

# THE ARCULARIUS FAMILY

By Genevieve Arcularius Clement

William Arcularius came from Germany as a young man. He worked his way west and to Inyo County in the early 1870's. Upon seeing the opportunities he returned to New York to marry Lisetta Halberstadt, a Pennsylvania Dutch and a descendant of the Wannamaker and Zimmerman families. They were wed in August 1872 and came west immediately by way of Reno where they were met by the Clarks of Bishop who ran the stage line.

Eventually they took up land in Round Valley under the "Act of Congress of 1820 entitled an Act Making Further Provisions for the sale of Public Lands." The deed to this property was signed by President Ulysses Grant, November 1875.

Farming did not prove fruitful at this time, and with mining the largest enterprise in both Eastern California and Nevada, William Arcularius secured a team of eighteen mules and two horses and went into heavy freighting. The two horses were called wheel horses, who were responsible for guiding the rest of the team, and their respective position was right next to the wagon. In front of them were two mules who were called pointers and their position is at the end of the tongue. They are responsible to keep the wagon in the tracks. In front of these pointers were two sets of mules called "swing mules." These animals would have to jump the chain in order to keep the wagon in the tracks when travelling very crooked canyon roads or to initiate a turn. These mules were very well trained and only needed to hear Gee or Haw and they would jump in the proper direction. If they did not heed to this, which was

only rarely, they were horsewhipped with a long blacksnake. William Arcularius felt a mule was like a young boy and needed a lashing every few weeks to keep them on their proper behavior. However, he never touched his lead mules as they were old and well trained. The lead animals were named Rose and Mary, and he felt as if they understood everything he said. The team was driven with a jerk line, and he always drove it himself as a mule worked best if handled by one person at all times. The team pulled a wagon, trailer, water tank and feed tank. With this team he immediately struck out for mining country, first going to Bodie where he did a great deal of hauling - taking ore to the vicinity of Placerville and returning with goods and lumber.



Anna Albers (2<sup>nd</sup> wife) and William Arcularius

William Arcularius followed one mining town after another, as at this time the booms were not long lasting, and the activity in these parts slowed down considerably. So he was forced to take his family on

another adventure and for their livelihood and went to work on the "Old Panama Ranch", in Bakersfield, which was owned by Miller and Lux. There he acted as Foreman for a number of years, while his wife Lisetta was the second cook at the ranch working under a Chinese first cook. After leaving the Miller and Lux Ranch he went back to teaming at Calico where he hauled Borax. Then on to Keeler and Darwin where he hauled out lead and brought supplies back. When the gold mining boom of Goldfield

and Tonopah brought the rush of fortune hunters to Nevada, William Arcularius moved to Sodaville, Nevada, and hauled ore from the numerous mines to the Tonopah smelters.

It was here that he passed away in 1902 during the plague of black pneumonia. He died as a comparatively young man as he was only in his fifties. After his death his second wife sold the team to the parties that have now glorified its name as the "Twenty Mule Team Borax."

William Arcularius was a very strict person. He wanted things done right. He took excellent care of his stock, but they knew that he was boss, as he corrected any misbehaviors on the spot with a blacksnake. One story goes that he was stopped outside of Darwin a few miles, using the blacksnake on a mule when a man confronted him as to his abuse of the animal. William paid no heed and the man kept on tantalizing him. He took out after the man with his blacksnake and chased him into Darwin where he sought refuge by hiding in a saloon. He was known as "Alkali Bill" from Dagget to Barstow.

From the Files of the Inyo Independent 1877: "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."

Through his Union with Lisetta six children were born. Katherine was born in West Bishop, 1873. She took up the profession of school teaching in the vicinity. She married Thomas J. Watterson, a railroad agent at Sodaville, Nevada. They both became employed as Railroad agents and spent considerable time in Hawthorne. Returning to Bishop they took over the Andrews Mercantile store, which later became the Inyo Store under the management of Mrs. Watterson. Her high character and personality won and held many friends. The second daughter, Carrie, was born at Fort Independence in 1875 and married Henry Evans spending the rest of her life on their Ranch in Round Valley. A son, William, was born at Ft. Independence 1878 and his life was devoted to the Round Valley Ranch. The second son, Frank, my father, was born in Bodie in 1880. He recalls the occasions when he and his brothers would accompany their Father on freighting journeys and acted as swampers. They found it most difficult even trying to harness the animals as they were accustomed only to the Senior Arcularius.



Home of Lisetta William Arcularius in Round Valley.  
Lisetta is standing on the porch.

Another interesting recollection of Frank's was when he recalled the terrific drought of around 1895, when sheep and cattle from the Los Angeles County were sent into the Mojave desert and Inyo County for whatever food they could forage. Finding the same conditions in this country, many cattle and sheep died, leaving a stench on the desert that was unbearable. During this time the Arcularius Brothers were travelling through this drought-stricken country and picked up many sheep that were about to die. They took them back to Round Valley, thus starting their interest in the livestock business. Frank held interests in mining and operated a retail butcher shop and grocery in Bishop only to further his interest in

livestock. He was active in the management of the livestock along with his two sons until the time of his death. Frank married Lura Garner, my mother, whose family came to Round Valley in the early 1900's. Three children were born, Genevieve, Frank and Howard. Lura was taken in death during the flu epidemic of 1918. Frank married her sister Olive Garner, my stepmother, who finished raising the family. Both Lura and Olive received their high school education at the Inyo Academy.



L/R: D. E. Lutz, Frank Arcularius, E. Plumer.  
First store of Frank's "Bishop Market," before refrigeration and perishables had to be taken to the Ice Plant each night.

Charolotte, the third daughter of William and Lisetta Arcularius was born in 1882. She remained a spinster and spent a great deal of her early life in the Railroad towns of Nevada, where she gained an immense amount of knowledge of early railroading. She shared her love of music with all, through her many, many hours of organ playing at all kinds of events.

The last son, George, born in Round Valley, married Carrie Knecht, and they ranched in Round Valley. To that union were born three girls: Lisetta, Mary and Georgia. George died at an early age. Carrie later married his step brother, Louis Arcularius, and to this union a daughter, Carolyn, was added.

William Arcularius Sr.'s second marriage to Anna Albers of Georges Creek, which was near Independence brought forth three children Anna, Louis who now lives in Bishop, and a second daughter Anna.

Lisetta Arcularius, the Mother of the first six children, spent most of her life on the Ranch in Round Valley. It was known that "She was the Godmother of Round Valley." Sickness or death never came to a Round Valley home without her offering help for the suffering or consolation for the sorrowing." Her hospitality was of the old West kind, that has been a special characteristic of that valley, to a degree seldom found elsewhere in these later days.

Bishop was at least a day's trip with buggy and horse so buying trips were not made often. Lisette Arcularius maintained a small store, carrying staples for the people in and around the Valley. It was like

a cellar with a rock creek running through it where the fresh milk and cream were kept. She made butter and cheese; bacons and ham were smoked; beans, flour and large pieces of tobacco were also carried in the store. The tobacco was cut by a regular tobacco cutter to the desired size.

All the Round Valley folks looked forward to the occasional dances held in the School house. These affairs would last all night as travelling by buggy was long. The entire family would come with blankets for children's beds, and all kinds of food, to make these gatherings very gala affairs.

This Round Valley Ranch has remained in the family for over one hundred years, and one of the few in the valley not to be taken up by the City of Los Angeles. The Long Valley Ranch taken up in the early 1900's for livestock by Frank Arcularius, also developed as a fine fishing resort. Frank in the early days issued permits to fishermen if they bought at least \$2.00 in groceries at his market. These permits entitled people to camp and fish for as long as they liked. At that time the limit per day was twenty-five fish, and fishing license cost \$2.00.

The descendants of the Arcularius Family, most of whom still live in Inyo County today, cherish and respect the memory of their pioneer ancestors. Louis Arcularius, the last son of William Arcularius recalls the incident concerning his father and the Carson and Colorado Railway Lines. It seems there was "R. R. Crossing" put in when the tracks crossed the road at Swansea. This made it practically impossible for wagons and other wheel traffic. When my father come along he had an empty load, so was able to jump the team across the tracks, pulling the wagons and tanks behind. In a short distance the train came along. He flagged it down, stating that he was on his way to Darwin for a load of ore, and if there was no crossing in that time he would pull the tracks in the river. On his return with the load, there was no crossing and no way to get over the tracks with a big load. He pulled the first wagon over the tracks and locked the back wheels in the parallel tracks with the brakes. With the railroad ties acting as runners, he pulled the tracks and ties off to the side of the road so he could get by. Upon seeing the train later approaching this section, he flagged it once again, and warned the trainmen about going slow as up the line a way the tracks were a bit crooked.