

LITTLE LAKE HOTEL – 1860 TO 1977

By Larry Armstrong and Emerson Ray

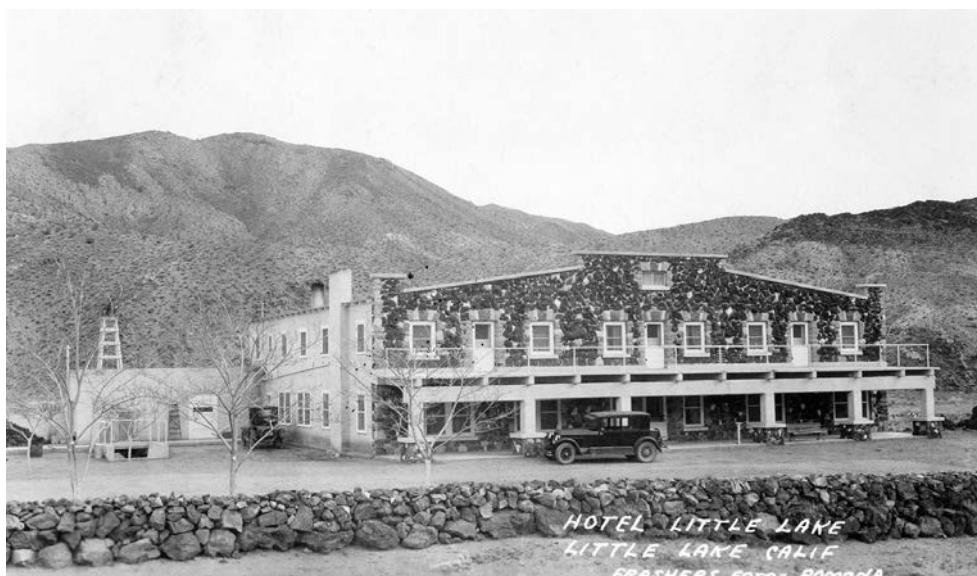
Little Lake has always been a "stopping place" for travelers going north or south across Owens Valley. It was a welcome oasis, a place to stop, rest and recuperate before the next long stretch of desert roads. It had water and in the days before automobiles, when transportation was by horse or mule drawn vehicle it was a "Thank God we're here" stop.

It was still that kind of a stop when automobiles became the main means of transportation around 1917. It was a long day's drive from Los Angeles to Little Lake if going north and it also was a long day's drive from Bishop going south. It was not unusual in those days, because of the hot sandy desert road, to have 20 or more cars lined up to have flat tires repaired.

This welcome "watering hole" was originally known as Little Owens Lake. Around 1860 Mexican miners named it "Lagunita." The English translation, "Little Lake" was used after that time.

In October 1898 Charles W. Whittock filed a deed for his homestead at Little Lake. He had a ranch house, small post office (not U.S. official), a cafe, and a store established by Hobart and Reed. It was in the period from 1898-1900 that the first Little Lake Hotel was built.

About 10 years later Whittock sold his property to Mr. Shuttock. He kept it for a few years and then sold it to William W. Bramlette who operated the lake, hotel, store, garage, and gas station for many years.



Little Lake Hotel

Photocard courtesy of Rich McCutchan

The increasing popularity of the Little Lake Hotel and the interest in its surrounding geological resources indicated that a new, unusual structure should be built. It was started in 1919 and completed somewhere near 1923.

In keeping with other changes, the Bramlettes decided to dam the tule marsh area with its continually flowing artesian springs and make it an actual lake. They also sponsored the formation of a private duck club on the new lake. When Bramlette finally sold his property it was divided among several owners. The three items are Lower Little Lake, Upper Little Lake, and the Little Lake Hotel and its adjoining buildings.

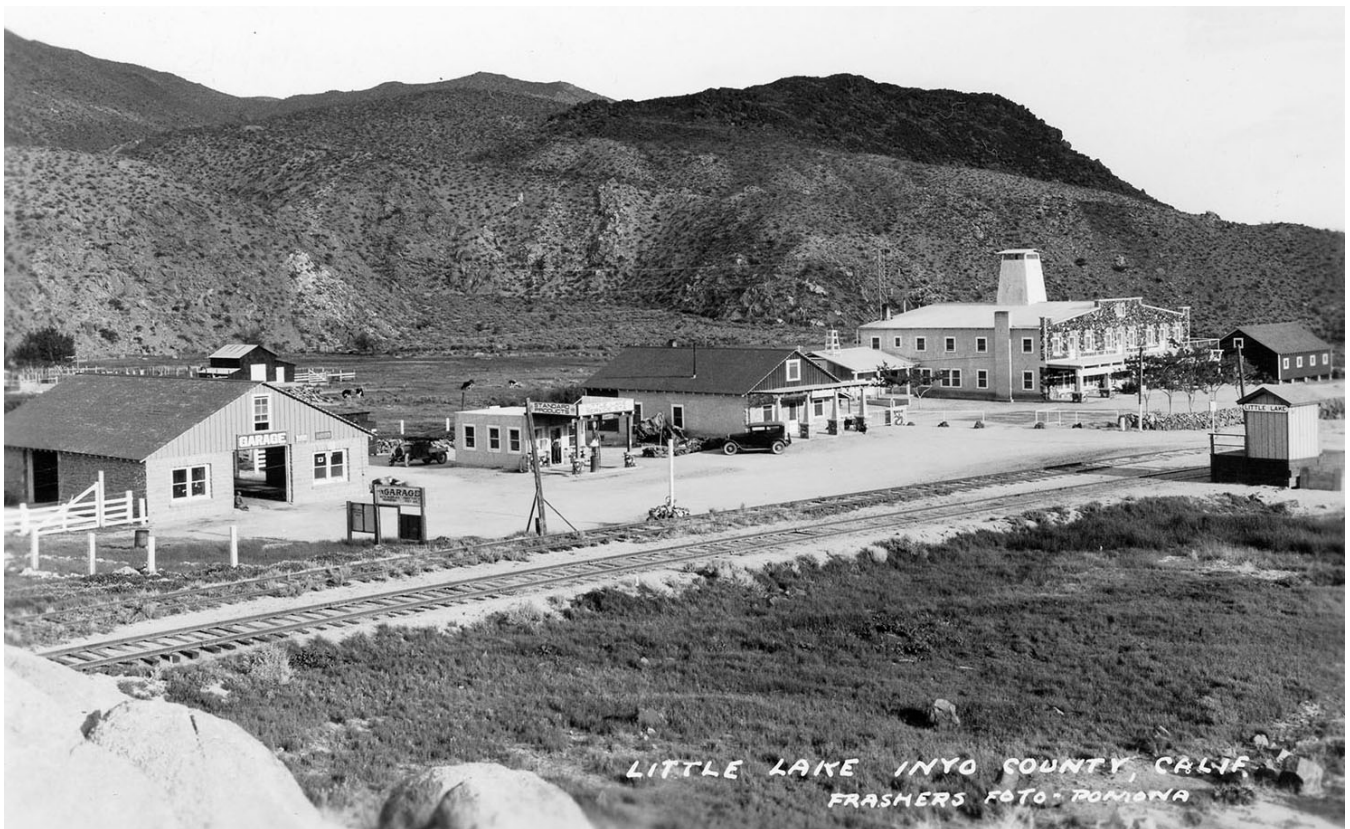
There are many ancient petroglyphs on the black lava cliffs on the east side of the lake. The anthropologists have estimated the habitation of the area to the Pinto and Prepinto Indians, some of whom were here 10,000 years B.C., and their mark is still found upon the area.

There has been a geothermal drilling program going on a few miles north and east of the Little Lake area that covers a vast volcanic area, Coso Hot Springs, and it is rumored that it may be of sufficient temperatures to make the installation of electrical generating plants feasible to supply power to a very substantial area in Southern California. We are all hoping this works out, as it would enrich this intriguing area considerably.

Very recently there has been a uranium drilling and prospecting program going on in the area from Haiwee Reservoir to the north and Fossil Falls on the south.

The Little Lake Hotel with its nicely appointed 30 rooms is now owned by Larry and Irene Armstrong and their fine family. Many of the locals get their mail in the post office. The Cafe, dining room and bar are a nice place for the various persons to get acquainted, visit, tell tall tales, dance, sing and soften the lonely hours between shifts and on days off. The climate ranges from about 10 degrees in the winter to 110 degrees in the hot part of the summer. There are usually 2 or 3 nice snowstorms, and in the summer some nice cloud bursts or gentle rains. The average annual rainfall is about 6 inches.

The entire Saga of Inyo County would not permit space to recount all the wonderful happy times (and others) or recall all the famous (and others) people who have passed through our portals. Motor and tire trouble through the past decades has made even famous people humble. By tradition, Little Lake continues to hold out a "helping hand."



Town of Little Lake
(Photocard courtesy of Rich McCutchan)