. They made sixteen dollars a cord for their hard work.

During their long packing career, the Olivas family also hauled bags of compressed snow from Lone Pine Canyon for summer refrigeration in Owens Valley towns. National Park rangers from Sequoia and General Grant hired Carmen to transport their equipment, and materials were also hauled for the east side of the Mount Whitney trail from the Owens Valley. From 1905 to 1907, materials and dirt for building and grading of the Yosemite Valley Railroad bed was carried by Olivas mule trains.

Supplies and tourists were packed to resort type camps. Henry took deer hunters and fisherman with furnished saddle horses, teams and pack mules for the movies. Many parties were as big as six packers, 40 mules and 30 horses. He wrangled for the various companies off camera, providing horses, mules, cows, extras, and stagecoaches for shoots in the Southern Sierras. In 1949 he drove a 4-horse team from Lone Pine to Death Valley for the television show *Death Valley Days*. When the script called for a 20 mule team Henry drove it for the show, also.

Part 4 - Reuben Cook Spear

Originally from England, Reuben Cook Spear came to Lone Pine in 1874 at the age of 22. He partnered with blacksmith and wagon shop owner, A.C. Harvey, and eventually acquired the business from him. His heart was in the mines, however, and he eventually had interests in Beveridge, Burgess, Cerro Gordo, Darwin, Panamint Valley, Ubehebe, and in Nevada.

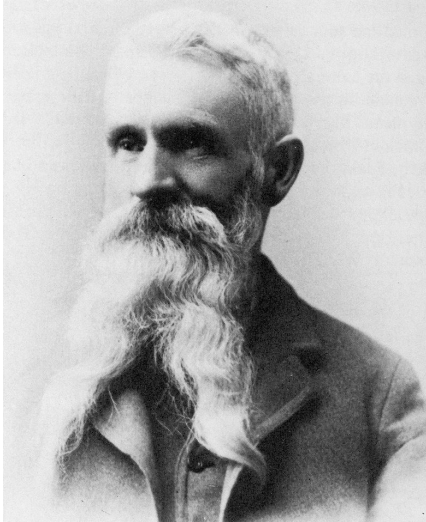
"Reub" hauled workers back and forth by pack train during the survey of the salt tram until the tram was well under construction. He also packed and distributed wire from Monache to Beach Meadows from the Tunnel to Kern



River during the forest service Sierra telephone installations.

Groups of tourists were occasionally led into the Sierras by Reub. Animals were rented for one dollar a day and the packer worked for three dollars. During the Burgess mining boom, he packed heavy freight to New York Butte for a cent a pound. His mules carried ore down the road from the Santa Rosa mine to the leasers known as "Cloride."

Part 5 - William L. Hunter



Hunter Mountain is named after William L. Hunter who operated a large pack train of mules in Cerro Gordo. The Hunter house that still stands in the ghost town today belonged to his family. The pack business was profitable but he eventually gave it away to pursue mining interests in the southern Inyos.

A mile away and a canyon over from the Big Horn mine, near a spring in a little hanging valley Hunter built a cabin with a thatched roof and three steam engine powered arrastras. The engine and boiler were brought up the Swansea road, then up the steep Flagstaff grade.

A quarter of the way up, there was no road whatsoever, and Hunter would have had to pick his own way. He succeeded in pulling his wagon and machines all the way to the summit. The wagon made it to Burgess on the southern shoulder of New York Butte, the first wagon and perhaps the last, on the summit. At Burgess the Hunter trail from Lone Pine crossed the summit into Craig's Canyon. From here it turns north into the head of Hunters Canyon then winds down several miles to the spring.

Engines were dismantled at the summit, and then packed down on mules (except the engine base, the tubular boiler and a large cogwheel). These were loaded on separate mules secured by a diamond hitch. The rough terrain and heavy load was a struggle for the mules, with exhaustion setting in every hundred feet.

The men would transfer the load from mule to mule many times until they reached the 11,000 foot summit of New York Butte. Hunter's grandson said, "The cogwheel at least in size, gave them endless trouble and grief. I was never told how many mules collapsed or failed in this operation." On the north shoulder of New York Butte they built skids, pulling the machinery several miles down steep canyon sides to the spring. This was in 1880.

Part 6 - William Arcularius

"Wm. Arcularius, the teamster, the other day had a lively time with his pet mules at Cerro Gordo Landing. The gentle mules started to run him a race and after smashing the wagons won the race and of course the stakes, consisting of a shower of blacksnaking," reported the Inyo Independent in 1877

Eighteen mules and two horses made up Arcularius' team for heavy freighting. The horses worked as wheel horses, guiding the rest of the team. The two mules in front of the horses were known as the



pointers and were responsible for keeping the wagon in the tracks. In front of the pointers were the swing mules that would jump the chain in order to keep the wagon in tracks at crooked canyon roads, and when they needed to initiate a turn. Commands such as Gee or Haw, directed the well trained mules towards the proper direction.

It was rare when a mule did not listen to Arcularius, but when they didn't there was always the long blacksnake. Arcularius believed that a mule was like a young boy and needed a lashing every few weeks. Rose and Mary, the lead mules were so well trained he never needed to whip them. It appeared they understood absolutely everything he said to them.

A jerk line drove the mule team. Arcularius, who felt a mule worked best when handled by one person at all times, was always the driver. A wagon, trailer, water tank and feed tank were pulled. He worked out of Bodie and Calico, and hauled lead and supplies back from Keeler and Darwin. Ore was also hauled from the numerous mines to the smelters in Tonopah, Nevada.

William Arcularius was known to take excellent care of his stock, but always made sure they knew he was boss, never hesitating to correct their misbehaviors on the spot with the blacksnake. A few miles outside of Darwin a man once confronted him on the abuse of his mule. Arcularius ignored the man, who constantly tantalized him until he couldn't take it any more. Arcularius took out after the man, known as Alkali Bill, and chased him into a Darwin saloon.