



THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

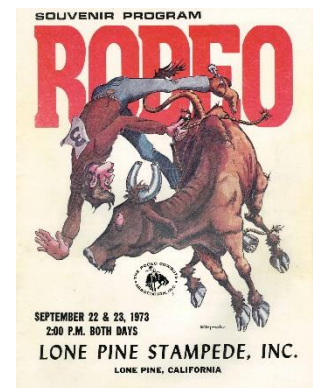
The History of the LONE PINE STAMPEDE

Local citizen's years ago made plans to stage these spectacular days of the old west and bring visitors and champion cowboys from the far ends of the country to our unique little town for a chance to relive the Wild West in a gala weekend celebration. Possibly a forerunner to the Stampede were the Jubilee celebrations of the early 30's, the fourth annual such event was held on Labor Day weekend in 1935.

Another such big celebration was the Wedding of the Waters in late October of 1937 when the Death Valley-Mt. Whitney highway program saw many honored notables present, including Governor Merriam. This pageant was unique in California and was highlighted by water brought from Tulainyo lake and carried to Death Valley in a spectacular observance, culminated with a fireball by beacon fires from Mt. Whitney signaling the completion of the fete and opening of the highway. Although not rodeos these were fine community performances and drew many visitors to the locale.

Then in April of 1941, through the efforts and community spirit of a few local citizens, the first big show of rodeo fame was instigated. Wilfred Cline, stockman, and one of the leading rodeo stockmen in both California and Nevada and the late Russell Spainhower, Southern Inyo rancher and cattleman, started the ball rolling for what became a traditional spring event. Stock for the rodeo was provided by Cline and by a unanimous vote, at a meeting called for organization, Spainhower was elected Stampede president, a position he held for nine consecutive years. Directors included Ben Baker, Howard Miller, Fred Reynolds, Otto "Slim" Honerlah, Ted Cook and Wesley Logan. Walter Jones was elected secretary-treasurer, a post he filled continuously for 21 years. Announcer for the first rodeo was Jack Hopkins.

In the beginning the rodeos were held on what was known as the town ballpark and as they continued to gain momentum (and became an "RCA (Rodeo Cowboys Association) approved rodeo) plans materialized for a formal Rodeo ground. The new location (behind where the Lone Pine Film



History Museum currently stands) was considered one of the best. Hundreds of persons were able to be seated on the fine grandstands and monies from the annual shows provided necessary funds for maintenance and continued improvement of the grounds to maintain the highest standards.

Rodeo events included: calf roping, bareback bronc riding, team roping, saddle-bronc riding, steer-stopping (a privilege of Inyo-Mono registered brand owners only), and bulldogging. Later years included presentations by the Bishopettes (a women's western riding club based in Bishop), a water ski act, (Diaz Lake) steer wrestling, a girl's barrel race, and bull riding. One local resident recalls Slim Pickens was the rodeo clown for numerous Stampedes. Sponsors included the local Lloyd's Shoe Store, Joseph's BiRite Market, J.C. Penney Co, Wrangler Jeans, and numerous others.

As the Stampede continued to grow and become more widely known amongst the professionals, such top-notch names in the rodeo world as Casey Tibbs, Rex Connley, Bill Linderman, Ross Dollarhide, Chuck Shepard, Don Adams, Lawson Fore, Bill Hogue, Enoch Walker, famed Canadian cowboy, appeared on the rodeo program. Among other notables who have added much to the local shows with their stellar performances have been Joaquin Sanchez, Fes Reynolds and Wes Curtis.

Let us not forget that along with these professionals, our local businessmen have contributed much in making these shows the pride of the community. Following the nine-year term of Russell Spainhower as president, by-laws were amended to read a one year term for each president and beginning in 1951 the following citizens served well as leaders of the Stampede Inc.: Jack Hopkins, Ben Baker, Fred Reynolds, Tom Noland, Norvil Aigner, Henry Olivas, Lefty Edmonston, C. M. Richards, Bob Rutherford, Gwen Gardner, Bud Slater and Joe Bonham. Other names, to mention a few, who have played major roles in the successful celebrations are Frank Chrysler, Ted Cook, John Morris and Howard Miller.

By 1955, the Stampede program included Lone Pine vs. Independence baseball, a parade, the stampede dance, and the coronation of a Stampede Queen. Community women coveted the crown for the "Stampede Queen" and young belles vied for the honor. Jean Noland served as one of the first queens, and the tradition spanned the duration of the Stampede. The 1973 program includes winners for Stampede Princess and "Little Miss Rodeo" contests.

Many years of celebrations listed scores of activities in conjunction with the rodeo: First class parade competitions for prizes with as many as seven bands performing and trophies in up to 19 categories; whiskerino contests with intense rivalry, sponsored by the Lions Club; and outstanding pet parades for the kiddies. "Carnivals too came in for a share in the excitement; a businessmen's burro race for several years was a stimulating part of the annual weekend; barbecues of highest quality were staged by local organizations and drew hundreds of guests."

The 1964 program announced the passing of Slim Honerlah, "...a man who lived his life out with honor, dignity, and truth. His help to the Lone Pine Stampede was an inspiration that kept the show alive throughout the years." The continued support of Spainhower and Cline, and the contributions of countless others resulted in the Stampede becoming the pride of the community. After Spainhower's nine-year term as president, by-laws were amended to limit presidential terms to one year. The following citizens served well as leaders of the Stampede Inc.: Jack Hopkins, Ben Baker, Fred Reynolds, Tom Noland, Norvil Aigner, Henry Olivas, Lefty Edmonston, C. M. Richards, Bob Rutherford, Gwen Gardner, Bud Slater and Joe Bonham. Other names, to mention a few, who played major roles in the successful celebrations were Frank Chrysler, Ted Cook, John Morris and Howard Miller.

In 1963 the Stampede show was changed to a non-professional type show due to the increasing cost of procuring stock and professional participation. The 1964 show followed the same pattern with some new innovations including... participation of the newly locally formed - Lone Pine Stampede Roping club. The organizers in 1964 indicated to the community that "plans are under way to stage other events throughout the year including a quarter horse show in the fall."

After approximately 30 years of being a community institution, the Lone Pine Stampede eventually stopped. Staff at The Lone Pine Film History Museum, with community encouragement and support, hope to reinstate this beloved event.

As stated in the 1964 Silver Anniversary program, "What more picturesque setting could any arena boast than the spectacular snow-clad peaks of Mt. Whitney fronted by the pictorial Alabama's for a contrasting background.

Where in these United States could this be equaled?"