The Album

Times & Tales of Inyo-Mono

Being a quarterly recounting of the nature and history of two California counties

Vol. II, No. 3

Inside:

Rossis Revisited
Valentine Reserve
One 4th of July
A Good Deed
Fossil Falls
Those Church Mice Again
and more

The Eastern Sierra

Land of Many Uses

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power works with Inyo and Mono counties to maintain the eastern Sierra as a vacationers' paradise. In addition to being one of America's finest recreational areas, the region is also the source of most of Los Angeles' water.

Cooperative projects include Klondike Lake, the Lower Owens River, and a number of pasture lands and alfalfa fields.

Most of our leased lands remain open for hunting, fishing and other forms of recreation. Additional land has been made available to public agencies for roadside parks, campgrounds and fish hatcheries.

We are doing our best to make sure that the eastern Sierra has something for everyone and remains that special vacation spot.

And remember, we're in the middle of drought, so please, use water wisely.

DWP Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

Photo by Diane Reesman

THE ALBUM, Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono

July 1989
Volume II, Number 3
Published quarterly by Chalfant Press, Inc.

In This Issue

Our Trip Across the Mojave Desert in a Covered Wagon 2
by Estelle Rossi Fanlser Screen
Dedicated to her parents and brother, Harvey

Curley and Harriette Rossi Cowboy Poets 10

The Good Old Days 12
by Dave Babb
Range & Wildlife Specialist, L.A. DWP

Valentine 13
compiled by Louise Kelsey
Kelsey Sierra Studios, from an interview with Mrs. Edward Valentine

One Fourth of July 20
by George Garrigues
Bishop Native, Writer, and Poet

My Good Deed 23
by Martha Lenbeck Mills
Native of the late town of Manzanar

My Growing Up Years As I Remember Them 25
by Virginia (Babe) Rossi Harwood

Bits of History to Gnaw On An Eye-Witness to the Lincoln Assassination 33
by Peter Korngiebel
Chalfant Press Staff

Fossil Falls and Prehistoric Man 39
by Marguerite Sowaal
Director
Inyo County Free Library

Home on the Range with the Rossis 45

Map, Letters 48

Publisher
Deane Funk

General Manager
Pete Doughtie

Editor
Jane Fisher

Layout Assistant
Peter Korngiebel

Cover photo: "Five Generations" clockwise from upper right: Nancy Blake Rossi, mother of Estelle and Babe whose stories appear in this issue; Nancy's mother, "Grandma" Blake, "Great Grandma" Reams holding Warren, Buddie and Estelle Rossi Fansler.

The Album, Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono, is a collection of stories, history, and natural history of Inyo County and Mono County, in Eastern California.

Letters, comments, and contributions are welcome; contributions should be accompanied by photos, documents, sketches, or maps.

Chalfant Press, Inc. assumes no responsibility for damage or loss of material submitted but will make every effort to return materials, whether published or not.

Individual copies of The Album are available for $3 by mail or $12 a year (four issues) by subscription, including tax and postage. Address correspondence to Chalfant Press, Inc., P.O. Box 787, Bishop, California 93514, Attention: Jane Fisher

Angelo Rossi, center; from left, clockwise: Joe, Berna, Louis, Rafael, Tony; July 17, 1884

photographs from Rossi family albums

Only one highway runs through Inyo and Mono counties, and along its length lie little towns, some thriving communities, some slowly turning into new ghost towns, others hidden off the road among trees and lanes. Descendants of many of the first white settlers are still devoted to the life here along the vast spine of the Sierra, and as time passes the tapestry of relationships becomes complex.

One such family began its American saga when Angelo Rossi came from southern Italy and 105 years of Rossis began in the Owens Valley.

A family tree tracing relationships of Rossi, Serventi, Fletcher, White and Liston moves into Clarkson, Blake, Milovich, Fansler, Screen, Smith, Harwood, and on down into a sixth generation of well known Valley names woven into the fabric of an epic.

The Rossi stories typify the evolution of America, of the West, and of the Eastern Sierra. Angelo and Rosa's eight children and their descendants can tell of triumph and tragedy, love and music and poetry, adventure and hard work, of homesteading in Lone Pine, herding goats and sheep from Lone Pine to Mono Lake, of farming near Independence and ranching near Big Pine, of mining and stonemasonry, beekeeping, vineyards, orchards, cowboys, business ventures, and community volunteerism, of the good life the way it used to be and the way it is in the high country today.

This August will see the reunion regularly held on the first Saturday in August at the Rossi Reservation, site of the original home of Angelo's son Tony and wife Nancy (Blake) in Big Pine. One of those lovely oases unsuspected by passing motorists, the quiet streets of little Big Pine are bountiful with gardens, trees, neat fences and charming homes. A lush park on a back street, the Rossi homestead is now owned and maintained in its original beauty by Tony's grandson Mike Rossi and his son, Dean. Estelle and Virginia (Babe), Tony's daughters, also live nearby, as do 13 families altogether.

From 250 to 400 people from all over the West will gather under great trees shading the old home buildings, sloping lawns, pond and streams, with flowers, grapes, berries, and fruit trees planted generations ago. Games, swimming, skits and sing-alongs will be sustained by chickens, roasts and game birds planted in the ground in dutch ovens by the men around 4 a.m., accompanied by salads, desserts, polenta, spaghetti, relishes, breads and a Rossi staple, beans.

Here the stories will be told and re-told, keeping alive the roots of real America.

Harriette Allison, Babe's daughter, says, "We are all Valley people. We have a love for the snows in winter, lilacs in spring, and the gathering of wood in the fall. Children of the families who have moved away come back to meet cousins and find their roots. No one is gone from us forever. They live on in our memories and come back with us at every reunion. We re-live the stories and remember how much fun we had. We're all there together and no one is alone with his memories."

We have chosen two of these stories, written by two of Angelo's granddaughters for their families, to share here. Estelle's story begins.

OUR TRIP

Across the Mojave Desert

by Covered Wagon

Center: Harvey Rossi

Dedicated to My Children
and in Memory of
My Dear Mother, Father and Brother Harvey

By Estelle Rossi Fansler Screen

Jay and Estelle Fansler and family

"No one is gone from us forever. They live on in our memories and come back with us at every reunion."

When I was a very young girl, my father decided to take his family on a trip to Los Angeles to see the bright lights of the city. It was the year 1911 in late November when we started on our journey. There were four of us kids and another on the way. My older brother, Harvey, was two years older than I and then there was a span of eight years between me and the younger ones.

Late in the summer months, my dad began making plans for a means of transportation. He took the old wood wagon and made it into a covered wagon which was as beautiful and glamorous to us then as the beautiful motor-driven house cars of today. The only difference — ours was horse power. We had no showers, sinks or running water. We carried our water in barrels fastened to the side of the wagon. We carried everything we needed, and it all had its place in the wagon.

When we stopped to camp overnight, Dad put up the tent and set up the little wood stove which we cooked our meals on and heated water to wash dishes and take baths. The tailgate of the wagon was our table, and the doors on the back were made to swing out and were used as cupboards. Dad made shelves on the inside of the doors to carry our dishes and cooking utensils. When the doors were opened out, we had our dining area before us. The tent was facing the back of the wagon so the stove was nearby and we could get in and out of the weather. Mother and the two little ones slept in the wagon which had a double bed made up. My Dad, older brother, and I slept in the tent. We were very snug and happy.

About once a week we would heat water and get out the old washtub and take baths and wash out our clothes and hang them on the bushes to dry. We carried enough supplies to last throughout the trip. Mother canned lots of vegetables and fruit. We had home-cured bacon and ham, dried beans, potatoes, and flour in large quantities. We were almost ready to go — everything had been taken care of. My Dad and Mother knew a family who would move into our home and take care of things until our return.

So, the first warm day in late November found us preparing for our journey. Grandma and Grandpa Blake thought it would be better if we stayed the night with them and get an early start the next morning. Grandma made beds for all of us and we retired early. We were up at the crack of dawn and could hardly wait to get started. Finally we were ready to climb aboard with everyone kissing, hugging, and crying all at the same time.

At last, we were on our way with excitement and adventure ahead of us. Dad had a team of big mares, a gray and a bay. We called them Maude and Grace. They were gentle and strong and we loved them. Maude had a colt, I guess she was about ten months or a year old, that my brother and I were breaking to ride. She was sweet and gentle with us. She would not lead, so Dad tied a rope around her belly and attached it to the lead rope some way so that when she pulled back, it pinched her and taught her to lead. Her name was Hazel. Dad took her along with the idea of selling her to help pay the expenses of our trip. Horses were much in demand at that time and sold for a good figure. When we arrived in Long Beach, a Chinaman offered us $150 for her but we had all become so attached to her that it was like giving up one of the family, so she made the trip home with us.

The first day we drove as far as Aberdeen and set up camp at what was then called the old Black Rock Ranch. The road used to go through the center of the ranch. Dad knew the people who lived there, so the grownups visited and played cards until late in the night. We kids were put to bed early so we would be ready for the next day's travel. Dad used to herd sheep up and down the valley in his younger days and became acquainted with all the ranchers along the way.

"Grandma and Grandpa" Blake

Early next morning we were on our way. We came to the Eight-Mile Ranch. It was a big sheep ranch north of Independence. In the early days it was a stage coach stop. Dad knew the folks who lived there so we stopped for awhile to rest and visit. Dad and the Mr. used to herd sheep together and had much to talk about while refreshing themselves over a glass of homemade Dago Red. The

women had many things to talk about, too. Visitors were few and far between in those days.

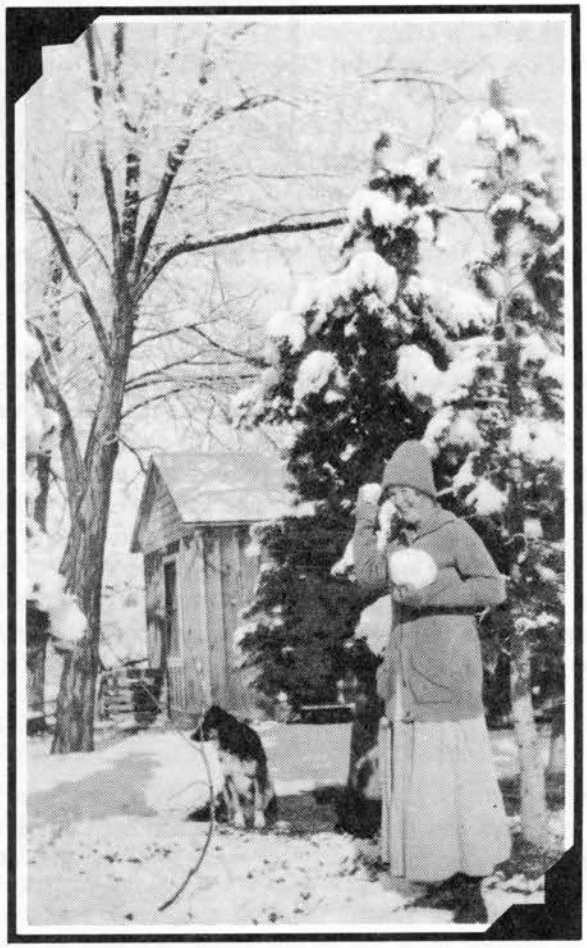
Finally Dad said that if we were going to make distance that day, we had better be moving on. So, off we go and went as far as Independence. We had some friends living there. We spent the night and part of the next day with them. Mama did the family wash and cooked a pot of beans and potatoes to carry us through for a day or two. We got a rather late start that day and only got as far as Manzanar. We pulled up in a little grove near the old school house and made camp.

This was during the time that the City of Los Angeles was building the aqueduct to carry the water from the Owens Valley across the desert to the city. There were supply camps about every fifteen miles through the desert and my dad tried to plan his trip to stop near one of these camps every other day. We could get water and hay for our horses which made it more convenient for us. This was the first one; it was a big camp set up in a locust grove alongside a stream of water. There was a big boardinghouse, many horses and corrals, there were no motor-driven vehicles. The work was all done by man and horse power — mostly mules in those days.

After we were all settled down for the evening, my brother and I decided to go calling. We went over to the cookhouse and the cook invited us in. He asked us to have supper with him. It was quite a thrill for us, so we stayed and, after we had finished, he made up a basket of goodies and walked us back to our camp. Of course, Mama and Dad were beginning to wonder what had become of us and were quite relieved when we walked in with our new-found friend. There were lots of goodies in the basket and, among them were some codfish balls that he had made. We nibbled at them and decided they were pretty good. Funny how things stick in your mind. I remember we used to go to Grandma Blake's and, about once a week in the pantry would be a kettle of codfish soaking in water to cook for the next day. It smelled horrible! She used to boil it and make a cream sauce with it; it was supposed to be good for us. They thought it was great but we kids could hardly swallow it, but we were made to eat it anyway. So, we were a little curious about the codfish balls. We didn't realize it could be cooked any other way and they tasted fairly good.

Up early and on our way the next morning. We drove as far as Cottonwood Creek. There was a little stream coming down out of the mountains, winding its way through the sand. A few cottonwood trees grew along the banks. The water emptied into Owens Lake which was a large body of water twenty-eight miles long. It reached from south of Lone Pine to Olancha. They used to haul cargo on a steamboat from Keeler to Olancha in the early years (before my time). My great uncle, Elias Blake, worked on the ship in his youth.

Well, we set up the tent under the trees and settled down for the night. We were always glad to get out of the wagon and stretch our legs. My mother must have been miserable throughout that whole trip, and I often wonder how she stood it and stayed so brave and cheerful all the way. I guess it was the pioneer blood in her.

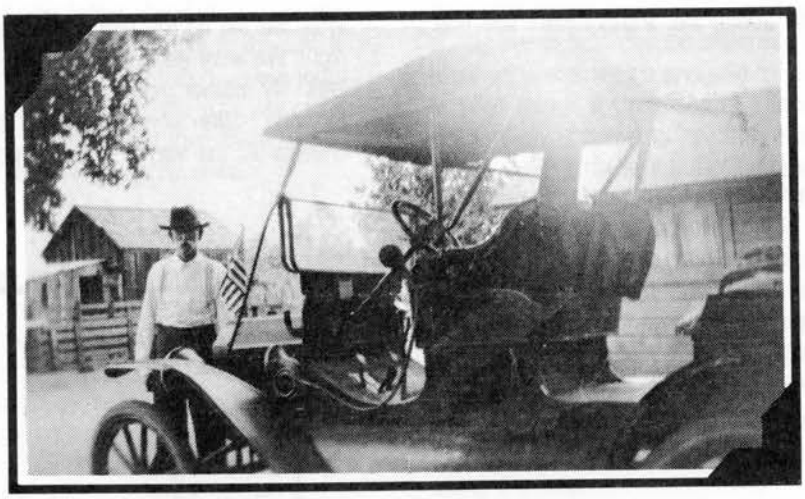


"Mom" Nancy Rossi

The weather was beautiful and the sand was warm and soft on our bare feet. Dad set up the camp stove, my brother and I gathered twigs and buffalo chips for the fire. We all helped get supper. Mama made biscuits (I can still taste them). They had a smoked flavor from the brush and twigs we used in the fire. She made enough to last for a few days. We ate lunch as we traveled.

We spent a few days here enjoying the beauty and warmth of the desert.

We drove as far as Cartago the next day. We spent the night nearby the aqueduct supply camp. The next day we traveled as far as Haiwee Dam (at that time it was called the goat ranch). We stayed overnight here and then on to Little Lake. It was so warm and lovely here. Dad set up the tent on the south side of the rocks



"Grandpa" Blake and his 1912 Model T

in the canyon. It was so nice that we spent three or four days here. There was water from the spring and green grass for the horses. We spread our bedding on the bushes to air in the sun while Mama baked bread and cooked a pot of beans and boiled some potatoes for the next few days of travel, never knowing where the next stop might be. After a few days of rest and basking in the sun, we were ready to move on again. We drove as far as Indian Wells. We bathed in the pool from the mineral springs. It was there we met Grandpa Blake. He had been to Los Angeles to purchase a new Model T Ford and was on his way home. He stopped to rest and visit awhile before continuing on his way.

Dad knew the people who lived at Indian Wells. They were very nice to us. We only stayed one night. We had been on the road about ten days up to now and we were having the thrill of our lives.

My brother and I walked the biggest part of the way across the desert. The horses traveled so slow that it was easy to keep up with them. Once in awhile we would take our little sister and brother off the wagon and let them play along with us. Alma was four and Maynard was two. Mama was pregnant with our younger sister who was born after we returned home. I often think back and wonder if our mother really enjoyed that trip. I can't remember ever hearing a word of complaint from her; how uncomfortable she must have been climbing in and out of the wagon, sitting on a high, hard seat mile after mile dangling her legs and bringing her feet to rest on the dashboard below. The bed was fixed so she could crawl in the back and lie down when she got too tired to sit up, but there was always the little kids who required much care and attention.

Up to now, we had been taking our time and enjoying the scenery and beauty of the desert, but the horses were getting frisky and impatient so Dad thought he had better work it out of them. We traveled many miles that day passing through Red Rock Canyon in all its colorful beauty, and then on to Cinco. We stayed a couple of days here. There was a grocery store and a few old prospector shacks around. We made our camp near the railroad. The store was owned and operated by an old woman who had spent her entire life on the desert. In the evening she would sit on the porch in front of her store rocking back and forth, smoking a corncob pipe, and telling us stories about her life on the desert.

We traveled on to Mojave the next day and set up camp on the outskirts of the town. We made our beds and set up the little stove and cooked supper inside the tent. When we finished eating, we were all tired and went to bed early. Sometime during the night the wind came up and blew so hard it blew our tent down. We scrambled around in the dark and gathered up what we could find and crawled into the wagon until daylight. Then we finished gathering up our camp and were on the road again. By now we had been on the road two weeks. From then on we ran into more traffic and more people. We had to be a little more careful where we stopped to camp. The dirt road ran parallel to the railroad. When a train went by the horses would rear and snort and kick and make such a fuss it was hard to hold them. Sometimes it took both my brother and dad to keep them from bolting and running. It was fun for his kids but we didn't realize the danger it could have been.

Once in awhile we would meet a traveler who would be stuck in the middle of the road. The sand was so deep they couldn't get out of their tracks. We would unhitch our team and hook onto theirs in order to pull them out of the way so we could get by. The desert was beautiful but the roads were terrible!

We passed through little towns along the way like Rosamond, Lancaster, and Palmdale. We went through the tunnel at Newhall near Saugus. The horses really put on a show going through that long, dark tunnel. We were excited and frightened. It was a relief to all of us when we came to the end.

We drove around looking for a place to stop for a few days and found a big oak tree on the hillside. We had just gotten settled

when it started to rain. It rained for days, our tent leaked, the cover on our wagon leaked, and everything we possessed was soaked. Luckily it was a warm rain and we were on a slope which kept us from drowning.

Finally the rain stopped and the sun came out so warm and bright. We had bedding and clothes spread out on every bush and shrub around. When we finally got dried out and back to normal, we realized we were in the middle of an oil field. Most of them were pumping oil. It was quite an interesting experience for all of us.

We traveled on and camped here and there throughout the San Fernando Valley. The orange groves were a beautiful sight and the people were very hospitable and friendly to us.

We had some friends who lived in downtown Los Angeles. We had their address. We shared our home with them one winter when they were stranded and having a little hard luck. When they left, they told us if we ever came to the city to be sure and come to see them.

We were driving up one street and down another, the shoes on the horses' feet were making sparks on the pavement, the horses were snorting and rearing and shying from the trolley cars and automobiles. We were all hanging on for our lives. I guess our friends heard us coming because, when we finally found the place, they met us at the door and didn't seem very happy to see us so we didn't stay very long.

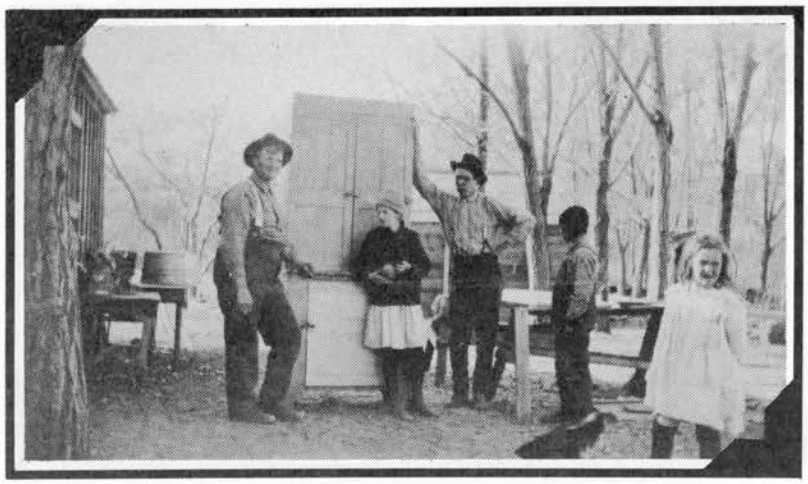
We drove around awhile and admired the beautiful homes and yards. The horses were getting restless and hard to manage. Dad was pulling on the reins and trying to hold the brake at the same time; he was worn out and quite relieved when we found ourselves in a little town called Hollywood.

There was a eucalyptus grove at the edge of town and that was where we made our camp for a few days. At that time it was a very small place. I remember a drug store, post office, and a general store. Orange and lemon groves were everywhere. My brother and I fed them to the horses and played anti-over the tent with oranges.

We got settled for the night and Dad decided to take a stroll. He came upon an old deserted-looking shed with a few old bales of hay in it, so he took a bale and carried it over to camp for the horses. He had just put the hay down and had come into the tent when a man came walking up and asked where our dad was, he would like to talk to him; so brother started calling for him. I don't know whether he saw the man coming and was trying to avoid him but, anyway, we were all ears and heard the man say to him, "You can return the hay now or answer to the judge in the morning." So, poor old Dad returned the hay and, as far as he was concerned, the case was closed! We thought it was funny and we were getting quite a bang out of it until Dad told us to forget it — or else!

After a few days, we traveled on and stayed in all the little towns like Fullerton, Anaheim, Little Rock, Venice, and several other places, finally settling in Long Beach. We had been on the road twenty-eight days.

Dad found a little unfurnished house for rent on Atlantic Boulevard where we stayed for a month, part of December and January. It had a big yard with a fence around it. There was an outhouse and barn on the back of the lot. Dad pulled in and we all pitched in and started unloading our belongings. Dad tied the horses in the barn and tied the colt to the water hydrant nearby so she could graze on the green grass for a few minutes. The first things she did was to break the hydrant and we had water spraying all over the place. Dad found a stick and whittled a plug, drove it into the pipe to stop the flow of water, and, as far as I know, it's still there. At any rate, it served the purpose for the time being.



"The Old Cupboard"

Rose Seglie, Jean Peden, Estelle Rossi from postcard addressed from Estelle to "My dear cousin, Miss Louise Serventi"

We finally got settled in the house. We didn't have any furniture so Dad went to a secondhand store and bought a used gas range and a table. We made do with the rest of what we had.

We spent Christmas here. Dad bought us a little tree and we popped corn and strung it, cut pictures from magazines and decorated the tree. We picked oranges from the tree in the yard. We filled the little kids' stockings and hung them on the tree. Mama prepared a lovely Christmas dinner. We didn't have a turkey but we had a home-cured ham and all the trimmings. It was a beautiful Christmas, one I shall remember always.

We were near enough to the ocean that we could walk to the beach. My brother and I would go fishing off the pier almost every afternoon. In the evening, after dark, we played games in the streets under the lights with the neighbor kids from blocks around. It was all a new world to us. We didn't have electricity or street lights where we came from.

We spent a glorious month here. Dad used to take us on the street car for a Sunday ride and Mama would fix a picnic basket. On week days we would go to the beach and play in the sand or fish off the pier.

Virginia (Babe), Alma, and Maynard Rossi

But finally it came time for us to make plans for the trip home. The horses had to be shod and the wagon had to be repaired, and everything put in shape for the long journey home. It was the end of January when we hit the road again, homeward bound. The weather was beautiful. We traveled pretty steady as we were all homesick and anxious to cover the miles in a hurry. When we came to the crossroad at Mojave, Dad wanted to flip a coin to see whether to go to Bakersfield or Big Pine. We were all so anxious to get home, we didn't even consider changing our course. We made very good time crossing the desert homeward.

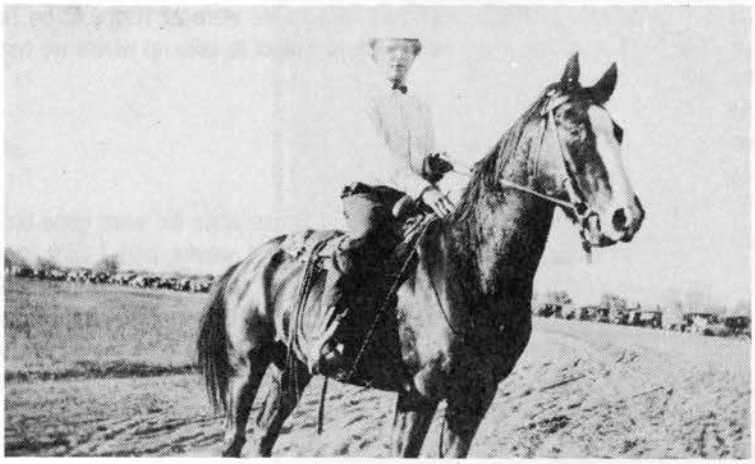
The weather was perfect until within a few miles south of Olancha. The north wind began to blow and we were miserable and almost froze. The horses were hard to manage, the wind whipped the cover loose from the wagon, and blew us around. The kids got scared and started crying and Mama wasn't feeling well. We finally made it into Olancha and met some people who had a cabin nearby. They invited us in to stay until the storm was over. It lasted a couple of days. When we were ready to leave, they decided to follow us home and they spent the winter with us.

We arrived home the middle of February and the snow came down. It was a long, cold winter. We were all happy to be home. My brother and I went back to school to take up where we had left off.

The family that stayed in our house while we were gone brought in a batch of bedbugs. We spent days, weeks, and, I think, months washing, sunning, boiling in lye and soapy water, all the bedding and even the bedsteads. We tore all the paper from the walls, white-washed and scrubbed with hot water and lye all the walls and floors of all the rooms. We finally got rid of the bugs and hung new wallpaper throughout. The time had come to start making preparations for the new baby who was born April 21, 1912. We named her Virginia Rose Rossi.

The years sped by. My brother Harvey joined the Medical Corps in the Army of World War One and I married and moved away.

Harvey Woodcock, Jay Fansler, Nancy Rossi, and Estelle on the occasion of the wedding of Jay and Estelle, 1917



Curley Fletcher on Picadilly

CURLEY *and* HARRIETTE

Rossi Cowboy Poets

photographs from Rossi family albums

Front: Fred, Rose Allard, Reta Fletcher
Back: Harry and Curley Fletcher

Right: Harriette Allison, packer's Gal Friday, business woman, poet, and promoter of cowboy poetry
photo by Mary O'Shea

CURLEY

Curley Fletcher, cowboy poet, came to laws in 1892. For a long time it was thought that he was born there, but records now show he was born in San Francisco and came to Laws with his parents, Harry and Benedetta (Berna) Rossi Fletcher when he was two months old.

His maternal grandfather, Angelo Rossi, and some of his uncles had already successfully accumulated farm and rangeland on the California-Nevada border. Fletcher's home in Laws was where the Drover's Cottage stood, just north of the Laws Railroad Museum.

Curley attended school through the sixth grade at Laws, and even with that education, he wrote poetry with insight and brilliance. He learned horsemanship and the feeling of freedom from the Paiute cowboys who rounded up the wild cows and mustangs in the foothills of the Sierras. He was well known in cowboy circles as a good rider and talker.

Throughout his life he wrote poetry and gave poems to those he loved. Few cowboys today do not know of Curley Fletcher, and "The Strawberry Roan," his best known saga, was put to music, anonymously for many years.

For more about the cowboy poet, see Joy Fatooh's article in The Album, p. 29, Vol. II, No. 1.

On Friday, September 1, the Rossi family will host an "Old Time Cowboy Poetry and Music Show" at the Laws Museum. It will be an outdoor recital of the poetry of Curley Fletcher and other classics of the old West.

So Santee this Christmas there's nothin' I want
'Cept the love of a man that rides on a bronc
I'm askin' this special of the elves and you
'Cause no one else ever seems to come through

This Christmas I'm askin' for you to try
And this ones as tough as teachin' reindeer to fly
When you go out there makin' your rounds
Find me a cowboy in one of them towns

Then stop on his roof top, knock the snow off your boots
Jump down the chimney and say "we're in cahoots"
You're shoppin' for an honest, kind, lovin' man
For a swing dancin' woman with an empty left hand

excerpt from "Letter to Santee"
by Harriette Allison

HARRIETTE

"My interest in cowboy poetry began much the same as keeping the Rossi reunions going. Cowboying is a dying trade and with its passing will go its stories of days gone by.

"In my heart, I live in the past and love the way things were. I like the old mining and ranching days when people worked hard and slept well because they were exhausted; when bartering was a way of life and honesty and being neighborly were common.

"I'd heard 'The Strawberry Roan' all my life and was proud that it was written by my Mama's first cousin. In fact, lots of the family members write poetry and we grew up with it.

"When I began to do back country cooking, I was exposed to lots of western flavor poetry. Many of the packers have memorized some of the greats and it's a real fireside treat to listen to the stories. I bought some books of cowboy poetry, and on the trips when my packer didn't recite, I began to do it. The more I read, the more I loved it and wanted to share it with the world.

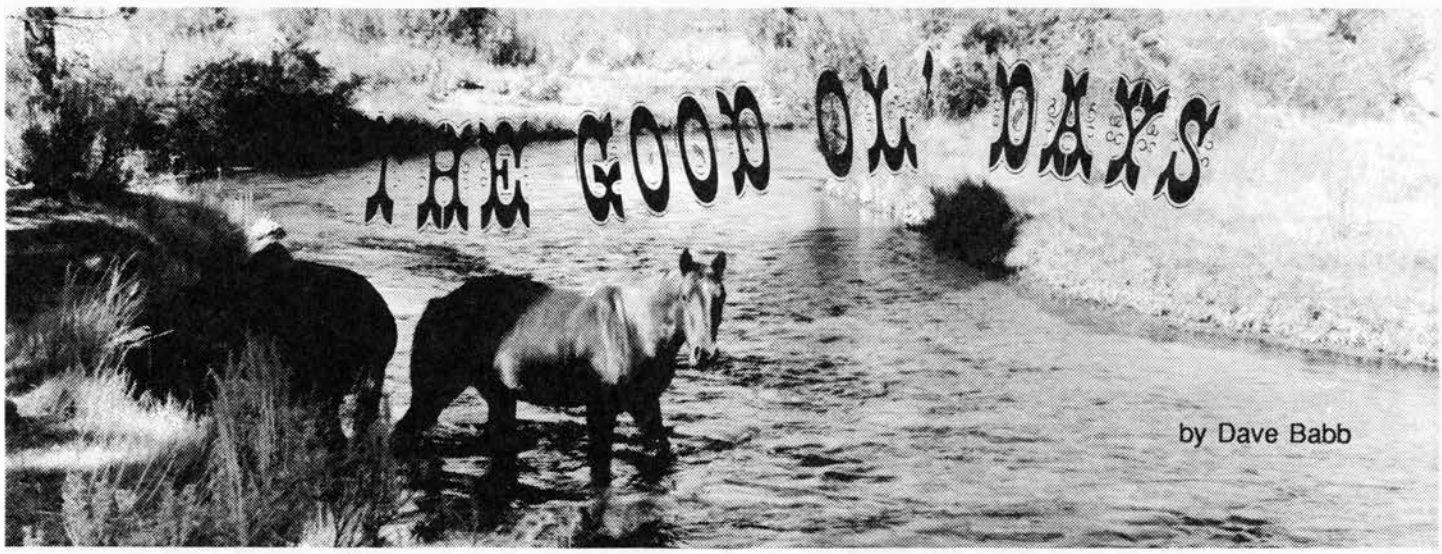
"I think almost everybody dreams of being a cowboy once during childhood and for a few minutes you can listen to their rhymes and imagine yourself there. You can live experiences you've never had and laugh as though they were your own.

"Duane (Rossi) has always been quite the entertainer with his poetry and stories, so I suggested we go up to Elko, Nevada for the big gathering and have a listen. We came home so excited, we decided to publish his book. It took Duane, Gary (Rossi) and I one whole winter to extract all of his poetry from his memory. We finally had a book and I had the fever.

"I had to know more about Curley Fletcher, so I started asking questions of the locals who had known him personally. I learned that he was fun, a character, and pulled stunts that really made me laugh. I was glad to be related to him. The more of his poetry I read, the more interested I became.

" 'The Strawberry Roan' isn't the only poem he ever wrote but you'd never know that. His poetry is serious and deep and very well written, as well as fun and funny. His use of the language is admirable. His knowledge of the cowboy trade and his ability to describe it is a true art. I am proud to bring the works and name of Curley Fletcher into the limelight for the credit he so deserves.

"Let me take you on a trip with Curley to a time gone by, on Friday, September 1, at the Laws Railroad Museum, 7 p.m., where wonderful cowboy poets will recite his works. ✤



by Dave Babb

Those of us who have lived in the Owens Valley for many years have a tremendous appreciation for the clear, cold water that flows from the Sierra as well as from our faucets.

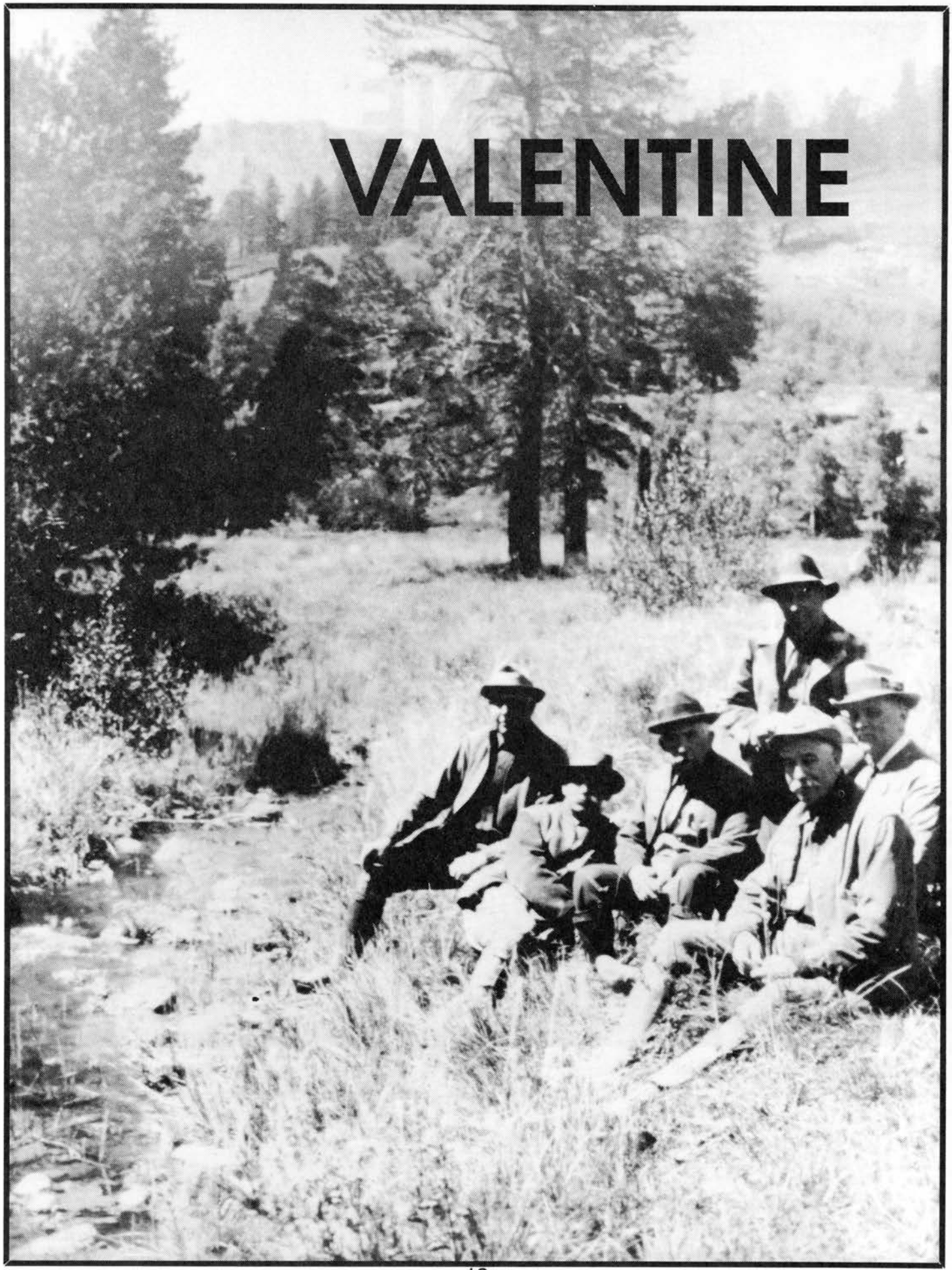
While the waters in the lower elevations of the streams or in the Owens River are not as pure as in the high country (forgetting for a moment the occurence of *Giardia lambia* in recent years), most would still be shocked to pick up the morning paper and read the caption, "River is Valley's Sewer, Says Expert Bacteriologist." This is, however, just what readers of the INYO REGISTER saw in August of 1914.

That caption was followed by the statement, "From a study of the situation of the power company camps in the Owens River gorge, the ranches about Bishop, the sewage disposal in the town of Bishop, the slaughter house filth and the marshes, I feel the stream should be called the outfall sewer of Owens Valley instead of Owens River." This statement was made by Dr. Ethel Leonard, who served as City Bacteriologist from 1904 to 1907, and was considered to be the foremost authority on the subject on the coast at that time.

Dr. Leonard's remarks were presented as testimony in a lawsuit brought in Los Angeles to enjoin the City from delivering aqueduct water to consumers; alleging that the water was unfit for human consumption. In a 20-page report, Dr. Leonard cited many examples that led to her conclusions that ". . . any use of Owens River water is absolutely impossible from a sanitary standpoint," and that "Any domestic use of Owens River water as a source of domestic supply must be abandoned." One of the problems contributing to the unsanitary conditions was the Long Valley swamp, now covered by Long Valley Reservoir (Crowley Lake). Apparently, the carcasses of hundreds of cattle that had died from anthrax and other diseases had been deposited in that area over a period of many years and the contaminated water emptied into the River. In and around Bishop, several areas were cited. The north fork of Bishop Creek, as it circled the northeastern part of town, passed through a pond about 200 feet wide on the property of the City Market and slaughterhouse. On the shore of the pond were "bones of cattle partly covered with hide, remnants of hoofs and other portions of slaughtered cattle." Downstream, another slaughterhouse was described with even worse conditions and was situated in a swamp that drained directly into the River.

Northeast of Big Pine was a large collection of garbage and refuse on the banks of the River, and Big Pine Creek ran through it into the River. To the south, the streams emptying into the Los Angeles Aqueduct were found to have the purest of water but the Aqueduct was more contaminated than the River to the north; not only from the carcasses of dead animals in the canal, but in addition the two water closets at the George's Creek School were built directly on the creek which flowed into the Aqueduct just 200 feet away. We won't even attempt to describe the conditions found at Haiwee Reservoir, except to say that samples of water from Haiwee Reservoir and Fairmont Reservoir, near Lancaster, showed the worst chemical conditions of all.

A review of the chronicles of earlier days shows that the purity of river water was questioned as early as 1906, when fish were reported dying in the Owens River for some 10 miles south of the Laws bridge and the suggested cause was a "black barnyard ooze" seeping from the River banks. Also, in July of 1906, the Inyo Register reported that workers on the construction of the Aqueduct near Blackrock had to have their drinking water hauled in from the Eightmile Ranch because the water from Blackrock Spring was not fit to drink. And they call these the "good old days"? ✤


VALENTINE

VALENTINE

compiled by Louise Kelsey from an interview with Mrs. Edward Valentine

The Pond *Louise Kelsey photo*

p. 13 "The Men" Mr. Wm. Valentine on left, Mammoth Creek near present Meadow Trail
Carol Valentine collection

Snow from the Sierra seeps into the Lakes Basin, filling George, Mary, Mamie and Twin. The clear water flows out of Twin Lakes to become Mammoth Creek, then falls into a lush meadow. The only sound in this special place is the wind moving through the trees, water bubbling over its streambed and animals and birds stirring about their homes. Carol Valentine moves among the Reserve's flora with attentive grace.

Tex Cushion and dog team, famous in the '50s, pulling into camp *Carol Valentine collection*

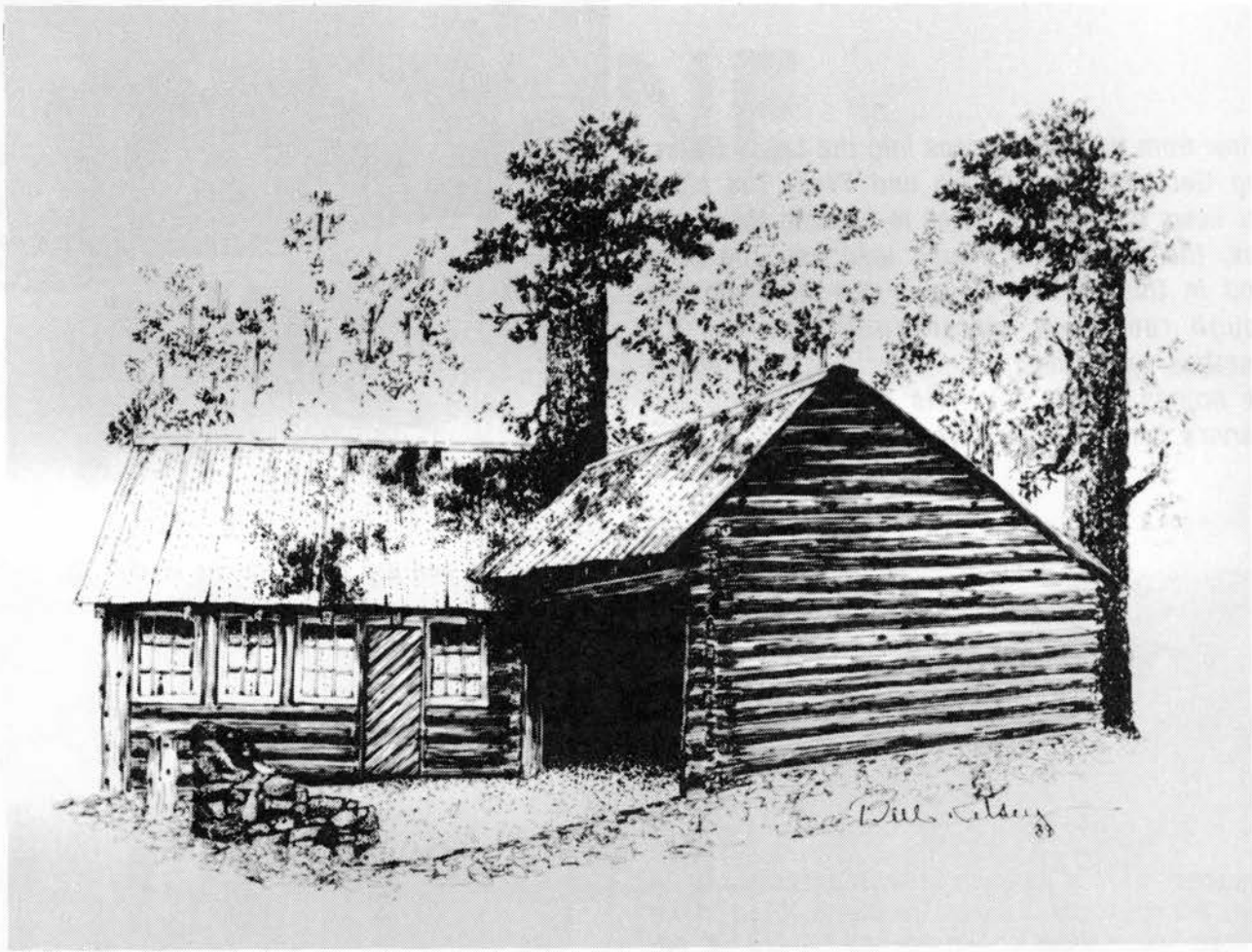
Down-creek the Hotel was being freshened and readied for the season's first guests, the fishermen. The shelves of Lutz' Market were being filled with food for both man and fish. The little pot-bellied stove in the "lean-to" post office puffed away while Sybil Summers sorted the mail. Pack horses and mules would come up from winter pasture when the meadow greened up and snow was clear of the passes. It was early spring and the beginning of fishing season was close. Now it was quite enough just get ready for The Opening.

Three hundred miles south Los Angeles was flexing its muscles. It had changed from a sleepy Spanish/Mexican village to a growing metropolis with all the drive and needs of an emerging giant.

It was early 1920s and a small group of successful Los Angeles businessmen were enjoying lunch at their club. They had bought acreage in Mammoth and log cabins had been built from native trees. The men were making final plans for their next trip to Mammoth, mentally taking themselves to their cabins.

In the early 1900s movers and shakers were called "tycoons." Belonging to the California Club, Los Angeles Athletic, Jonathan or University Club was essential. Cooks and drivers, called chefs and chauffers, were necessary domestic staff. Life was different but fishing was the same: addictive.

"The Fishermen" Mr. Wm. Valentine on the right, in camp *Carol Valentine collection*



"The Cookhouse" *Pen and ink by Bill Kelsey*

The logistics were familiar. Arrange for the chef from the club. He would bring his assistants. Be sure that secretaries had purchased train tickets to Lone Pine. Check time schedules with the driver who would meet the train and chauffer them to the fishing camp.

At Valentine Camp none of the cabins had kitchens. The men gathered at the cookhouse for cocktails and meals. Occasionally wives would come to the Camp, but generally only once. Unless a lady fished or hiked there was little to do. The Swiss chef prepared delectable meals and, of course, there was no housework or gardening. Florence Nichols attended to that.

In 1954 E.R. Valentine, son of a member of the original group, bought out the remaining owners, except for the O'Melveny interests, and hired Woody Sampson. Sampson, with the help of his wife, cared deeply for the Reserve and at the same time created a reputation as a local storyteller and humorist. So unless one wished to admire the wildflowers or sit by the stream and read, life for the ladies was far more inviting in the city.

Before his death, Ed Valentine and his wife Carol discussed what would happen to the Camp. Should it be given to an Alpine Garden, or to the Nature Conservancy? The Valentine Foundation elected to give 136 acres to the Natural Reserve System of the University of California as one of the 27 reserves in the state dedicated to be used as outdoor study areas. The Foundation was in effect only a few years before the University of California took management of the camp. It was dissolved and the assets given to the University, providing a generous endowment to the Reserve.

The Valentine Foundation has been a significant asset to Mammoth from its first gift to the Mammoth Lions Club for the construction of a campground for the handicapped, as well as the gift of the Valentine Reserve which is dedicated to research.

The Reserve is a component of the University's Natural Reserve System. Students and faculty researchers use the grounds as an outdoor laboratory to make observations and conduct experiments in a natural setting. Recent studies have examined dialects in brown-headed cowbirds, a brood parasite, because of the need to understand their effect upon the song bird population. Also under observation is the territorial behavior of hummingbirds, their adaptability and their protective ability to defend their food source as a means of survival. Another scientist researched his master's thesis in botany with studies of the Mariposa lily and its fruiting strategy as it responded to surviving against grazers.

Presently the Reserve is open to the public only one day a year. On this day the Mammoth Hospital Auxiliary, as a fund-raising project, arranges guided tours through the grounds. The balance of the year the Reserve is used by researchers and students.

Hidden away in the heart of one of the world's finest ski and recreational areas is Valentine: the gift of a segment of the Mammoth Lakes Basin to remain as unimpacted by growth as it is practical and possible to be.

Valentine Reserve plaque *Louise Kelsey photo*

Researchers and students are lulled by breezes, their thoughts soothed by moving water as they study close to the birds, plants and animals in their natural setting.

And Carol Valentine? The gracious lady continues to enjoy hiking and picnicking on one-day excursions to the endless natural marvels in the Mammoth area.

The Pond *Louise Kelsey photo*

Leslie Dawson, Reserve Associate at the falls *Louise Kelsey photo*

REFERENCES

1. Interview with Carol Valentine (Mrs. Edward)
2. Dan Dawson, Reserve Manager
3. Louise Kelsey, personal recollections
4. Morris/Gustafson: "Valentine Camp" brochure
5. Reed, Adele: "Old Mammoth"

Scott Christensen, Reserve Steward, at Valentine Camp cabin *Louise Kelsey photo*

VALENTINE
EASTERN SIERRA RESERVE

The Valentine Eastern Sierra Reserve consists of two components: Valentine Camp and the Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory (SNARL). SNARL's 51 acres are located at the base of Mount Morrison at an elevation of 7,100 feet. Convict Creek flows through the property in a natural section and four experimental stream channels controlled by dams and weirs. The site is also outfitted with wet and dry labs, a radioisotope lab, a walk-in cold room, offices, a library, and housing accommodations for 44 people. SNARL's extensive facilities are available year round to researchers and students working at Valentine Camp.

Location:
Eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada in the S.W. corner of the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mono County, CA; 314 driving miles N.E. of Los Angeles, 436 driving miles east of San Francisco.

Size:
136 acres of University-owned land

Precipitation Range:
20-25 in./yr.

Average Temps:
July max: 77°F
January min: 14°F

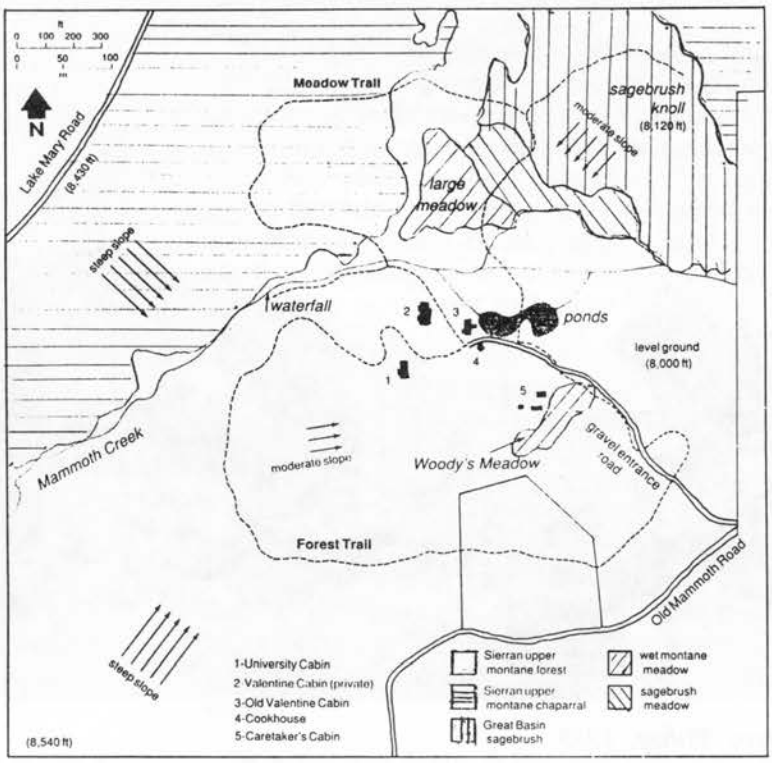
Topography:
Varied, including low-lying, spring-fed meadows; gently sloping glacial moraine; steep north-, east-, and south-facing slopes bisected by the main course of Mammoth Creek.

Habitats:
Sierran upper montane forest, Sierran upper montane chaparral, Great Basin sagebrush, high montane riparian vegetation, wet montane meadow vegetation, sagebrush-meadow vegetation, and seep and spring

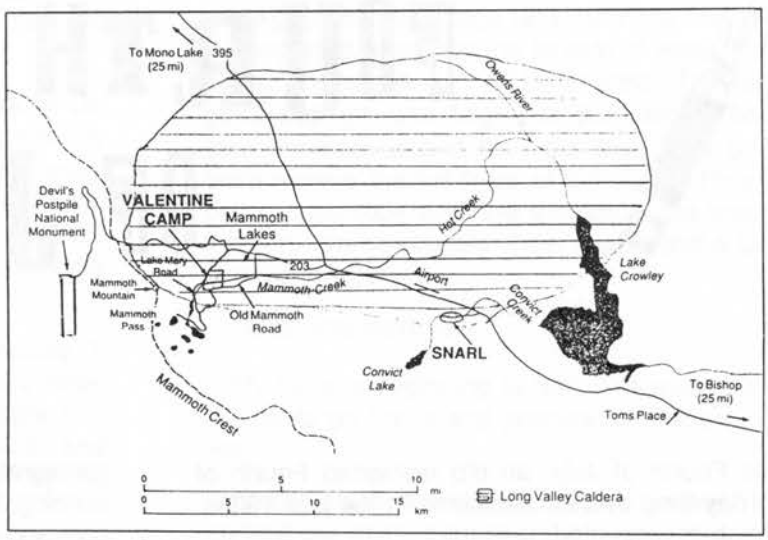
Species Diversity:
Vascular plants: 247 (96% native)
Amphibians: 2
Reptiles: 5
Birds: 89 (35% nesting)
Mammals: 24

Facilities
Housing space for 12 people in 3 cabins. Lab and living space for researchers and dormitory space for class groups of up to 25 available at SNARL

Database:
Synoptic collections of plants and insects at SNARL and UCSB; 35 scientific publications generating by on-site researchers.



Valentine Camp site map



Valentine Camp regional map

Main Street, Bishop, 1939 *Garrigues collection*

ONE FOURTH OF JULY

by George Garrigues

It is the Fourth of July; an old fashioned Fourth of July. The day-long events, sometime in the late 1930s, are still fresh in my mind.

I jump out of bed with the stars still sparkling like a thousand minute diamonds. Dressing hurriedly, I dash outside, eager to be the first in my block to start setting off firecrackers. Soon others arrive and the loud bangs accelerate, like water rushing through a broken dam, echoing from every direction all over town. Terrorized cats and dogs scurry for cover, seeking refuge from the blasts. The acrid powder odor permeates the neighborhood.

We use an old tin can and, taking turns, try to see who can blast it the highest. Mine goes up and up, but

not as high as some of the others. One two-incher blows it higher than the tallest tree, a record which we think can't be topped. Someone brings out a cherry bomb. We watch in wild anticipation as the fuse is lit and everyone backs off. A loud bang and the can rises only a few feet. Looking at it we discover that the explosion had blown the bottom out of the can and split the seam.

I find a wormy green apply under a neighbor's tree. Someone asks:

"What are you doing?"

"Watch and see," I reply.

With my knife, I carefully cut most of the core out of the center. I insert a Black Panther, the most powerful of the regular firecrackers. Setting it in the center of the street, I light the fuse and retreat.

Bang.

Little bits of apple fly in all directions.

"Hey, that's fun."

Soon everyone is doing the apple blast.

We begin lodging lady fingers in ant hills with devastating results. We think it is great sport, but the displaced ants do not agree. A layer of cottonwood cotton along the edge of the street ignites, burns like gunpowder and goes out without further consequences. No out-of-control fires today.

I run out of punk and, looking around, decide to use a smouldering piece of exploded firecracker to ignite the fuses. This works fine until suddenly I feel something hot between my fingers. My provisional punk has burned down so I drop it, but forget all about the ignited firecracker in my other hand. It explodes, burning my fingers and splitting my thumb wide open. My fingers are numb and blood is oozing out of my thumb like juice from a ripe tomato.

A speedy trip for the first of my many visits to Dr. Scott, new in town and an unknown. He hastily gains my confidence with his down-to-earth chatter and even shows me the bones in my hand with his new fluoroscope. He skillfully treats the wounds and covers them with such a large bandage that my hand is completely useless. This Fourth of July is ruined.

Soon other activities take my mind off my troubles. It is time for the street races and exhibitions. We head downtown where a large crowd of local people has gathered near the old Bulpitt Building at Main and Church Streets. We find a good viewing spot as the events are about to begin.

The three-legged race brings lots of laughs. Teams of two are preparing, fastening one's right leg and the other's left leg together with belts or ropes. They are ready to go and off with the starter's count. The trick is to use the joined legs in unison and then the alternate ones. It takes a coordinated effort not easily achieved. Some stagger, some trip each other, some slowly proceed until all cross the finish line.

The sack race is next, with participants putting both feet and legs in a large gunny sack and pulling it up to their waists. They start like a bunch of one-legged chickens, they stumble, they roll and eventually cover the distance amid much dust, laughter and cheers.

One of the highlights of the activities is the hundred yard dash. It has been the subject of much speculation and discussion for several weeks. There are rumors that several large secret bets hinge on the outcome. The distance has been carefully measured, the finish line is strung and here they come. Only the result is in doubt with Niley Paul and Boots Heedick finishing as close together as Siamese twins and far ahead of the rest. There is no agreement as to who won.

It is time for the greased pole climb. A smooth round pole about fifteen feet tall with a bell attached at the top has been thoroughly lubricated with old axle grease and crankcase oil until it is as slippery as a trout fresh out of the water. Inserted in the ground, it awaits all challengers. Putting on old pants and shirts, several men and boys attempt to climb the pole, ring the bell and claim the prize. Time after time the entrants shinny, jump or bear hug their way toward the top only to slide back down losing to the slime of the grease. Laughter, applause and cheers do not provide the necessary stickiness.

Now the final event. A fire hose has been hooked up to a nearby fire hydrant. Two carefully selected and vigorously rehearsed teams of local firemen line up, alongside a length of heavy rope. They grasp the rope and the fire hose shoots a heavy stream of water between them. The tug-o-war is on. They grunt and groan, pulling like two teams of evenly matched work horses. One team gets an advantage and pulls the first member of the opposing team into the stream of water. Everyone is yelling encouragement to his favorite. The losing team gains strength and begins to pull back. The first and then the second and then the third man of the other team receive the full force of the water. They lose their grips on the rope and now the rest of the team is pulled through. The spectators cheer louder and a losing team member says:

"Wait until next year."

My hand is beginning to hurt. The events are over. It is time to go home and prepare for the evening activities.

"Come on, hurry, I don't want to be late." I shout as we load our picnic basket and fireworks into the car. We drive south of town to the sand hill where many of our friends are gathering. We greet them with shouts and laughter as if we hadn't seen each other for a long time. The food fest is on. I load my plate with fried chicken, baked beans, potato salad and sit on the running board

of the car to eat. Chewing on a drumstick, I am beginning to feel better. I finish with a big dish of homemade ice cream topped with fresh raspberries. It is turning into a pretty good holiday after all.

The fireworks begin with the men setting off the dangerous pieces. Skyrockets leave a trail of sparks as they head into the sky and then burst, shooting forth multicolored stars bringing many ooh's and ah's from the audience. Roman candles, always my favorite, shoot blue, red, green and gold balls of fire into the air between showers of colored sparks. I try to guess which color will be next. Varied fountains with volcanic names like "Vesuvius" and "Mt. Etna" spew forth sparks of every color like their namesakes.

There is a lull and boys of my age shoot more firecrackers, but I, handicapped with my bandaged hand, have to be content with the little kids' sparklers. I twirl them in circles and write my name with one, but it doesn't bring the thrill of lighting a fuse and waiting for the explosion. I pick up a piece of a black snake and chase some girls as they run, shrieking, from the insipid thing.

The show is over, but there is still some ice cream left. I nibble at another dish while the men check the area for any remaining sparks.

We head for home, exhausted by the long day of excitement, well fed, entertained and happy. In spite of being a casualty, I had fun and it certainly is one Fourth of July I'll never forget. ✤

GRAND FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

Bishop, 1892

SALUTES IN THE MORNING;

EXERCISES and LUNCH AT MUNZINGER'S GROVE;
Ice cream provided by the Committee; Ladies are invited to bring lunch baskets at 10 sharp.

AFTERNOON.

GAMES AND RACES ALL KINDS FOR PURSES—List Next Week

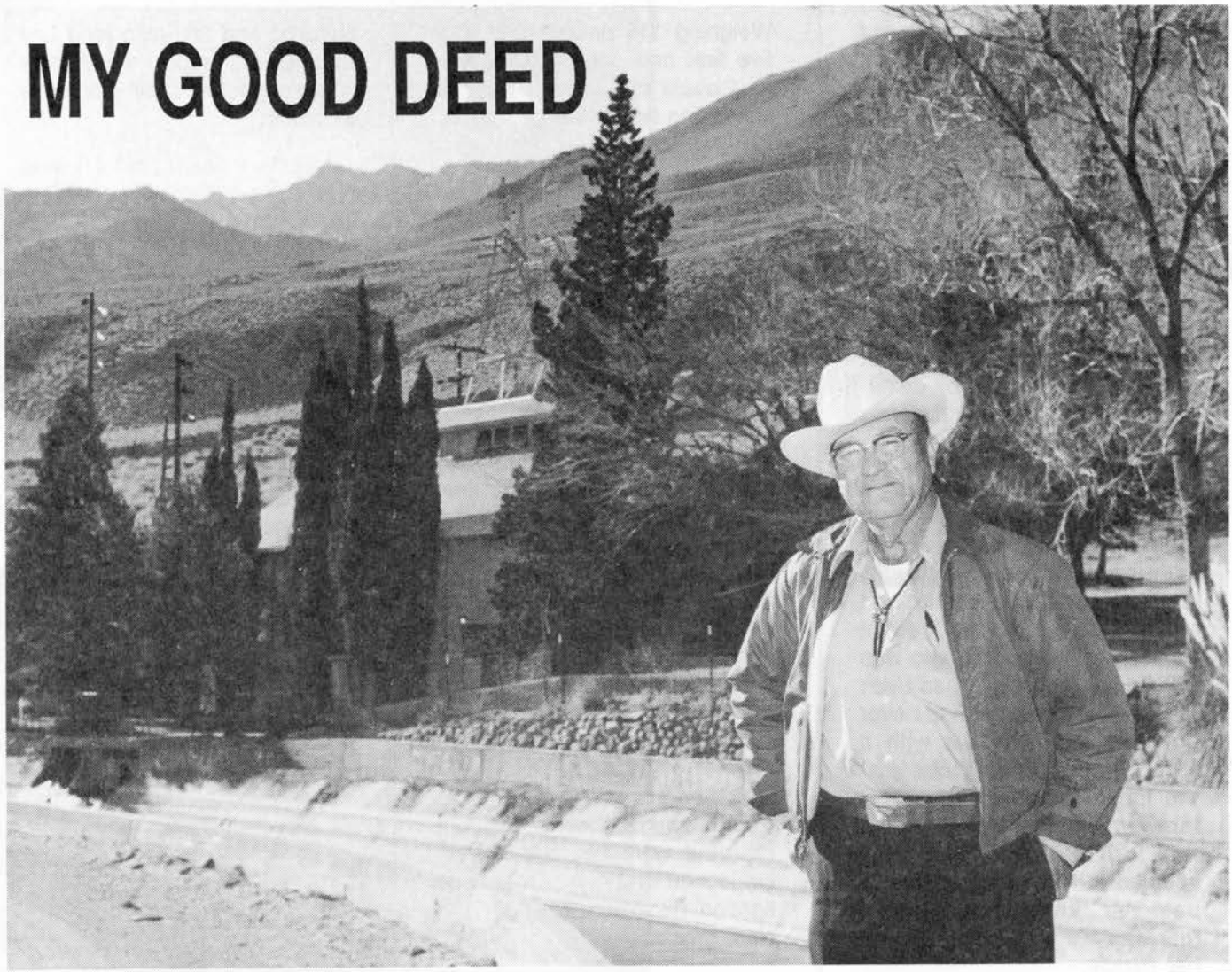
GRAND BALL

At Spencer's Hall in the evening; music, Summers' string band. Tickets $1.50.
Supper at Hartshorn's, 75 cents.

All About It in Next Week's REGISTER.

An earlier celebration of the Grand Old Fourth

MY GOOD DEED



Cottonwood Creek power station, the late Gene Mills, foreground *photo by Cecil L. Riley*

by Martha Lenbeck Mills

Since the late eighteen hundreds, sheep men from the Bakersfield, California area have grazed their sheep through the Owens River Valley to the high mountain meadows in Mono County.

From the Sierra Nevada range on the west of the mountain streams flow to the valley floor. When moisture in the valley was good from winter storms and early spring rains, the bands of sheep would come in April and May to graze on the abundant feed.

The sheep would be accompanied by one or two Basque herders with their pack burro and several well-trained sheep dogs. They traveled early, stopping to rest and quench their thirst at streams or watering troughs along the way.

On a spring morning in early June, 1962, a band of sheep stopped at the watering trough below the Cottonwood Power Plant, twelve miles south of the town of Lone Pine. After the water from Cottonwood Creek was discharged from the power plant, it then emptied into the Los Angeles aqueduct. My family and I were stationed here as my husband was the operator in charge. On this particular morning the two operators were working at the intake four miles up the canyon.

After my children were safely off to school on the school bus, I settled down to do my morning's work. Soon I heard the plaintive cry of sheep and dashed to the front porch which overlooked the aqueduct. There I saw three sheep swimming rapidly with the current and going south. The herder had left

the band in care of his dogs and was running along the road on the opposite side with only his pack rigging to rope them.

My first thought was to get a better rope for him. With this in mind I ran to the garage and, finding a lariat, made haste after them on my side of the aqueduct. At this point I wasn't sure just what I would do, as there was no way to get the lariat across to him except by crossing over a bridge some distance away.

I passed another operator's house where two ladies were on their front porch. I waved to them and continued on my way, jumping over sagebrush and rocks. Out of breath, I caught up to the slowest ewe who was swimming frantically. I had been raised on a ranch but had never done anything serious with a rope. With a quick prayer that the loop would hit its mark I threw the best I could. About the fourth throw, the ewe seemed to know I was trying to help her, and lunged toward me, with the loop going around her middle.

The walls of the cement-lined aqueduct slant to two and a half feet from the top, after which they go straight up. I pulled, she walked up, and there we hung. Weighing 115 pounds and only five feet one-inch tall, that was all I could do. I didn't want to risk losing her or being dragged into the aqueduct.

By this time the herder had pulled one ewe out. He looked across and saw me, and even at that distance, I could see the surprise on his face. He motioned to ask if I wanted him to come help, but I motioned for him to go after the third one.

In the meantime, one of the ladies on the porch had phoned the next station down the line, and the relief man came at full speed. He stopped where the herder was and then saw me in my precarious position. With a yell, "I'll be right there," he drove back up to the bridge and arrived where I was still holding on. With his strong arms he soon had the full-grown, soaking wet ewe in his pickup. We took her back to the watering trough where the herder had returned with the third sheep. He looked at me with a strange light in his eyes, saying "Gracias, gracias."

I was almost too tired that evening to attend my daughter Kathleen's high school graduation. I can probably lay claim to being the only woman to pull a full-grown ewe from the two-hundred and fifty-mile long Los Angeles aqueduct, which now has a protective chain-link fence all along.

Mostly I am thankful I was able to save one of God's creatures, and that I have lived all of my life in our beautiful Owens River Valley.

Ed. Note: Martha Lenbeck Mills and her sister, Lena Lenbeck Sluyter, are natives of the real Manzanar (Little Apple), from the days of orchards, homes under magnificent cottonwood trees, and thriving ranches. Martha and Lena are currently writing a book of their memories of the town of Manzanar. ✤

photographs courtesy Martha Lenbeck Mills

Above: The two-room schoolhouse at Manzanar, 1920

Left: Manzanar Community Hall, 1920

"Home" The home of Tony and Nancy Blake Rossi at the Rossi compound in Big Pine, now in the care of Mike Rossi

People worked together to build a flume, wooden storage tank and the Butler pipeline, named for Jim Butler of Tonopah fame, whose idea led to the Big Pine Water Association.

MY GROWING UP YEARS

As I Remember Them

by Virginia (Babe) Rossi Harwood

photographs from Rossi family albums

I was born on a lovely summer night in June of 1900 in a little shack on my grandfather's ranch. It was called the bee house. My brother Harvey, older than I, was born there too. My mother and father were struggling to give us a good life but times were rough in those years. My papa had to work away from home and Mama helped with the chores on the ranch. She came from a large family of 14 brothers and sisters. The ones I remember were William (Bill) Blake, Florence (Florie), Ernest (Whiss), Robert (Bob), Kate, Phillip, Maude, Alice, and Rosalie who died at age four.

When I was about a year old we moved to Fish Springs. My papa herded sheep on the hills nearby. We raised chickens, pigs, and a few lambs. We had a cow and a team of horses. We lived there for about two years.

When I was three, we moved to town. Papa owned twelve acres west of the little town of Big Pine. There was a little one-room house on the property so we moved in and made do until papa could add on a room. Mama dyed barley sacks and strung them on wires across the room to separate the bedrooms from the kitchen. She also nailed a thick layer of them on the floor to keep out the cold. The floor was made of one-by-twelve boards and was full of splinters. I can remember my brother and I handing boards to Papa and he made us think we were really helping him but I'm quite sure we were only in the way. We finally got another room added on and were settled in. Now it was time to build fences for the livestock, sheds for the chickens and horses. When Papa got things squared away so we could take care of them, he had to leave home and go to work for awhile to make enough money to buy the

things we needed to start our own place. It wasn't long until we could live off the place.

With Papa being away at work most of the time, Mama, my brother, and I worked very hard. We gathered sagebrush roots for firewood which grew in abundance on the hill in back of us.

My father and the neighbors around formed a water association which supplied our water. It came from Big Pine Creek. Ditches had to be dug to carry the water to us. There were little streams running everywhere. There were no pipelines then; people depended on the streams for household use and irrigation. We always had a bucket of water on the bench in the kitchen with a long-handled dipper hanging on the wall. We all used the same dipper with a bucket of water, wash basin and a bar of homemade soap and a towel hanging on a nail nearby. In the summertime we would fill tubs of water and let them sit in the sun to warm so we could bathe. In the winter we heated water on the stove and took turns bathing in the washtub behind the kitchen stove.

Once in awhile the neighbors would all gather at the old schoolhouse and spend the evening dancing and singing. My mother would put on a pretty dress and send me out to the honeysuckle bush to pick a sprig for her hair. She looked so pretty and loved to dance. Papa would set me astride his shoulders and carry my brother in his arms and off to the dance we would go for an evening of fun. Our transportation was our feet.

We worked very hard trying to keep the wolf from the door in those years. My mama traded eggs, butter and milk at the old general store (Eugly's General Store) on the corner of Main and Crocker Streets (where the Standard station now stands) in exchange for sugar, flour, and salt. Once in awhile she would let us have an egg to trade for a stick of candy. An old couple owned the store and they were so kind to us. The lady wore her hair in long curls that hung below her waist. We used to sit around an old pot-bellied stove in the back of the store. Apples, pickles and crackers were sitting around in open barrels. Sometimes she or he would tell us to help ourselves to an apple or a cracker. We always took the cracker because we had apples at home.

At Christmastime we always had a tree and a program at the church. My brother and I were always called on to sing or recite in a dialogue. An orange and a stick of candy were handed out to the children. While we were at church, Papa would hike over to Big Pine Creek and cut us a tree. After we were put to bed, Mama and he would trim the tree and put our presents on it. Papa made me a little doll cradle and Mama made me a rag doll, and for my brother a little wheelbarrow which he made out of wood. We had our stockings hanging on the head of the bed and they put candy and apples in them. It was a wonderful Christmas.

One Christmas we spent the night with our neighbors. Our folks played cards until late in the night. We were put to bed early so Santa Claus could come. There were three girls and a boy, ages from three to nine, and my brother and me. They had lost their father a few months before and my parents were trying to help the mother through her sorrow. After we were sent to bed, we thought it would be fun to stay awake and watch for Santa Claus and were very much surprised when we saw that our parents turned out to be Santa Claus, but we kept our secret. Christmas day we all went sleigh riding. Papa made a sleigh out of our spring wagon and wrapped barley sacks around our horses' hooves so they wouldn't slip on the snow and ice. We all climbed on and Papa played his accordian while we sang and drove up and down the streets all over town gathering crowds as we went.

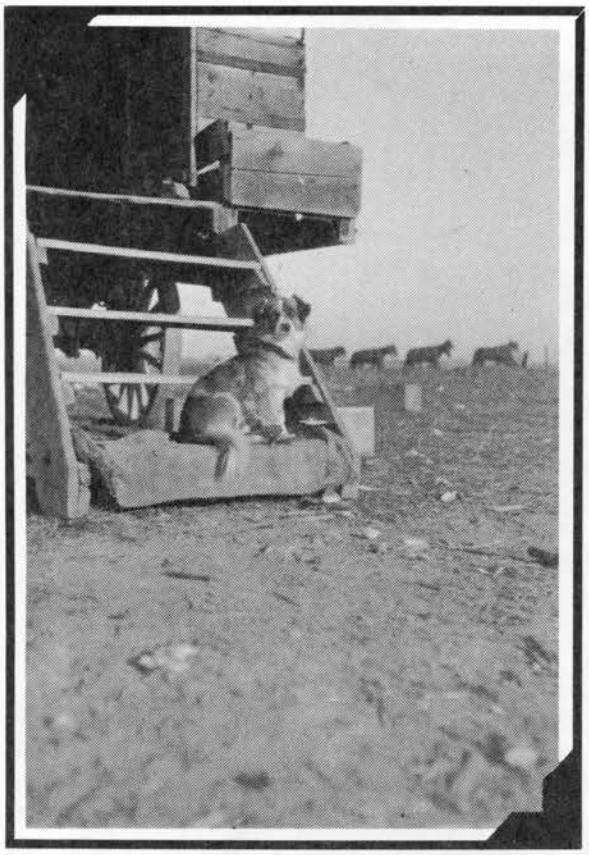
It was a long, hard winter. We had to dig trails in the snow to the chicken pen and all the livestock. The snow was so deep and we were so small it seemed like we were walking through tunnels. Papa made us some skis out of barrel staves and we learned to ski very well.

The first warm days in the spring we would go out in the fields and watch the ants working in their mounds of dirt and the doodle bugs made little round holes in the sand. We would scoop up a handful of dirt and try to catch one but they were too fast for us. The little baby lizards, chipmunks, and horned toads would play around in the warm sand and we would sit by the hour watching them. We scampered over the hills picking wild flowers, and in the meadows wild violets, buttercups, and lily of the valley were in bloom. The wild roses were everywhere. Of all the seasons, I liked spring the best when the fruit blossoms were in bloom. I can still smell the aroma of fruit blossoms and manure. Every spring Papa would clean out the corrals and spread the manure all over the place. We had a big garden spot where we grew vegetables. Papa always had a hotbed in one corner of the garden spot where he planted his seeds early and then transplanted the plants to the big garden after the danger of frost had passed.

We had a good sized stream of water running through our place. Willows and grass grew along the banks of the stream. Sometimes Mama would let us go camping. We would load our little wagon with the things we needed to make camp. We had a stove made out of a five-gallon can. We cut one end out of it and made a small hole in the other end so the fire would draw. We got vegetables from the garden and fried onions and carrots together, baked potatoes in the coals, and had quite a feast. Mama kept very close watch on us and sometimes would come out and eat with us. There were trout in the stream and easy to catch. Once in a while Mama would let us sleep under the stars on warm summer nights with our old faithful shepherd at our feet. About the only thing we had to fear were skunks running about at night.

We had some neighbors about two blocks from us who had been living on a ranch in the hills above us but had moved closer to town so the girls could walk to school. There were three girls, very skinny and timid, whom we invited to come and see us. We decided to have a picnic so we spread our gear out on the bank of the creek under the trees and went to the garden and picked green peas, beans, turnips and radishes. We picked garlic tops and put them between bread and butter for sandwiches. The vegetables we ate raw and really had a feast, but our little friends weren't used to eating like that and they all got sick. Their mother would never let them come to see us again. We were used to running to the garden and eating raw vegetables and were never sick. We used to gather dandelions and watercress from the meadows for greens and salad. Lambsquarters grew in abundance whenever there was enough moisture and we cooked them for greens.

We used to play in the meadow on warm summer days. The boys that lived on the ranch north of us dug a big swimming hole under the willows on the lower part of our meadows. The older boys went swimming almost every evening after the day's work



"Baldy"

Babe Rossi and Emma Hutton in the meadow

was done but I and their sisters were too small to go in the water. Our mother gave us strict orders to not go near the pond so we would straddle a big willow limb and play like we were riding a horse. It was real flexible and bounced up and down, sometimes throwing us to the ground. One day we were playing and heard a cow struggling in the mud near the watercress bed. We ran to the ranch and told the boys. They got on their horses and got there as fast as they could to try and save her, but she was too deep and they couldn't get close enough to pull her out. She sank out of sight while we sat and looked on. We were never allowed to gather watercress after that unless some grown person was with us. The folks on the ranch moved to Fresno shortly after that and the old swimming hole was abandoned.

We used to climb trees. We had a locust grove in back of our place where we spent hours chinning ourselves, skinning the cat, and swinging high in the air on a swing made of rope. We made chin bars from limbs that we put from tree to tree. We even tried to learn to walk a tightrope, without much success. We took many a spill and our knees and elbows were constantly scabbed over.

Before our neighbors moved away, we used to climb in the rafters of the hay barn and jump into the hay. The boys would climb on top of the barn and jump into the stack alonside the barn. It's a wonder we didn't break our necks.

We raised our own pork. Every fall we butchered our own hogs. We made our own sausage and rendered the fat into lard. We cooked the sausage in patties and put it into big crock jars and poured lard over it to keep it from spoiling. We took it out as we needed it. We had a cellar underground. We cured hams and put the rest of the pork in a big barrel of brine. When it had stayed in the brine long enough, Papa made a smokehouse and hung the hams and other parts of the hogs over a smoking, smoldering fire made of apple wood. They hung in there for weeks until they were thoroughly cured. They were then taken out and wrapped in cheesecloth and hung from the rafters in the cellar.

We had a root cellar made in the ground to keep our cabbage, carrots, turnips and parsnips in during the winter months. Sometimes we would have to dig through the snow to get to them, but it was all a way of life and survival. Mama canned all kinds of fruits and jellies. We also dried our own raisins, pears, apples, peaches and apricots. We dried green beans and corn and hung them in sacks in the cellar for winter use. On windy days we all got out and thrashed the dry beans. We would stack them and pound them with sticks to get the beans out of the shucks and then hold them up and let them fall through the wind onto the canvas spread on the ground to get the trash out of them. When we finished, we put them in sacks and stored them in the cellar.

The time had come for my brother to start to school and the days were long and lonesome for me. I couldn't wait until I was old enough.

When I was about six, my mother became pregnant. I guess times had been too hard on her because she spent most of her days in bed and I had to help in the house. When it was time to bake a batch of bread, Mama would have me bring a pan and put it on a chair beside her bed and she would tell me what to put in it and show me how to mix it. Papa made a bench from the stove to the table for me to walk on to cook the meals and set the table while Mama instructed me from her bed. We had an Indian woman come in once in awhile to help with the washing and ironing. She would comb my hair and if I moved she whacked me over the head with the brush and yanked my braids until I wanted to cry, but I didn't because I didn't want to upset Mama. Our baby was a little girl named Mary but she only lived a few hours. It was a sad time in our young lives. I was six years old and would soon be starting to school.

The home of "Grandma and Grandpa" (Mr. and Mrs. Robert Harvey Blake) on School Street in Big Pine

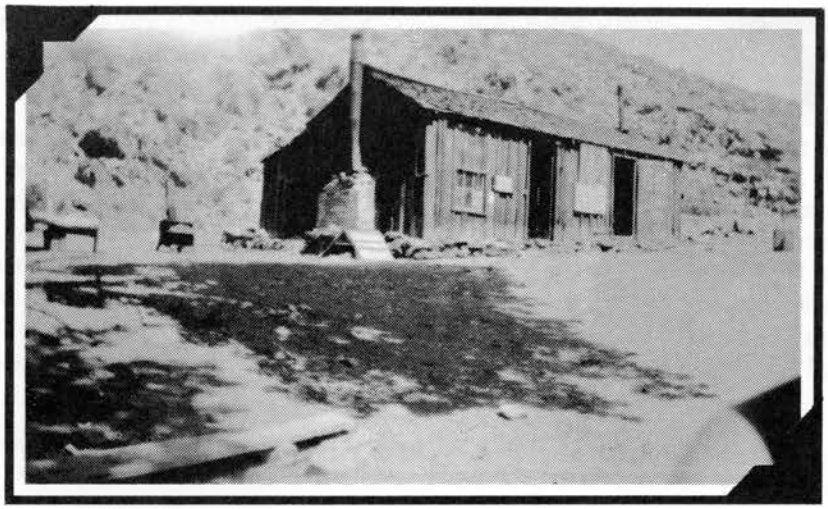
My Grandpa and Grandma Blake had sold their ranch and moved to town. Grandpa built a big two-story house on School Street, about ten minutes walk time from our place. My grandmother, Mama and her sister all had babies within a few months of each other. Well, Mama gained her strength back in a few weeks. She had younger sisters and brothers that lived at home yet and she got all their hand-me-down clothes. Mama was a good seamstress and she made me some real cute dresses for school. She made my coat and made it long enough to last for two or three winters. Every winter the hem was lowered. Our shoes were clod-hoppers and had steel caps on the toes and cleats on the heels so we would not run our shoes over or kick the toes out. They lasted until we outgrew them.

My brother and I used to ride horseback to the lakes on Big Pine Creek with my father and other members of the water association to check the flow of water in the summer. They would have to open the gates at the lakes to let more water come through. There were lots of little ranches in the valley.

One lovely day in the early summer Papa took us for a ride on the railroad in a handcar, Mama, my brother and I. Papa pumped the car by hand. We went to Laws and back. We stopped many times to rest and listen for the train because, if it was coming, we would have to take the car off the track so the train could get by, but luckily, we didn't meet it.

One summer we went camping at Silver Lake. On the way we stopped over at Casa Diablo and took baths in the mineral pools. We camped for several days on the sandy beach at Silver Lake. My father and mother fished and caught enough to last for several weeks. They were very large trout with pink meat. Papa cured them some way with salt and smoke. We had fish all winter.

We had a friend called Tonopah Kate. In the summer she hauled fresh fruit and vegetables over the toll road (Westgard Pass) to the mining towns of Tonopah and Goldfield. It took her about a week to make the trip, perhaps more. She would fill up with water at the



The old tollhouse on Westgard Pass

tollhouse and had to pay toll on her horses to get through the gate. She was rugged and could chew tobacco and curse like a man. My brother and I loved to listen to the stories she told of her experiences. She bought vegetables and fruit from my parents for her trips. She had rheumatism very bad and someone told her that worm oil was very good for it, so my brother and I decided we would make some for her so we dug some worms and put them in a jar with a lid on it and put them behind the cellar in the sun for a few days. Well, I think you can guess what kind of shape they were in when we went to look. They had fermented and were about to blow the lid. When we told the folks what we had done, they laughed and said we should have asked someone, they could have told us it wouldn't work, but was a nice gesture anyway.

We always had a big garden in the summer and my brother and I would load our little wagon and go from door to door peddling vegetables. Some days we would have to make two or three trips. The money we collected was put in a cup on the shelf for family use. We had to help weed the garden and do the chores. We raised a few lambs every spring and fed them milk from a bottle until they were big enough to eat grass and then we took turns hearding them over the hills in back of our place. We had a shepherd dog that helped us for a few hours every evening. When the sheep got big enough, we sold them.

I had an old white pony. We called her Babe. She was gentle but could run like the wind. I and two other girls, Clarice Tate and Edna Uhlmeyer, had the job of taking the cows to pasture every morning and bringing them home in the evening. After we got them to pasture, we would race home and my pony could outrun all of them. We had no saddles and sometimes it was a struggle to hang on.

The burros ran wild everywhere and in the spring the kids would start rounding them up for a rodeo. All the kids around would take turns trying to ride. We had some great times in those days - wide-open spaces everywhere.

In those days water was plentiful everywhere. Klondike Lake was full all the time and was full of catfish. On Sundays there would be three or four wagon loads of us headed for Klondike. Everyone fished. The men would wade out into the lake up to their waist and drag the catfish in with nets and the women and kids would fish from the shore. When we thought we had enough, we would have a big fish fry. My father would get out his accordian and play while we broke camp and headed for home, singing all the way.

In the spring of the year the lambs would be castrated. The men bit the testicles off with their teeth and my father was an expert at this. Afterwards all the ranchers and sheepmen would get together and have a big feast and celebration. They would stretch canvas on the ground for an open dance floor and everyone for miles around would join in the fun and dance until daylight. Homemade Dago Red wine would flow like water. I was older than the other kids and had to babysit the younger ones. I may have been babysitting but I didn't miss out on seeing everything that was going on.

I started school a year before my sister Alma was born. There were no preschools or kindergartens in those days. We had to walk and every winter three or four feet of snow fell. My father would break trail by leading our old gray mare. He put my brother and me on her back and he would lead her. He had snowshoes on his feet that he had made and before we got to school, all the kids along the way trailed behind. When I went to school the Indians had their own school and when I went by they would chase me home and throw rocks at me. They didn't mingle with the whites in those days and they lived in the hills west of town and were still a bit savage.

As time went by my father became friends with them. One time during the summer months, he let them have a fandango on the

Riding the burros – Babe, Alma, and Maynard Rossi, with Jimmie and Addie Ober

lower corner of our place. All the different tribes for miles around came to celebrate. They were in their native costumes. I was too young to remember much but they were there a week and danced, played games, and their outfits were beautiful. Mama baked pies and cakes for them and they became friendly with us.

When I was eight years old, my sister Alma was born. My aunt was a midwife and delivered her. We had no doctor. Papa was working on a ranch north of Big Pine. This ranch was homesteaded by Papa's father, Angelo Rossi, and was called the Hillside Ranch. The man caring for the ranch had lost his wife. He was in poor health and wanted Papa to take it over so he moved us out there. It was a big ranch with hillside vineyards, pastures, and all kinds of fruit trees. The water came from a spring in the hills above and little streams of water ran all over the place. We had a spring house where we kept the milk and butter. We had buttermilk and cottage cheese to run to all the time.

I was in the third grade of school and we drove to school. My brother Harvey could handle the horse very well. .In the winter months Mama would heat rocks and put them in the bed of the wagon to keep our feet warm until we got to school. She put cow's cream on our faces and mutton tallow on our hands to keep the cold wind from chapping us. We picked up two other kids on the way. Sometimes coming home we would quarrel and my brother would kick us out and make us walk.

One time we were coming home from school and had picked up the mail, it was a few weeks before Christmas, and the cart was full of packages. Along the way there was an old cow lying in the middle of the road and she wouldn't move, so my brother said he bet he could make her move. He started to run over her and about that time she jumped up and tipped the cart over and the horse ran away, dumping us and scattering packages all along the road. She ran until she came to the corner (now School Street and County Farm Road) and cut it too short and hung the wheel on a post which stopped her. We were not far from Grandpa Blake's house so we ran over there. Neither of us were hurt, but scared silly. Grandma took us in and quieted us while Grandpa went to recover the packages and bring the horse and cart back. They got word to our parents and we stayed with Grandma that night.

We moved back to our home soon after that and my brother Maynard was born. I was growing up fast and had to spend a lot of time taking care of the little ones. My father worked away from home most of the time. My older brother Harvey got a job on the Halverson Ranch (now called Knight Manor and Rolling Green Terrace) feeding pigs and herding turkeys. The next summer I went to work for my Uncle and Aunt (Bob and Emma Blake). They were managing the County Farm and I helped in the kitchen with meals and set the table and ran errands for them. I was paid with a five-dollar gold piece for my first month's work. I spent my first night there and was so homesick I cried all night. After that I walked back and forth over the hill from home. I was about nine years old.

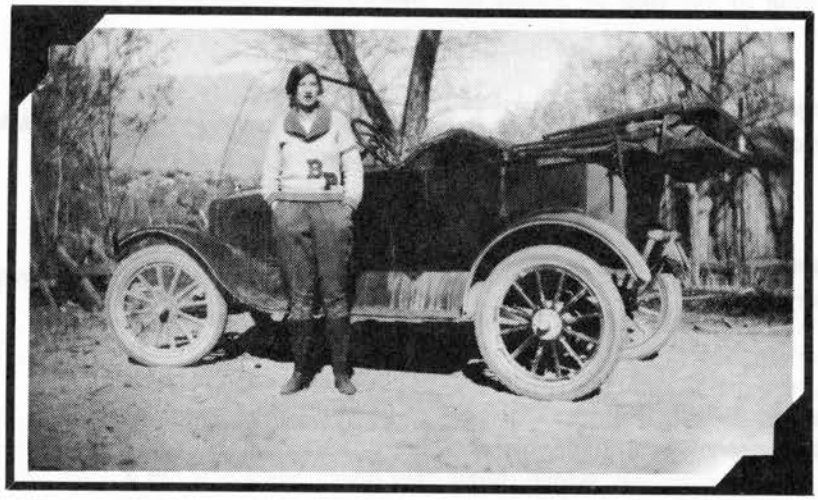
I had a cousin the same age as I (Ella Hines) and we were very fond of each other. Her father married my mother's sister and he didn't like my father because he was Italian and was herding sheep when he met and married my mother so he didn't want his daughter playing with a little Dago. Those were very unhappy times for my mother. My mother's family didn't like my father and my father's family didn't like my mother's so it was very hard on everyone. My cousin's father would try to keep us apart but somehow we managed to be together a lot. Her father bought one of the first cars that came to town and she begged her father to take me for a ride. I wasn't old enough to realize the way he felt about me so I was thrilled when he finally consented to let me go. It was one of the biggest thrills of my life. Her father was away from home a lot after that and we became very close to each other. I loved her mother and she was so kind and good to me. It wasn't long until he left home for another woman and my cousin spent a lot of time at our place.

My father was away from home most of the time now and Mama had to take in washing and ironing to keep us clothed and fed. She finally had to take jobs that kept her away from home. She cooked for hay hands and had to stay away three or four nights a week because she had to walk to and from work clear down by the river. My cousin, my older brother and I would take care of things at home. We had chores to do, the cow had to be milked, the chickens and pigs fed, also had a younger brother that we had to babysit. Mama left us fifty cents in change to buy something if we

needed it. So the first thing we did was buy a can of corn and a loaf of bakery bread. We had never eaten these things before. Did we think we were living, well I guess!

I finally got big enough to work during crop time on the ranches. I helped in the fields, drove the derrick team when they stacked hay, helped with the chores and helped in the kitchen at meal times, did washing and ironing and took care of the smaller kids in the family. In those days farmers helped each other put up their crops and I went with the crews from one ranch to another until the work was done. My father worked for his brother Rafael who owned a ranch about five miles north of us. He lived with them most of the time.

One cold spring morning our roof caught fire around the stove pipe. Mama crawled on top of the house with a wet sack and a bucket of water while my brother stood halfway up the ladder. I was running back and forth from the ditch with water. My brother would grab it and take it to Mama and I would go for more water. Finally Mama hollered to me to go for help. I was barefoot, my hair was stringing down my back and I was half dressed, but I struck out across stubble field of alfalfa as fast as I could run screaming, "Help, fire, help!" I finally roused the neighbors and they all came running. By the time we got back, Mama had the fire out and was she a sight. She was covered with soot from head to foot. I didn't even feel the stubbles when I was running for help but when I got back my feet were bleeding and hurting.



Alma and Lizzie Maude

Babe continues to record the family stories and write her articles about Big Pine's past and present. Her daughter, Harriette Allison, is carrying on the tradition, as are the many cousins from all over the West.

"Graduation exercises were held on the stage at Hall's Hall," Babe wrote. "The seniors were given the last day of school off to decorate the stage. They gathered wild asparagus fern from the ditch banks for a background and laced it with roses, most of them coming from Nancy Rossi's yard where they were plentiful. They also made two long chains of roses for the graduates to walk through, going up on stage.

"Memorial Day was celebrated with great reverence. All adults went to the cemetery to visit and each grave was decorated with fresh flowers. Every year I went to Big Pine creek my grandfather to gather wild flowers. We took two wash tubs in his Model T Ford and filled them with tiger lilies and red columbine.

"The most vivid stretch of any imagination would never have guessed that our beautiful little town would one day be known as an oasis in the desert" ✤

Brothers and sisters living at the time of Rafael and Mary's 50th anniversary, July 27, 1935; Joe, Ben, Berna, Mary, Anthony, and Rafael

Angelo (1841) & Rosa (1836) Rossi

- Angela Maria (Mary) (1861) — Anton Serventi
  - Louise (Clarkson)
  - Margherita (Milovich)
- Benedetta (Berna) (1863) — Harry Fletcher
  - Carmen (Curley), Luigi, Gigi, Harry, Fred, Rita, Rena, Renee, Beatrice
- Raffaele (Rafael) (1867) — Mary Sutrario
  - Felix, Frank, Armando (Mandy)
- Guiseppe (Joe) (1868) — Marguerite White
  - Louis, Harold, Ruth Elizabeth, Franklin, Rosie
- Luigi (Louis) (1872) — never married
- Antonio (Tony) (1875) — Nancy Blake
  - Harvey, Estelle, Mary, Virginia (Babe), Alma, Maynard
- Ben
  - Ron, Charles, Ken, Lee
- Concetta (Nita) Liston
  - Lee, Esther, Ida, Reeves, Lincoln, Rosabelle

BITS OF HISTORY TO GNAW ON

An Eyewitness to the Lincoln Assassination

by Peter Korngiebel

Clarence Churchmouse
Michael Wolden

Furnace Room
Presbyterian Church
Bishop, California, USA
June 1989

Mr. Clarence Churchmouse
Westminster Abbey
East Cloak Closet
London, England

Dear Cousin Clarence:

I was pleased to receive the old English documents and assure you of their safety. Your assumption of our indifference toward them is ill-founded. We didn't eat any of the printing; the wife, I and the seven kids only nibbled once at the edges. You must understand that occasionally the janitor here harbors a cat and thus, along with harsh winter, we were reduced to 150-year-old parchment.

To demonstrate that we too have a sense of history, even at the "commoner" level, I am sending you an account of our President Lincoln's last few hours before he died from a bullet wound.

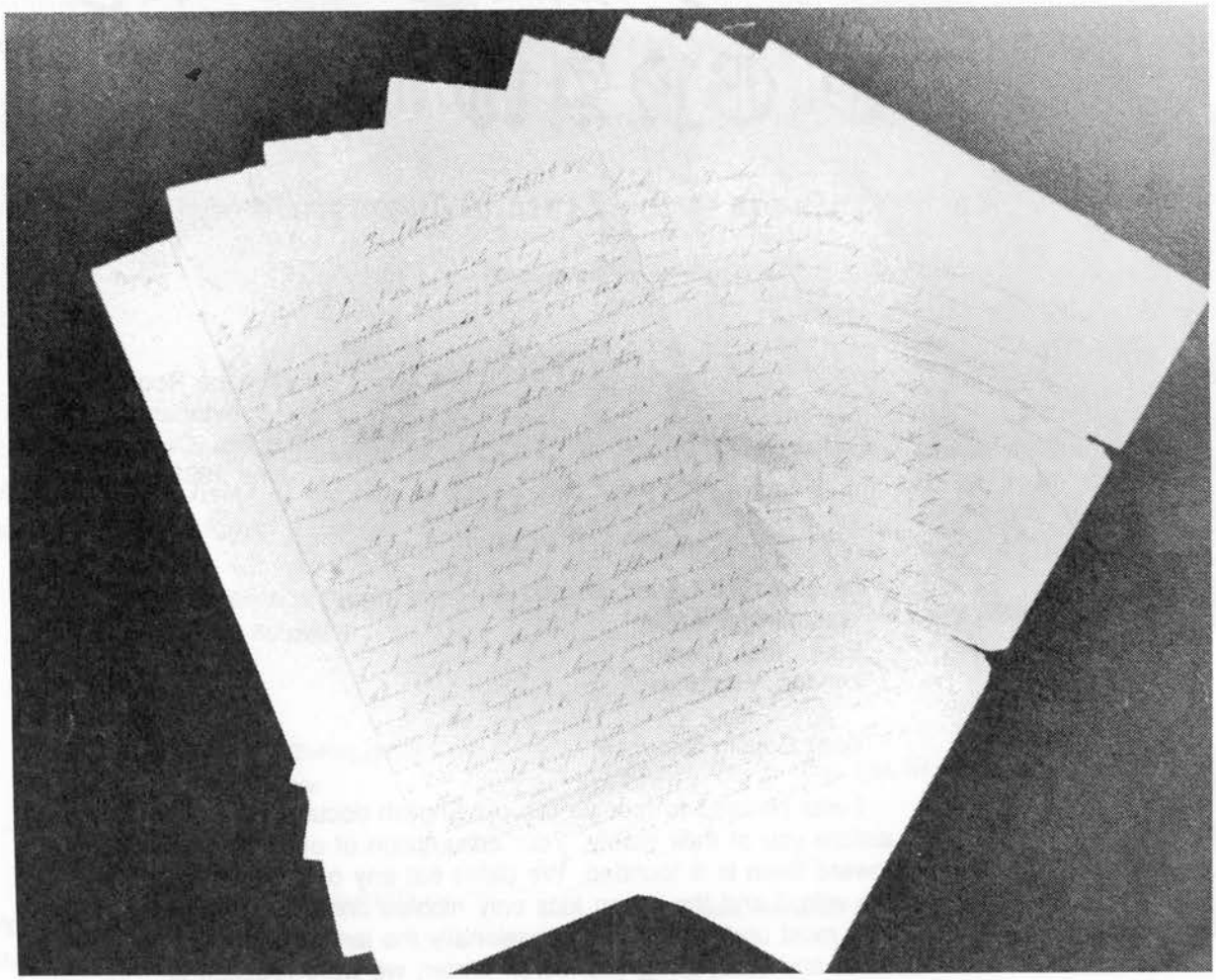
A friend, Oscar Fieldmouse, knew of this letter, along with a blood-splattered program from that fateful night at Ford's Theatre. Oscar was instrumental in helping to obtain this document. The program was too big and heavy for us to transport, but we did manage to move the letter.

Nothing is known about the writer except that he was part of the volunteer army posted in Washington, D.C. He was well educated for his time — note that he wrote and spelled very well.

I hope you enjoy this.

Regards,
Cousin Chester

Chester Churchmouse
Michael Wolden



The Letter. This eyewitness account of an event that changed history

To the Century

Sir – I see an article in your issue for January entitled Abraham Lincoln, A History in which a reference is made to the night of President Lincoln's assassination Apr. 14th '65 and contains some errors though perhaps unimportant.

With your permission I will write of some of the scenes and incidents of that night as they came under my own observation.

At that time I was Quarter Master's Sergeant of a company of cavalry known as the Union Light Guards O.V.C. We were ordered to Washington early in '64 from Ohio to serve as a guard or cavalry escort to President Lincoln whenever he went beyond the city limits. He lived much of the time at the Soldiers Home three miles out of the city. In these drives out and back evening and morning from 25 to 40 men of this company always accompanied him as a mounted guard. The President had a saddle horse and much of the time, in pleasant weather, would mingle with us mounted going to Soldiers Home and return. The carriage with Mrs. Lincoln and little Tad in the advance.

On the night of Apr. 14th I attended Fords Theater on 10th Street with friends who were strangers in this city. I was off duty and unarmed. We had seats about the third row from the Orchestra and a little to the right of the center aisle. I could see plainly the President and all in the box which was above and to the right. He occupied the upper tier of boxes the two being thrown into one by the removal of the partition between them.

I heard the report of Booths pistol and plainly saw its smoke. The President's head droped but not entirely out of my sight.

Booths jump to the stage, his little speech, the flourish of his glittering blade and his exit to the rear are facts with which all are familiar. The words, The President is shot, rang through the vast audience like an electric shock. The entire assemblage, as one man rose to their feet and all was in utmost confusion pressing toward the door. I climbed into the box as did two or three others. When I reached it the door leading into it had been unbared and people were coming in from that way. There were more there than could be of any service. I hurried on down to the street. By making this detour I reached the street in advance of the throng that was pressing the aisles and doorway in their efforts to get out of the building.

The Presidents carriage was standing in front of the theater door and his driver, a man by the name of Burke was sitting on the box waiting. I steped to the carriage and said to him. The President is shot didn't you hear the pistol, he said No I did not hear anything. I said, He is shot you go for the Surgeon Gen. as soon as you can. Whether I mentioned any one else or not I dont now remember. Burke started his team at a rapid pace.

I am quite confident that Burke with the Presidents carriage was the only messenger sent for any one. As soon as Burke had started I returned to the box where President Lincoln was. When I entered the box I picked up a piece of paper which had been used to staunch the wound. This paper proved to be a printed programme of the performance that evening The same as I find copied in your January No. I claimed that this is the first one used and probably the one Mr. Lincoln had in his possession that evening. I make this claim on this ground. On this paper I found three distinct clots of brain substance one of them covering a space nearly as large as a nickle coin, the others of less dimensions.

From the time the pistol was fired untill the surgeon had located the wound, which was not found at once, because there was no flow of blood, the wound being cloged with the brain substance, there was a lapse of perhaps 5 minutes or more which gave time for the brain matter to accumulate at the

surface and was wiped away with this paper. After being wiped away once it could not accumulate again because of constant attention. This brain substance has long ago decayed and gon, but the blood spots which covered its entire length are still plain though dimed by age.

As soon as the coast was clear below the unconcious President was carried down and across the street to the residence of Mr. Peterson. I do not know who bore the body. I was in the advance and with the help of one or two others forced a passage through the paralyzed thousands who packed the street. I did not enter the house at this time but as soon as the procession had reached the steps I hurried away to our camp which was located south of the Treasury building in what was then known as the White Lot nearly opposite D St and rallied all in camp about forty men who were ready to move in a very short time. While I was doing this the guards at our stables had saddled my horse so I was ready before the ballance of the company, while they were saddling I moved up 15th St. alone to Penn Ave and there waited for those behind me to come up. By this time a portion of a cavalry regiment that had been doing duty in the city had been sent out, by someone, to patroll the city with orders to let no one pass who could not give a satisfactory account of themselves. As I reached Penn Ave a lone cavalry man took his station on that corner. Just at this time Burke was coming down 15th St. in front of the Treasury Dept from the White House having on board Sec. Stanton Robert Lincoln Mr. Hay and I think others, The fire streaming from every wheel in the swiftness of his race over the old cobble stone pavement. As Burke wheeled from 15th St down Penn Ave. this lone cavalryman with a stern voice commanded the carriage to halt. I do not know whether Burke heard the command or not but he paid no attention to it. The cavalryman cocked his piece and was in the act of drawing it to his face when I halted him. I rode to his side and told him that is the Presidents carriage. He was much frightened at the thought of what he might have done. The force I was waiting for now came up on a rapid gallop and we closed in behind the carriage and were soon at 10th St. forced a passage for the carriage through the dense crowd to the steps of the Peterson house. This was Burkes second trip. He brought down Surg. Gen. Barnes Dr. Stone and I think one or two others and landed them in my absence. Surg. Basil Morris U.S.A. was there through the night. Whether he came with the first or later I do not remember.

We at once set to work to force the crowd back either way to the cross streets E on the South and F on the north. We had no more than commenced when Sec. Stanton ordered a force detailed sufficient to guard Sec. Sewards residence. If I remember 14 men were sent. I well remember Sec. Stantons order, he says, You take possession of all the approaches to Sec. Sewards residence and permit nothing to pass your lines without the consent of his family. This order was obeyed to the letter. In a short time we had 10th St. cleared without accident and kept it clear through the night. Although we had a steady drizzling rain during the entire night and up untill nearly noon the next day hundreds of people remained in the adjacent streets throughout the night.

When the detail was made for the protection of Sec. Sewards home a further detail was made of four men who took their station at the entrance of the Peterson residence to ply between there and the telegraph office at the corner of 14th St. and Penn Ave. The first despatch sent out was to Gen. Grant. In a short time, perhaps a half hour, a reply was received from him at Philadelphia. This half hour seemed to us a very long one, in our anxiety to hear from him, as many fears were entertained as to his safety. When his reply was received, Sec. Stanton communicated its contents to us on the outside. We breathed much freer as we passed congratulations from one to another believing that overwhelming as it was the worst was known. Every half hour a despatch was sent to Gen. Dix at

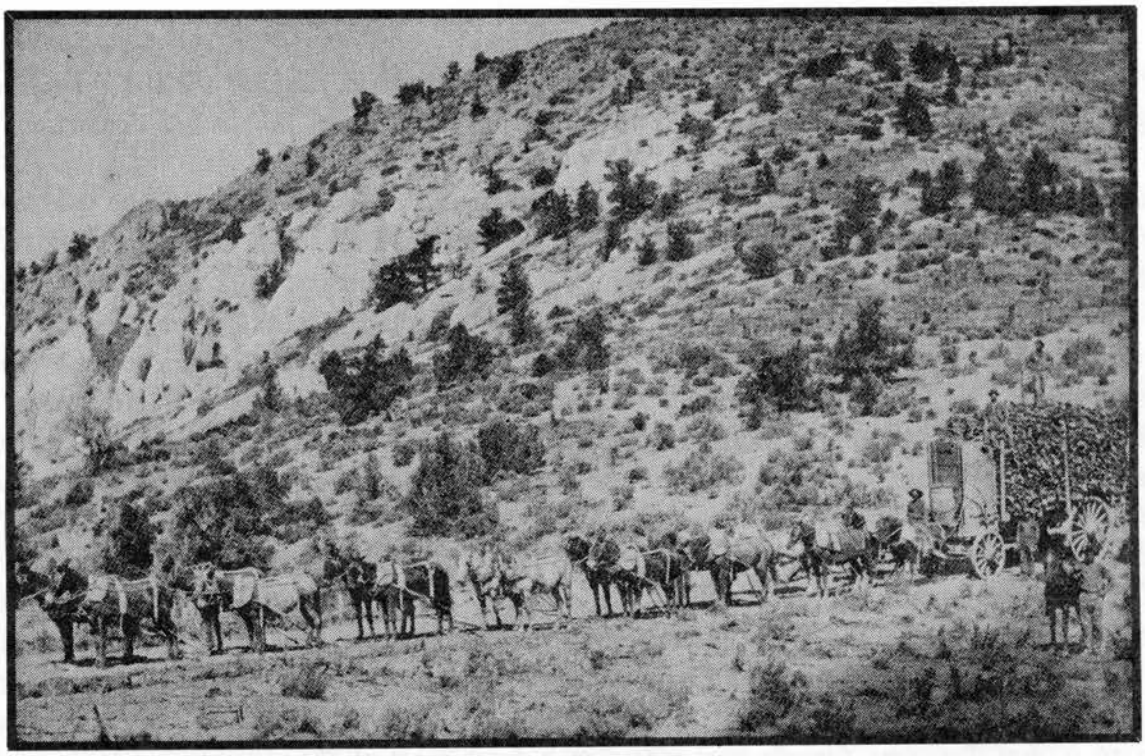
New York. The wires were kept fully employed through the night in flashing the sad inteligence over the length and breadth of the continent. The rising sun of the 15th of Apr looked down upon a Nation in tears.

President Lincoln breathed his last at nearly half past seven o'clock in the morning. We soon had arrangements completed for conveying his remains to the White House. Soon after eight the solemn procession moved from 10th St. on its way. The sidewalks were thronged with people along our entire line of march. Hundreds of the colored people of Washington could be seen kneeling upon the curbing in the rain, with uncovered heads weeping as little children as we passed. We reached the White house about nine o'clock and the remains of Abraham Lincoln were placed in the East Room. We were there relieved from duty by a portion of an Infantry regiment which took possession of all the surroundings of the White House and also of the residence of Sec. Seward. We were also permanently relieved from any further military service.

By direction of Sec. Stanton we appeared in the funeral procession from the White House to the Capitol as mourners in full uniform mounted but unarmed. We made application to Sec. Stanton to be allowed a representation in the guard of honor that accompanied the remains of President Lincoln to Illinois But were denied on the ground of its impropriety as we were considered as members of his household. We were finaly mustered out of the military service in the following September. My recollection is that President Lincoln was placed in a front room of the Peterson residence where he died. The first door to the left as you enter the building, not a back room as stated. I can't see how I can be mistaken in this. I was in his room at different times through the night in the line of duty.

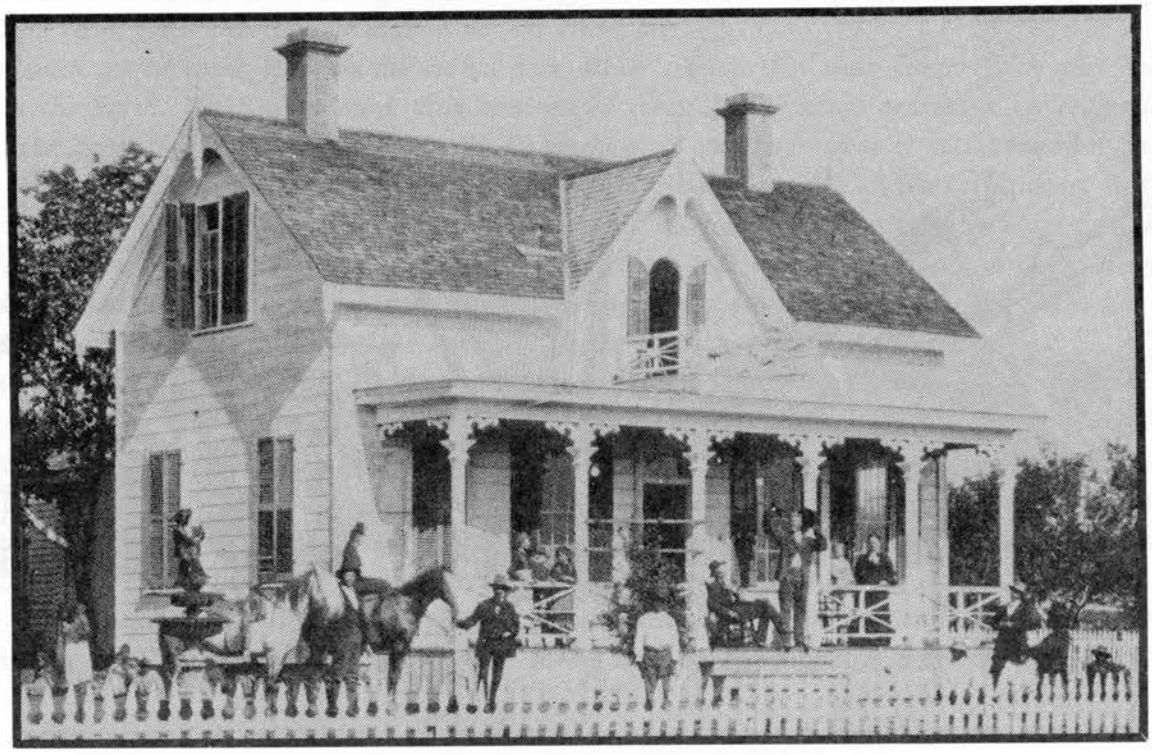
The blood stained programme of which I write is now in the possession of Burnside Post No. 2 G.A.R. of this city Wm. F. Bradley Q.M.

In this company of Union Guards there were two Commissioned Officers but neither of them were with us during the time of which I write. ✤



Above: Hauling pinon wood for the Carson & Colorado Railroad in the 1880s. Each wagon was handmade and hauled eight cords of wood. Eastern California Museum photo, gift of Howard C. Farrington.

Below: John Shepherd home, south of Independence, 1873-1904, one of the beautiful homes in the days of mining and agricultural enterprise in the Owens Valley. Eastern California Museum photo, gift of Eva Shepherd Gunn.



FOSSIL FALLS *and* PREHISTORIC MAN

photos by Frank Sowaal

by Marguerite Sowaal

It really was quite by accident that she even heard about it — a matter of being in the right place at the right time. In this case the right place was the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, and the right time was early November 1947. She was visiting Mark R. Harrington when Willy Stahl, an amateur archeologist, came in to report that he had located a large site yielding obsidian projectile points that he considered to be prehistoric (perhaps of Pinto Culture).

Dr. Harrington, Curator of the museum, listened carefully to Mr. Stahl and said he would investigate as soon as possible. She waited until Mr. Stahl had left and asked Dr. Harrington if it might be possible for her to help in the project. She told him she had taken a few courses in archeology at college and that she lived only an hour away from the proposed site. Dr. Harrington smiled at her eagerness and reminded her a dig was hard work. He added that "volunteer" meant no pay. Undaunted, she stated she really didn't expect payment but just wanted to be part of the expedition.

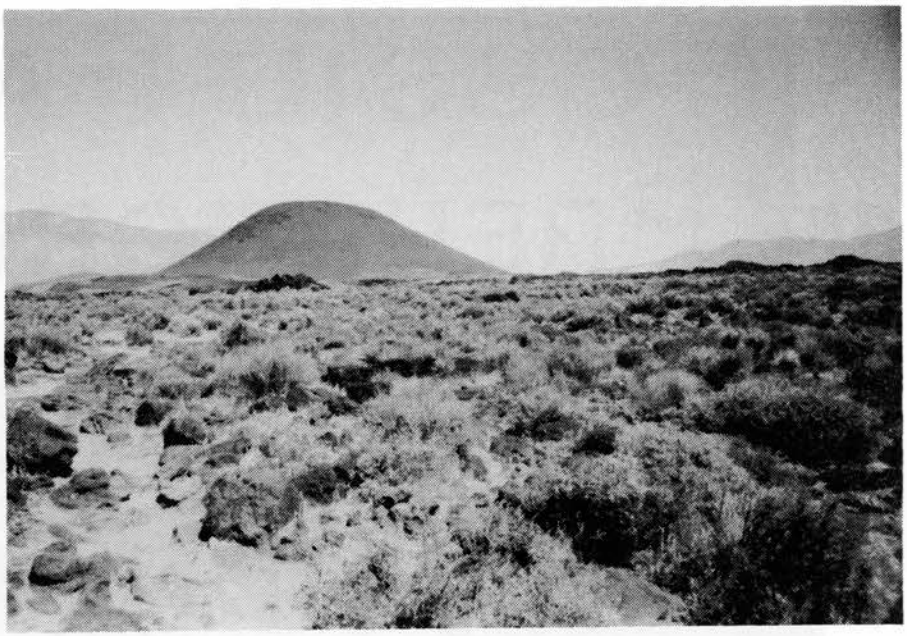
At home in Lone Pine, it seemed she waited forever to hear any news from Dr. Harrington. Finally, in March of 1948, she received a letter and map giving her directions to the site and telling her the expedition would begin work immediately. She was so excited she packed her gear and set out at once in the old pre-war bus she had

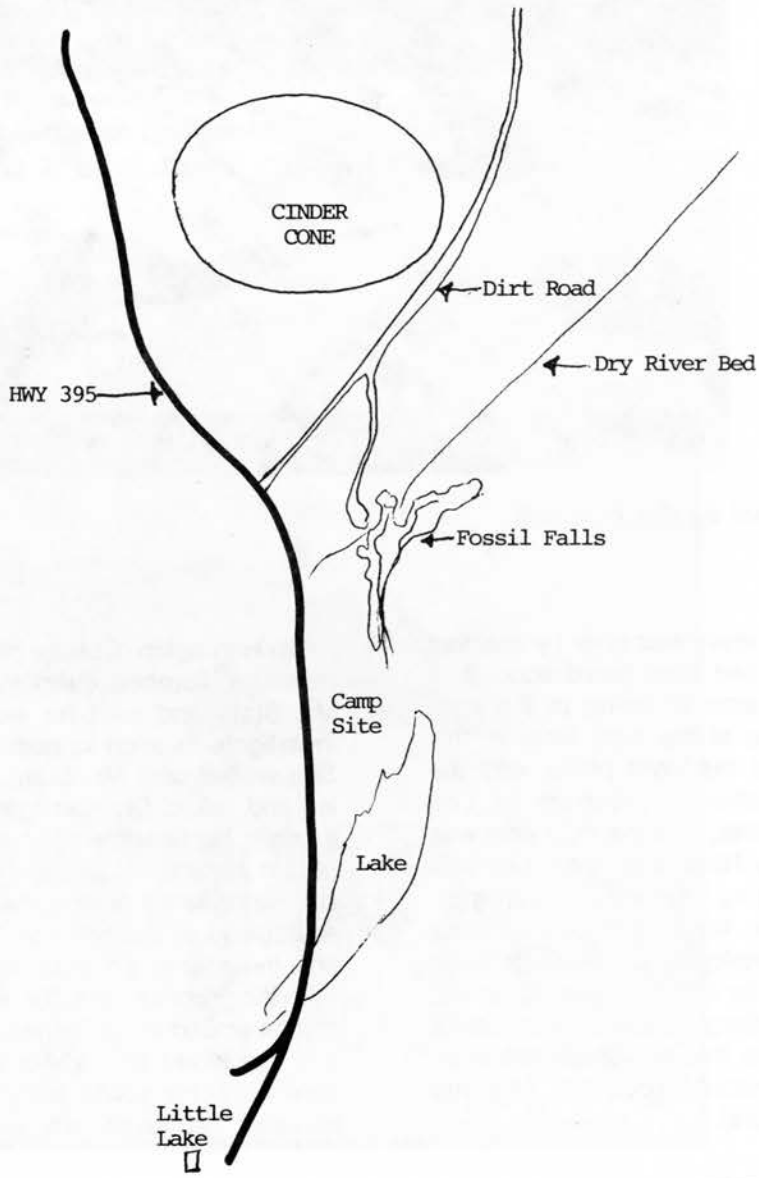
salvaged for use on camping trips. It was hard not to press the gas pedal to the floor as she traveled down California 395. The bus shook and complained until at last she came to the designated turn-off. She consulted the map and made a sharp left onto a washboard road which took her to the top of a cliff overlooking the valley. From above she spotted the campsite in the lee of a large lava dike which partially protected it from the strong March winds. The expedition's camp consisted of four small tents and a larger one to serve as a combination cook and dining tent.

Future finds would indicate that an ancient people had also taken advantage of the dike's protection.

Before descending into the valley and taking her place with the others, she stopped at the top of Fossil Falls to look out over the alien landscape. It appeared to belong to another planet and for a moment she experienced the sensation of being in a dreadful nightmare. Great deformed black rocks were strewn across the land for miles as though some angered giant had thrown them in a fit of temper. She knew, of course, that they were huge masses of hardened lava produced by volcanoes erupting as recently as

Future finds would indicate that an ancient people had also taken advantage of the dike's protection.





20,000 years ago. In her imagination she visualized the terrifyingly beautiful scene of molten lava and icy glacier battling for the valley — lava cooling, cracking, fusing, subjected to thousands of years of roiling water overflow from a vast lake to the north. Over centuries the river swollen by rain and snow would have sped through the narrow channel, eroding and sculpting the volcanic rock into grotesque grottos, distorted monoliths, and polished potholes before cascading forty feet to the valley floor. A chill ran through her.

She looked beyond the Falls and recovered her usual no-nonsense demeanor, noting that the sun was not too far above the peaks of the Sierra. Hurrying down to the camp, she had just enough time to greet the others and make her bed in the back of the bus before the sun set.

She woke to a cool morning filled with anticipation. The other volunteers were milling around waiting for instructions. Most of the first day was spent in plotting necessary field work. Having accomplished this, the group set out to examine the area surrounding the tents and were rewarded by the discovery of numerous obsidian chips and fire-broken stones within a radius of 500 feet.

Hiking out a distance from the 200-foot lava dike, one could conjure a huge human head, a volcanic "bomb," atop the rocky outcropping. This stony apparition was affectionately dubbed Old Pinto Joe. Toward the east rose a cliff of basaltic columns known by the local Shoshone as The Rattlesnake, its columns representing scales. Very little vegetation,

Great deformed black rocks were strewn across the land for miles as though some angered giant had thrown them in a fit of temper.

with the exception of the drought-resistant creosote, seemed to grow there, although subsequent study of the area produced evidence to indicate there had been abundant vegetation, including trees, at the time the site was first occupied.

Few large animals lived in the area. Found were four packrats, eight kangaroo rats, a few bobcat tracks, two ravens nesting in the rocks; once a circling buzzard; a persistent camp kingsnake who chose to occupy a different human bed each night; several varieties of lizards, scorpions and spiders which scurried away, or when cornered, stung or bit. Heard were a few concerts by serenading coyote families and the eerie wind-song through sand. Each year of the expedition saw fewer animals and less plant life. A cycle of drought had taken its toll. It was hard to imagine there was a time when prehistoric mammals — perhaps a camel or even a mammoth — roamed the forests and drank from the banks of streams and lakes existing then.

As work progressed according to plan, small test pits were sunk in various parts of the site to determine the most favorable spots for trenching. As it turned out, the most likely place was exactly where the tents were pitched.

The tents were moved and a six-foot wide trench (designation #6) was dug at the base of the lava dike where the first campsite had been. All in all ten other trenches were started. Each trench began six feet wide and each was then divided into 3-foot squares systematically numbered and lettered. Every specimen found was labeled immediately as to its depth from the surface, its trench number, the designation of its square and its horizontal position in the square.

She found the work exacting but extremely satisfying. Using a 5-inch pointed trowel for a few hours made her realize that physical effort was just as demanding as the mental discipline. Once she straightened up and quipped, "If I'm lucky I'll graduate to a brush or screen tomorrow." Other volunteers, appreciating her position, laughed with her.

Dinner that night consisted of hot dogs and beans and rivaled any gourmet feast. Nor did she have any trouble falling to sleep. Seconds after climbing under the blanket she was aware of a cool breeze, the campfire smell, and then nothing as she drifted into deep contented sleep.

Almost every day something new and exciting was discovered and she worked willingly. Obsidian points of the design found in the Pinto Basin (hence the name Pinto Man) of Southeastern California were found, indicating that a Pinto-like culture had flourished in the Fossil Falls area.

Pinto Culture seemed to be widely distributed. Evidence of this ancient man was found from Tule Lake in the San Joaquin Valley to the west, a dry lake in Nevada near the Utah border to the east, and to Arizona in the southeast. All are extremely arid sections of land, although the Pinto people were not desert dwellers, the climate being considerably wetter at the time of their existence approximately 15,000-20,000 years ago.

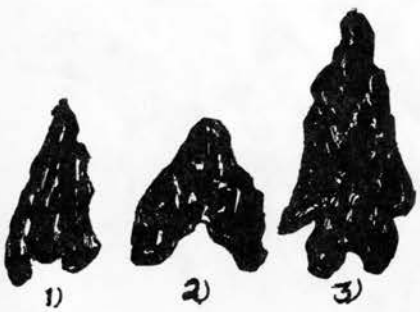
For her, the best part of the day was evening when everyone sat around the campfire, happy and tired but still able to discuss the ancient Americans who had inhabited this land. Perhaps they too enjoyed sitting around a campfire in this very spot, talking of the hunt.

She learned that although Pinto bones discovered had been fragmentary, archeologists believed that the Pinto skull was long rather than broad, and that the people were of a small to

medium stature.

The Pinto people were hunters and gatherers. In hunting they used light spears or darts tipped with points chipped from obsidian and thrown with the atlatl (a throwing stick). There were 497 recorded Pinto points found at the Stahl site and those were divided into five subtypes: shoulderless, sloping shoulders, square shoulders, barbed shoulders and one shoulder, as well as leaf-shape points which could not be verified as Pinto.

PINTO POINTS



1) shoulderless
2) spearhead resharpened to a stub
3) barbed (approx 2½ ")

Pieces of charred animal bones were found in "garbage" pits in the village, substantiating that meat was a food source. That they were also gatherers was shown by a number of metates (grinding slabs) and manos (hand-stones) used to grind seeds, nuts, etc. Meat was broiled or roasted (from the appearance of the bones found), but the preparation of other foods remains a mystery. It is possible that stones were heated and used to boil foods in water-tight baskets, but no pottery or stone cooking vessels were found.

It is unknown what kind of clothing was worn, if any, as no soft material seems to have survived. Since relatively large animals were hunted for food (shown by the size of the charred bones), perhaps skins were used for clothing, wasting nothing of the animal.

The most exciting and unexpected finds in the Little Lake-Fossil Falls excavations were dwelling sites, of which seven were located. On the 4th of July, 1948, Mr. and Mrs. B.E. McCown, volunteers from San Diego, were carefully removing dirt, level by level, from Trench #11 when they came upon a grouping of circular holes (determined by soft ground) running about fourteen inches apart at about the 22" level below the surface. Volunteers worked until dark to remove a pile of dirt in order to reveal the suspected post holes, arranged in a northwesterly direction. When all was laid bare, an outline emerged of what appeared to be a hut measuring 13' by 8'. That it was a dwelling was theorized by the number of points and other utensils found within the circle or nearby. Whether the roof was domed or conical could not be determined, although the arrangement of post holes indicated that doorways of the village houses usually faced east or southeast, taking advantage of the early sun while protecting the entrances from afternoon heat or winter wind from the west.

The enormous quantity of obsidian flakes, broken and unfinished points, verify the importance of this site for stoneworking, an obsidian quarry about eight miles away furnishing the raw material.

Only primitive scratchings on stone were found and their significance is unknown. Whether they represent art or religious totems could not be determined.

What happened to these prehistoric people? By 6000 B.C. the extreme climatic change which had caused the rivers and lakes to dry up had affected the marshes and grasslands to the extent that there was no longer enough fodder for large mammals, and this in turn affected hunting practices. Either these climatic changes drove the people from the region entirely or, with adaption to season and diet, they became the ancestors of the Shoshone.

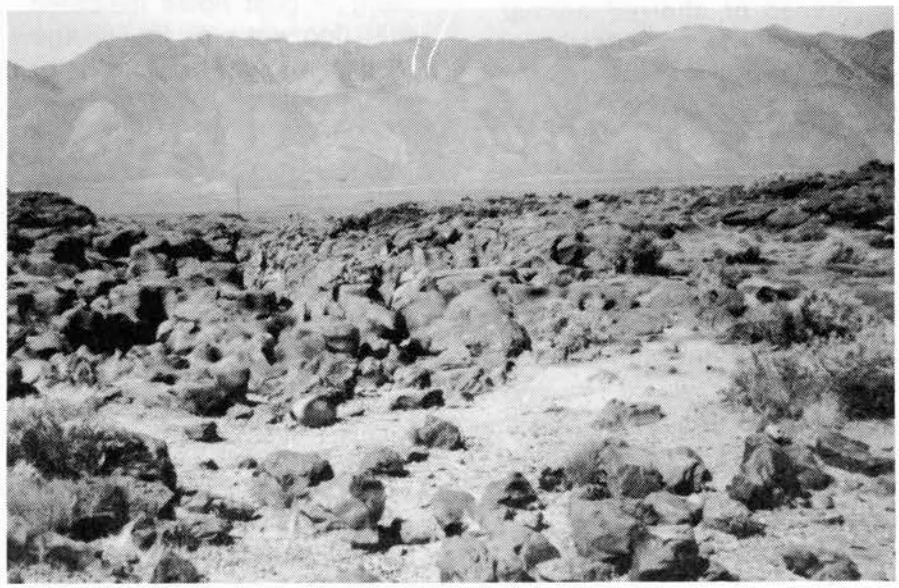
2000 years later there was another climatic change, moderating the existing aridity and forcing primitive man to change his lifestyle once more. Food came in the form of desert plants and very small mammals, reptiles, insects, and waterfowl. With the addition of pottery and the bow and arrow, this cultural pattern was still in place at the time the first white man came into the Little Lake-Fossil Falls valley. By then the Shoshone they found living there were nomadic, traveling to the foothills of the Sierra in autumn to collect pinon nuts for the winter, and down again to the valley in spring to harvest the first green plants. At this time there were communal antelope hunts with other family groups, but the region would only support a small human population, and at that, a mobile one.

The last expedition to the Stahl site was disbanded August 13, 1951. She had volunteered her help each year and was disappointed that the work could not continue. Future excavations in other parts of California occupied her time, but she would never forget her first experience in field

archaeology at the Stahl site. Though the years passed and she grew older, she could still remember the crisp mornings, the sound of wind shrilling around the lava dike, the weary satisfaction of a day's hard labor, and most of all, the excitement of finding a spearhead and realizing that the last person to touch it — its maker — had lived thousands of years before.

Author's note: Fossil Falls is open to the public (BLM). The Stahl Site is on fenced private land. The exact location has been omitted for the protection of any remaining artifacts. ✤

Perspectives



Home on the Range with the Rossis

A little family reunion

THE COOKBOOK STORY

The first Rossi reunion was organized in 1976 by Linda Lee, the ninth reunion in 1984 celebrated 100 years of Rossis in the Owens Valley, and this year will be the thirteenth gathering of the clan. Since several hundred people attend, some of the expenses have been offset by selling reunion keepsakes, such as tee shirts and bumper stickers ("I Survived the Rossi Reunion, Big Pine, CA").

Babe Harwood contemplated the notion of selling a cookbook after attending a fashion show where one was sold as a fund raiser. Later that spring, she won $700 on a Keno ticket and decided it was just what she needed for her project. For the 100-year reunion she took on the task of writing to all the family members she could find, asking them to send favorite recipes.

"We received over 4,000 pieces of paper," Babe said. "Then we had to combine them into a book. You can't believe how much work it was. We made 200 copies, with 208 pages. All the recipes are the original handwritten letters." The contributions ranged from Tony's hints on how to make good bread, down the generations to one from a great-great granddaughter of Angelo.

Chalfant Press printed the pages and Babe and her helpers put the books together in loose-leaf covers. "They sold like hotcakes for $5 each, and as soon as I got the $700 back, I breathed a sigh of relief. The remaining money went into our reunion fund," she said.

One family member testified, "The Rossi family sure knows how to cook," and anyone fortunate enough to have sampled the culinary talents of a Rossi branch in the Owens Valley will swear to that.

Cure for Colds

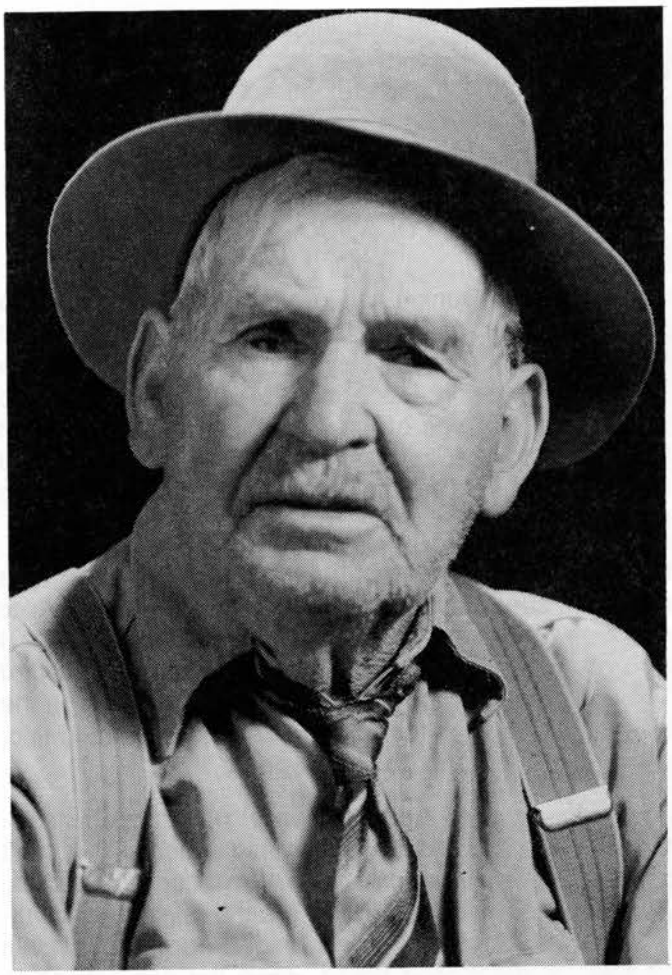
Ingredients

1 4-poster bed
1 Qt. whiskey
1 old hat
1 8-oz. glass

Directions

1) Hang hat on foot of bed
2) Lie down
3) Pour whiskey in 8-oz. glass
4) Drink slowly & consistently
5) then go to sleep

"Doc W."



Anthony (Tony) Rossi

"HOW TO MAKE GOOD BREAD"
FROM ANTHONY ROSSI'S
HANDY MANUAL OF USEFULL INFORMATION

How to make good bread. — Sift four quarts of flour and place it near the stove that it may become thoroughly warm; boil three or four nice size potatoes until perfectly tender, pour the water into a crock, mash and beat the potatoes as carefully as if they were being prepared for the table, and return them to the water in which they were boiled. About ten p.m., add enough hot water that the whole measures one quart, or if you have a quart of potato water, warm it well before using; hollow a place in the center of the flour, pour in the water, one large tablespoonful of salt, one of sugar, and a piece of lard the size of a walnut, one cup of yeast, or one cake of compressed yeast, dissolved in a cupful of warm water, mix well and knead steadily, using a small quantity of lard on hands from time to time to keep the mixture from sticking, until it is firm and can be handled without difficulty. Now cover carefully and put in a warm place and leave it rise.

In the morning, knead it about ten minutes, cover again and if it is warm it will be ready for the pans in about an hour. This quantity will make four nice sized loaves. Let it rise; bake from forty to fifty minutes. When your sponge is like a honeycomb it is time to make it into loaves. When the loaves do not retain the dent of the finger it is ready for the oven. Flour greatly varies as to quality and if the amount of flour is not sufficient to make a stiff, firm dough do not hesitate to use more than this recipe calls for, or if it is firm enough before you have used all the flour you have warmed leave it out.

Spaghetti Carbonara
(Good for breakfast, too)

1/4 lb. pork sausage (crumbled)
1/4 lb. ham (chopped)
4 T. Butter
1/2 lb. spaghetti
Parsley (chopped) (only use as desired for color or taste)
3 eggs (well beaten)
1/2 c. Parmesan cheese
Pepper to taste

Cook sausage and ham. Drain. Set aside. Cook spaghetti. Drain. Add meat, butter and eggs to spaghetti while the spaghetti is still hot enough to cook the eggs. (We sometimes have to cook the spaghetti a little more to get the eggs done.) Stir in cheese, pepper, and parsley. — The Ridgecrest Rossis

Sour Cream Pie
(Excellent old fashioned recipe)

2/3 c. sour cream, 1/3 c. sweet milk
1 c. sugar
1 c. seedless raisins
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 eggs
1 T. flour
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. cloves

Put sugar in pan and add flour, cinnamon, cloves, vanilla, yolks of eggs, and sour cream. Stir well. Add raisins. Boil until thick. Pour into baked crust. Cover with meringue and bake until brown. — Ellen Fansler

Green Tomato Jam

5 cups of green tomatoes ground
5 cups of sugar

Stir until well mixed, then cook until it comes to a full rolling boil. Boil for 20 min. Remove from fire, add Jello, 2 small boxes or 1 large, blackberry or raspberry or strawberry, etc. Pour in jars and let cool — Estelle Rossi Screen

Dad's Ice Cream Mix (Vanilla)

4 eggs
2 qt. whole milk
1/2 can evaporated milk
2 cups sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. vanilla
1 pkg. Vanilla Instant Pudding (3-3/4 oz.)

(May use strawberries, etc. as desired.) — Dr. Alan Rossi, son of Felix, Rafael Group, Florence, Montana

Trout and Taters

1. fresh caught trout
2. flour
3. cornmeal
4. potatoes
5. onions
6. salt and pepper

In a small dutch oven, fry potatoes until half cooked; at this time add chopped onions. Cook together 'til done. Prepare equal amounts of flour and cornmeal. Use plate to roll and cover fresh caught trout in mixture. In skillet fry both sides of trout until light golden brown. Place fried trout on top of potatoes in hot dutch oven, cover tightly with lid. Wait five to ten minutes and serve. — Duane

Polenta Polenta corn meal

This was always Papa's job to make the polenta in a black three legged pot that fit in the hole on a wood stove.

1 c. corn meal
4 c. water
1 tsp. salt
1 cube butter

Pour corn meal into hot water slowly to make a paste stirring with a wooden spoon. Cook slowly stirring often. Always use a heavy pot so to not burn as it forms a crust. Put in butter and mix well. Now have your favorite spaghetti sauce of meat, mushrooms and seasoning. Layer in casserole, sauce and polenta, grated cheese, top with sauce and heat through in oven. Good reheated. We also like the polenta with just butter. Roquefort cheese blended well. — Margherita Milovich

Alasklanuska Slaw

5 gal. mayo
15 c. lemon juice
10 c. sugar
1-1/2 c. salt
10 qts. cr. pineapple (strained)
1 80 lb. cabbage
10 2-lb. carrots

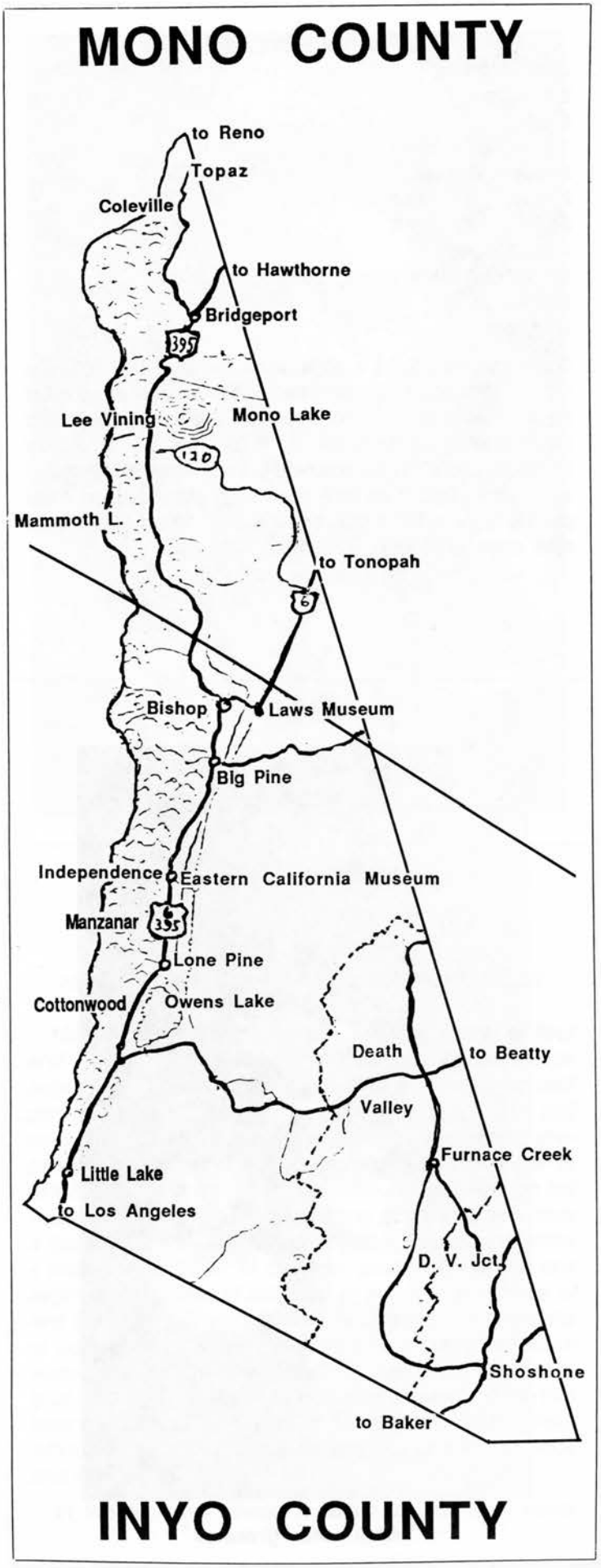
Prepare large wash tub. Add first 5 ingredients. Blend thoroughly with sanitized boat oar. Chill. For mixing bowl obtain 50 gallon stock watering tank. In this container shred cabbage and carrots into tiny bits with kitchen chainsaw. Pour sauce over cabbage and carrots. Toss gently with moose antlers. Serve. Makes 800 servings. — Shale Ann

Mama's Potato Cake

2/3 c. shortening
2 c. sugar
4 eggs
1 c. mashed potatoes
2 squares chocolate
2 c. flour
3-1/2 tsp. baking pwd.
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. each mace, nutmeg, cloves
1 c. walnuts
1/2 c. milk

Cream shortening and 1 c. sugar. In another bowl, beat egg yolks with the remaining sugar. Combine the two mixtures. Have ready the hot mashed potatoes (no lumps) and add them to the melted chocolate and combine to the first mixture. Mix and sift the dry ingredients and add to the nuts. Add to the first mixture, alternating with the milk. Fold in the stiffly beaten egg whites. Bake in a loaf pan 380 degrees. When cool, frost if desired. This is a large moist cake, which keeps well. — Babe

"Mama" and "Grandma"



Letters to the Editor

A CORRECTION

Thanks to Bessie Poole of Independence for calling our attention to the photo on p. 1, Vol. I, No. 4 of The Album. The lady is Miss Anne Margrave, not Eleanor. We, whose reading material she carefully censored in our girlhood days, should have known that!

THE NOTES WE LOVE

". . . We love your magazine and always learn so much about the beautiful Eastern Sierras. It's our favorite vacation spot year round!" — ***Gordon L. Morgan, Long Beach, CA***

". . . Although I am by no means an 'Old Timer,' I truly enjoy 'remembering' alongside those whoe were there back when. I guess my first real memory of your splendid valley was from the air as Bob White flew my dad and my older brother and sister and me in to Tunnel Meadows. I think that was 1962 or 3. I remember being just barely old enough to tag along, seven or eight. That was it for me, I was in love. Since then, I have visited numerous times, and as my knowledge of the area grows, so does my desire to see and know more. 'The Album' is thoroughly entertaining and, for me, spellbinding. I'm looking forward with great expectation to all the coming issues. I just wish I had something to contribute. Thanx and keep up the fine work." — ***Rick Hogan, Lakewood, CA***

How about that story of your first trip to Tunnel Meadows? Experience becomes history, even if it happened yesterday. — Editor

"Vol. II, No. 1 is the best. I really enjoyed it, especially 'The Elusive California-Nevada Border' story." — ***Elbert C. Anderson, Arcadia, CA***

". . . We lived in Bishop just after our marriage in 1926. Mr. C was employed by the Smith Brother's Garage for a while. It was dirt road from Mojave to Bishop in those days, and mostly corduroy . . . Have you written about the 'car lot' on the hill from Bishop . . . there were some good autos there. Wondered what finally happened to them . . . Then during the depression years, early '30s, Mr. C again worked for 'Smith's Garage' in Independence (not the same Smiths), and we lived in Independence until 1936 . . . Thank you for giving birth to 'The Album' and please continue it." — ***"Chris" Jen Christopher, Rosamond, CA***

". . . As for your magazine it fills a niche I haven't found anywhere else. I love to explore and camp in your area and buy every book and magazine I can find. I hope someday you do a story on China Garden Spring, located between Darwin and Panamint spring. I've been there several times and am intrigued by who once lived there. It's a beautiful place. I'm just sorry to see that the place is a little more destroyed every time I go there. Thank you for a great magazine." — ***Robert Johnson, Huntington Beach, CA***

Is there anyone out there who can tell us the story of the "car lot" or China Garden Spring? — Editor