

The Album

Times & Tales of Inyo-Mono

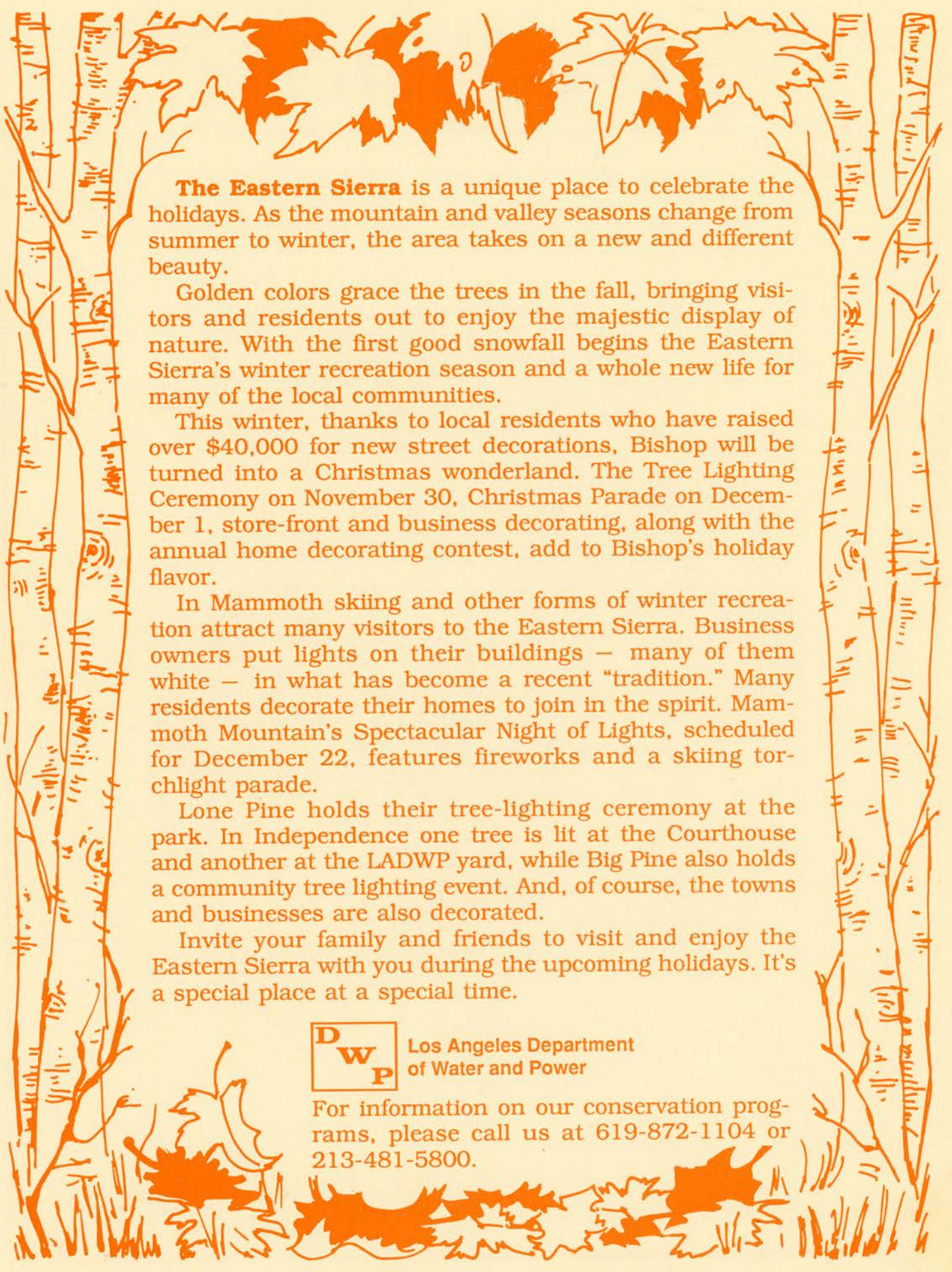
Being a quarterly recounting of the nature and history of two California counties

Vol. III, No. 4



Inside:

Shaw, next generation
Wood stove memories
Aberdeen memories
The Sherwin story
Model T trucking
Col. Stevens style
Frontier justice



The Eastern Sierra is a unique place to celebrate the holidays. As the mountain and valley seasons change from summer to winter, the area takes on a new and different beauty.

Golden colors grace the trees in the fall, bringing visitors and residents out to enjoy the majestic display of nature. With the first good snowfall begins the Eastern Sierra's winter recreation season and a whole new life for many of the local communities.

This winter, thanks to local residents who have raised over \$40,000 for new street decorations, Bishop will be turned into a Christmas wonderland. The Tree Lighting Ceremony on November 30, Christmas Parade on December 1, store-front and business decorating, along with the annual home decorating contest, add to Bishop's holiday flavor.

In Mammoth skiing and other forms of winter recreation attract many visitors to the Eastern Sierra. Business owners put lights on their buildings — many of them white — in what has become a recent "tradition." Many residents decorate their homes to join in the spirit. Mammoth Mountain's Spectacular Night of Lights, scheduled for December 22, features fireworks and a skiing torchlight parade.

Lone Pine holds their tree-lighting ceremony at the park. In Independence one tree is lit at the Courthouse and another at the LADWP yard, while Big Pine also holds a community tree lighting event. And, of course, the towns and businesses are also decorated.

Invite your family and friends to visit and enjoy the Eastern Sierra with you during the upcoming holidays. It's a special place at a special time.



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A rail fence once protected this grave on Old Mammoth Road. Photo from Roscoe Severtson, Los Osos, CA

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THE ALBUM, Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono

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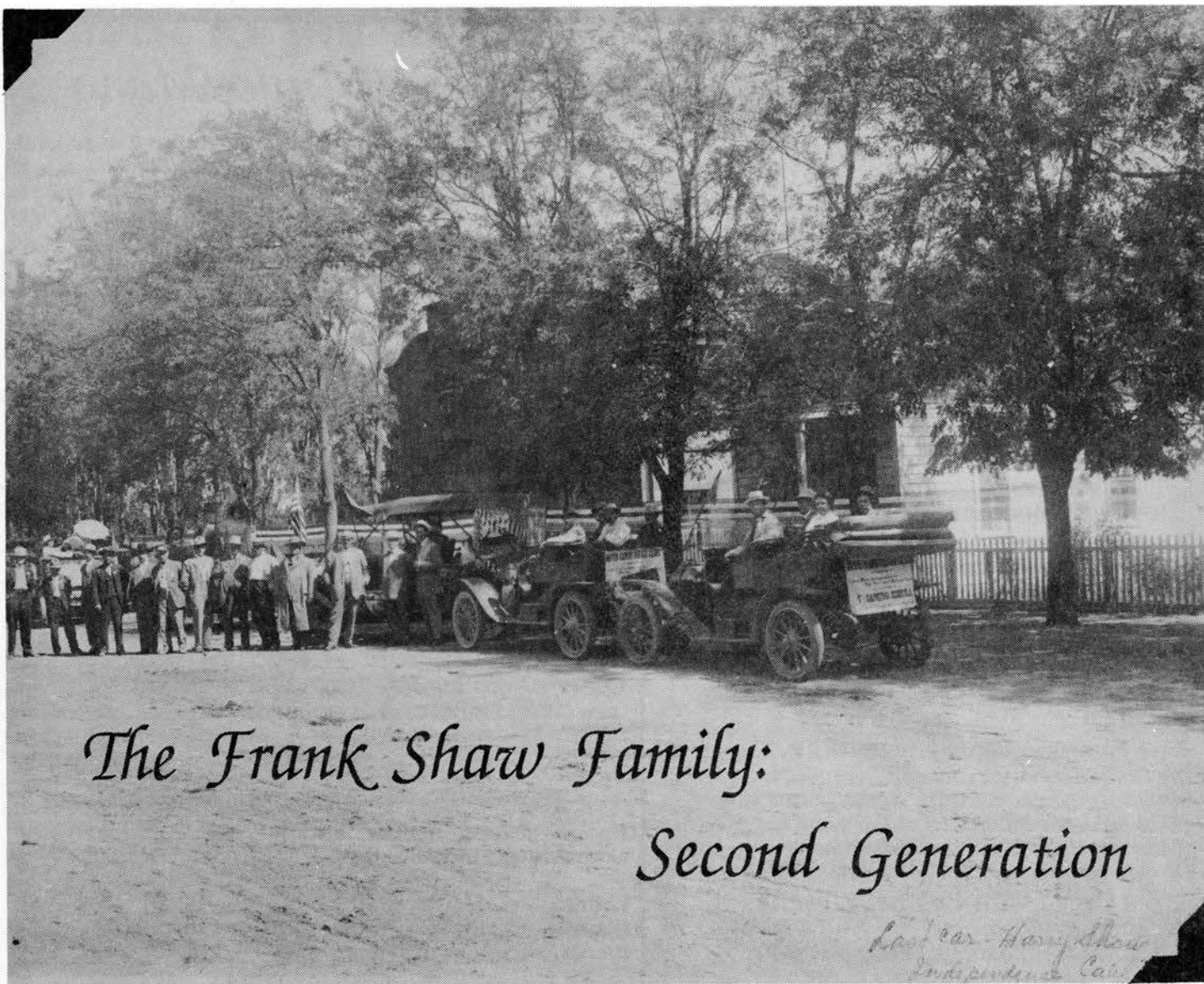
THE ALBUM, Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono, is a collection of stories, history, and natural history of Inyo County and Mono County, in Eastern California.

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

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The Frank Shaw Family: Second Generation

*Last car Harry Shaw
Independence, Cal.*

Inyo Good Road Club dedicates El Camino Sierra at Independence. Last car is Harry Shaw's.

by Demila Jenner

photographs courtesy Clara Shaw Eddy

Harry was 12 years old when his father Frank Shaw transported his wife Medora and their three children from Adobe Meadows to his more elegant spread near Bishop Creek. There, in 1884, Harry's third sister, the Shaw's last child, Elma, was born. Already Harry and his two younger sisters, Margie and Frankie, were attending grade school at Bishop's Inyo Academy, which Harry's second daughter, Asenath, a third-generation Shaw, born in 1906, would remember thusly:

"My first and second grade classes were held in the old Academy two-storied building. My father had also attended the Academy in the 1880s. In my possession is his McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader, 1879. The book bears the stamp of the Quartermaster Department of the United States Army. Apparently the Army supplied the school books. Mrs. Dorrance, our first and second grade teacher, lived in a big, beautiful two-story house on East

Line street. Maybe many of you remember the two-story lath house in the front yard; it was shaded and covered with vines. Mrs. Dorrance would invite us to have cookies and lemonade there . . .

"The pot-bellied stove in my Academy classroom was soon to be left behind. One could never forget the glowing hot stove in the winter time that was perpetually stoked with wood by the teacher in an attempt to keep the classroom warm. If you were the largest in the class, as I was, you sat in back and remained cold and if you were the smallest you sat in front, with warm, pink cheeks. The new West Line School was completed by the time I entered my third grade. The Old Academy School bell was moved to the new school. The same bell has now been moved to the Laws Museum and hangs in the newly erected bell-stand to recall the

'School Days' of long ago. During the Bicentennial celebration at Laws this July 4th (1976) it joined the other historic bells now hanging in the bell-stand by ringing as other bells did across the land of our Great Nation . . ." (Unpublished manuscript, *"My Childhood in Bishop, 1906-1919"* by Asenath Shaw Bailey, 1976.)

There was no high school in Bishop; after finishing Inyo Academy, Harry was sent to study finance at Stockton Business College, as befitted the future heir of the Shaw empire, which increased steadily. Harry, a well-built, fair-haired youth, early on assumed the role of his father's partner. Frank retained Adobe Meadows as summer range for his large herds of cattle; still in his teens, Harry rode herd as overseer for his father's distant ventures. A report in Bishop's *INYO REGISTER* for March 21, 1889, indicated even Mother Nature seemed a partner in Shaw enterprises: "William McCrosky and Harry Shaw were up at Adobe Meadows irrigating the Shaw hayfield, but found that the rain and snow had already done their job for them, so returned home."

Margie Shaw, two years younger than Harry, grew up equally self-assured. A group photo in the Museum at Independence shows an 18-year-old Margie already projecting the stately figure for which she would be remembered. In the 1889 photo, Margie sports a bunch of curls at front of her hairline, the rest of her hair drawn severely back; a scarf is pinned at the throat of her plaid dress. Not pretty, her face is pleasant, with straight brows and a straight mouth that yet suggests a smile. That smile must certainly have surfaced at a Valentine party two years later: "Margie Shaw played a raja of India in the masquerade ball at Bishop Creek." (*INYO REGISTER*, Feb. 19, 1891.)

Rather than the silks of Hindu royalty, Margie would have more nearly fulfilled her destiny by dressing in the flaming helmet, breastplate and cape of Celtic magician Manannan mac Llyr, legended as the first King of the Isle of Man. It was on this 30-mile-long island in the Irish Sea that Margie's true love Johnny Kewley was born, and though he lived near the Shaw place for years before the ball, she was totally unaware of the crucial role he would play in her life. Margie would marry Benton's rich widower, miner John Millner, bear him a son, then bury her husband in a distant grave before taking unto her ample bosom the diminutive Manxman whose heart already desperately yearned for her as she paraded in her raja finery at the Bishop Creek ball.

Years before, after burying his wife in ancestral soil in a parish north of Peel on the west coast of the Isle of Man, John Kewley brought his two motherless sons, Johnny and George, to the New World in the backwash of the Gold Rush. They came to Virginia City after the glory of Comstock had faded; Bishop records show that in 1887 Kewley bought for \$2,500 the Jackson ranch near Bishop, adjoining a big ranch owned by William Watterson, a Kewley relative from the Isle of Man.

At this juncture, George, Johnny's idolized older brother, did a fadeout: "He just disappeared," said his cousin, Mary Watterson Gorman, who was born and raised on the Watterson Ranch, and died earlier this year in Bishop, aged 101. "George just picked up and left and they never heard of him again. Never wrote home, never made any attempt to get in touch with them."

Johnny, "who never fitted himself for an occupation," hired on as cowboy for Frank Shaw and rode with Harry at Adobe Meadows, signing Benton voter rolls in 1888: "Occupation: vaquero."

Harry Shaw had adopted a cross-county mode of living; though a Bishop resident since 1881, Benton's Mono County voter rolls claimed him 1894: "Harry Shaw, 24, 6 feet tall, light complexion, grey eyes, light hair. Cattleman." The next year, Harry joined the Masonic Order in Bishop and in 1898: "Harry Shaw was elected Mono County supervisor from the Benton district." This year also saw the first journalistic linking of the Shaw name with that of a Bentonite named Millner, who would become Frank Shaw's son-in-law:

S.C. Croscup has applied for a patent on an ingenious form of cattle chute. The animal to be



Harry Shaw Family 1919

dehorned, branded or earmarked, is passed from the close-pen through an ordinary long chute into the machine where by manipulation of levers it is firmly held, head and body, where it is ready for any treatment or doctoring. The animal avoids any form of injury from being thrown down, as in traditional treatment. It is claimed that in Long Valley one steer a minute was branded in the apparatus. Charles Summers, Harry and Frank Shaw and Millner were quoted as giving unqualified endorsements of its value. (INYO REGISTER, March 10, 1898.)

John Frederick Millner was born in 1840 on Prince Edward Island off the coast of Nova Scotia and came to Benton in the 1880s with his brothers James, George and Gus. But it was John's name alone that would become synonymous with "plunderer" in the mining history of Blind Spring Hill. The former cigar salesman became Benton's richest man, if not its most popular citizen. During the two decades he lived in Benton before meeting up with the Shaws, John Millner had acquired title to most of the mines on Blind Spring Hill; he owned a hotel plus the historic stone building housing his general store in downtown Benton plus the Cambrian flour mills in Round Valley, and a 1,500-acre ranch in Irish Flats south of Benton. He was Wells-Fargo agent, Benton postmaster and foreman of the Grand Jury that put Mono County on a cash basis: *"The Jury report shakes the [Mono] county officers for using an excessive amount of stamps and recommends they pay for their own stamps used in private correspondence. Further, the jurors believe the expenditures on county roads to be too great for the amount of work done."* (INYO REGISTER, Nov. 23, 1899.)

For some time, the aging widower had been courting Bishop's lively Margie Shaw, some 30 years his junior. It is doubtful her parents objected to the age difference, since Frank Shaw was at least a quarter-century older than his wife Medora. And it would seem Margie's big brother Harry was much too busy to ride herd on his "little" sister, even had he been so inclined.

In April of 1899, Harry, as supervisor of Mono County, was appointed to confer with Inyo County supervisors about establishing a joint poorhouse. The *BRIDGE-PORT CHRONICLE* reported: *"Care of the indigent is a great tax on the people of Mono County, as many indigents are better able to earn their living than those taxpayers supporting them."* Inyo supervisors declined to come to the rescue. In August Harry reported to the Mono Board that "Inyo thinks it would be too expensive for them," and the matter was dropped.

Turns out, though, that Harry was not too busy for romance himself. His daughter, Clara Shaw Eddy:

"My father learned ranching from his father. It was one of Harry's responsibilities to escort cattle shipments to market. On a return trip to San Francisco in 1900, he noticed two attractive Canadian girls, Florence Alfretta

Arnold and Vina McCuish, en route for Bishop. Being rather formal, the girls were fussy about introductions, but Daddy made the grade. The girls were headed for the Tom McLeod place, just east of the Shaw ranch. Daddy re-routed his tickets to go along . . ."

The girls spent a year in Bishop as guests of Florence's aunt, Mrs. McLeod. Gus Cashbaugh remembered: ". . . They had many suitors. Harry Shaw, well-built, wealthy and good-looking, won the heart of Florence Arnold. They were married Jan. 1, 1902." Clara adds it was "a fashionable high noon wedding in Park-hill, Canada."

Margie beat her brother to the altar by a scant three weeks. From Independence Courthouse Marriage Records: "Dec. 11, 1901, John F. Millner, 59, native of Prince Edward Island, to Margie Shaw, 29, Bishop resident. Witnesses: Harry Shaw and Mrs. Frankie [Shaw] Birchim, both of Bishop."

The wedding took place at the Bishop Creek ranch of Frank and Medora Shaw. No guest list survives, but it is safe to assume that the little vaquero from out the Irish Sea was not among the revelers. Cousin Mary Gorman: "Frank Shaw's cowboy Johnny Kewley was always in love with Margie and he was oh, so brokenhearted when she married Millner."

Margie went to Benton to live in one of her husband's many properties and Harry built his bride a two-story home in the alfalfa patch three miles southeast of the Frank Shaw house. There on Jan. 23, 1903, was born Clara, the first of Florence and Harry's four children, first granddaughter for Medora and Frank Shaw. (SEE *SIDE-BAR*). Harry's other children were Asenath, Jean and Frank.

Again though, Margie had upstaged her brother by presenting Frank and Medora with their first grandchild, named for his grandfather: Frank Shaw Millner was born the day after Christmas, 1902.

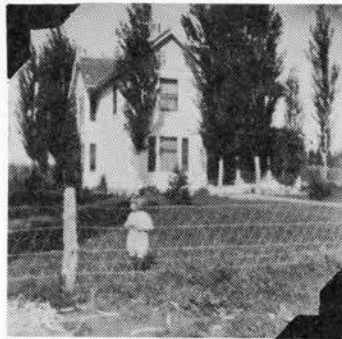
Page 5 top: Harry and Florence Shaw with Clara and Asenath; Clara with her doll

Center: Shaw home, Asenath in foreground

Bottom: Harry Shaw; Grace Leece and Florence cool off in the creek

Little Frank Millner got two public mentions in connection with his rich father. Dec. 31, 1903, the *BRIDGE-PORT CHRONICLE* noted that "J.F. Millner and wife took their little son Frank to Bishop from Benton last week for medical aid." Two years later appeared the second mention:

JOHN F. MILLNER DEAD. Benton's most prominent citizen is gone. The well-known mining man died in San Francisco Sunday night, age 64. Mrs. Millner and her



3-year-old son, the only surviving relatives in this region, had been in San Francisco for some time. Mr. Millner joined them a few days ago and they all intended to come back together . . . The trouble seems to have been an abscess of the brain which resulted fatally. Mr. Millner had been a resident of Benton for more than a score of years and very prominently identified with all affairs thereabout . . . (INYO REGISTER, Nov. 23, 1905).

Margie had her hands full for the next two years seeing to the settling of Millner's very complicated estate. One assumes that Cowboy Johnny, still riding for her father, was a comfort to her during this difficult time, to judge from a notice in the Bishop newspaper Aug. 8, 1907: "Married at Bridgeport, July 21, J.C. Kewley and Mrs. M.S. Millner."

Did love, then, triumph after all? Mary Gorman: "I was in my brother's store in Bishop, Leece & Watterson's Hardware, when Margie and Johnny came in right after they were married. She was so pleased and happy, and of course so was Johnny. No, he wasn't a handsome man, and didn't have much personality. Sure, Margie was a rich young widow but no one thought of the marriage as being anything but for love. Everyone knew he'd always loved her. Margie was a very fine woman, but not beautiful, either; she was a big woman and he looked rather insignificant beside her . . ."

But love made the union work for 19 years. The INYO REGISTER signalled its end on Sept. 2, 1926: "John C. Kewley died last week terminating a long period of illness from stomach trouble. Born about 1865 on the Isle of Man, he came here as a boy. His father had a ranch near Bishop. Survived by wife Margie and stepson Frank Millner."

Harry Shaw, following the death of his father in 1908, consolidated and expanded the family holdings with the help of Shaw matriarch Medora. Margie moved back to Bishop with her Johnny and young son and participated in the family business. State records in Sacramento show The Frank Shaw Land and Cattle Company, most extensive operation of its kind in Inyo and Mono counties, was formed in 1910 with Harry Shaw president. Margie Shaw Millner Kewley was secretary-treasurer; other officers were Clara Medora Hart Shaw, Elma Shaw Shuey and Frankie Shaw Birchim O'Neal Leibly. Eight years later when Harry sold out to William Symons, title ownership was more simplified, but enumeration of the Shaw acreage still was impressive. As supplied by Clara Eddy:

LAND OWNED (California)

River Ranch 1300 acres
Frank Shaw Ranch 881 acres
Alfalfa Ranch 459 acres

Adobe Meadows 1440 acres
Crooked Meadows 313 acres
Dexter Canyon 864

Black Lake 440
Placer Mines 80 acres

After having three girls in a row, Clara, Jean and Asenath, in 1918 Florence presented Harry with a son, Frank, but his happiness at having a male heir was marred by continuing health problems. Suffering from high blood pressure and chronic appendicitis, Harry Shaw made perhaps the hardest decision of his life: he had to quit working!

Clara Eddy: "By this time, Father had let himself become dreadfully involved with the big ranch, a bank presidency (Owens Valley Bank, later merged with First National), chairmanship of the Irrigation District and presidency of the ill-fated Owens River Valley Electric Railway Company. Illness overtook him, and the fact that Los Angeles City was buying up water rights and taking over properties in the Valley checkerboard fashion, greatly distressed him. He up and sold the ranch to Will Symons, much against Mother's will, who pleaded with him to have a foreman take over until his health was better . . ."

The family moved to San Francisco, then to Los Angeles, where they bought a beautiful home. But the workaholic strain ran deep in Harry and he went into the cattle business again. His obituary in the INYO REGISTER, July 30, 1925, tells the rest of the story:

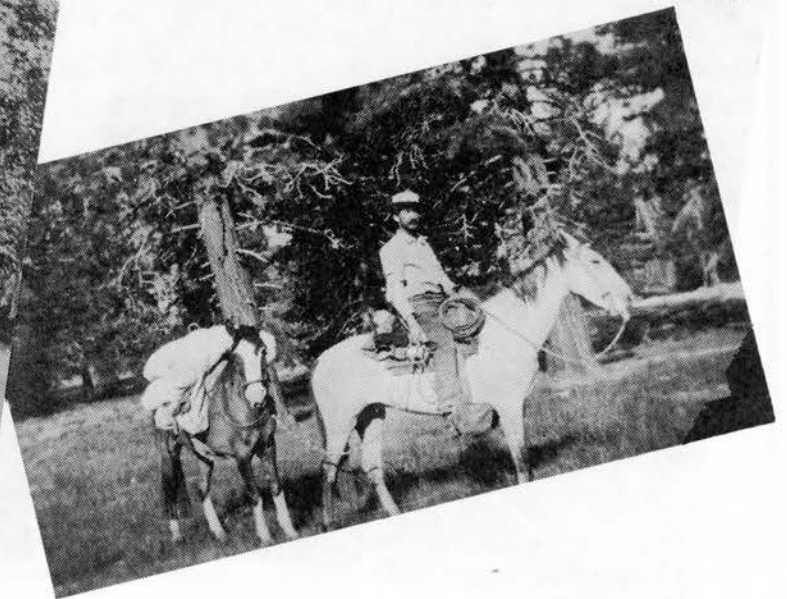
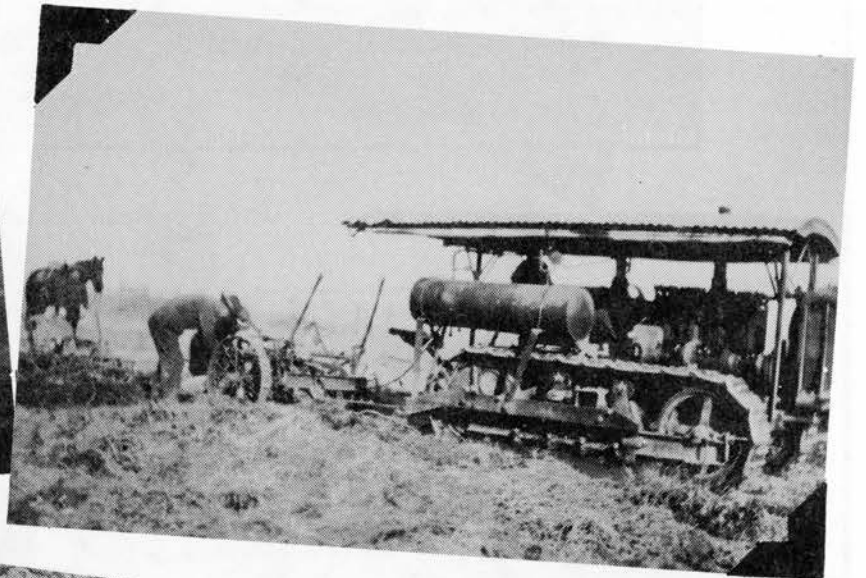
Mr. Shaw in March bought six carloads of cattle in Arizona and took them to a range he leased at O'Neal's, Madera county. Storms damaged that feed and he moved to another range . . . Last week serious forest fires broke out in that section and he helped in fighting them. In this work he undoubtedly overdid, with the result that he was overcome and passed away shortly after being taken to Fresno . . .

The funeral occurred yesterday afternoon from Albright's chapel, where a Christian Science service was given by T.G. Watterson. Interment was at the Masonic cemetery by the Masons. He had been a member of the Lodge here for more than 30 years, and was also a member of the Reno Consistory and of the Mystic Shrine . . .

Page 7 top: Clara and Asenath ride Slivers to school; Lola with the family

Center: Auburn horse; the tractor

Bottom: Gardener Bridget with produce; Jim Cline with pack outfit





The description of Harry by his daughter Clara Eddy might serve as his epitaph: "A fine and capable, well-trained boy became a great man, an outstanding citizen, loved, respected and admired by all who had the privilege to know him. Yes, he sure was a great Dad."

Medora Shaw outlived her husband Frank by 23 years; she lived six years longer than son Harry. She died in apparent good health on a sunny July noonday in Bishop. A lot of people, including the Shaws, regard Bishop as the nearest place to Heaven, so Medora didn't have far to go:

Since the final moment must come to all, none could ask for a more merciful passing from life than came to Mrs. Clara Medora Shaw about noon Tuesday. In seeming usual good health, she had attended to business affairs in town during the forenoon. After going home, she and her daughter Mrs. M.S. Kewley set about getting the noon meal. She answered a question, and began peeling a peach; the knife slipped from her fingers and she sank to the floor lifeless . . . Mrs. Shaw was a woman having the respect of every one who knew her, for her kindly qualities and high character. She was one of the early members of the Order of the Eastern Star here and a faithful adherent of the Christian Science Church . . . (INYO REGISTER July 30, 1931).

All members of first generation Shaws have passed on and a lot of Bishop history is buried, like the Harry Shaw home (Alpha Ranch) beneath the Bishop Airfield. One of the few tangibles remaining is the gate to his Bishop ranch built by Frank Shaw 110 years ago, memorialized by Gus Casbaugh before his death:

"This old gate has weathered many years of heat, cold, wind, rain and snow . . . The stage coaches passed by this gate, as well as horses and buggies, express wagons, oxen teams, twenty-mule teams hauling machinery to the power plants, and large wagons loaded with grain from Round Valley . . ."

The old gate is now in Laws Museum where one may gaze at it and invoke century-old images to intermingle with the present.

Page 8 top: Frank Shaw grandchildren Jim and Harold Birchim, Frank Millner, Clara and Asenath Shaw; Bishop ranch about 1916 — Clara 12, Asenath 1

Center: Harry Shaw on cattle horse

Bottom: Gardener Bridget and more ranch produce; the Buick 1919

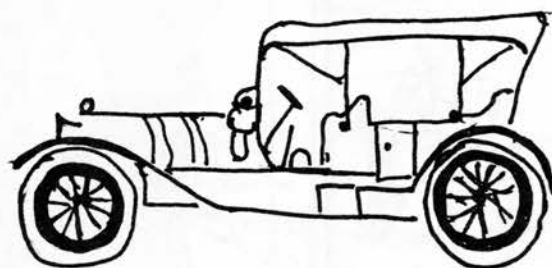
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Clara Shaw Eddy, firstborn (Bishop, Jan. 23, 1903) of Frank Shaw's firstborn, Harry, is alive and well in the Hancock Park area of Los Angeles. At author Jenner's request, this third-generation California Shaw journeyed into her past, conjuring up details of her early life on Bishop-based Shaw ranches to flesh out the accompanying article. The memories are Clara's; the sketches are by Clara and her artist-daughter Beryl.

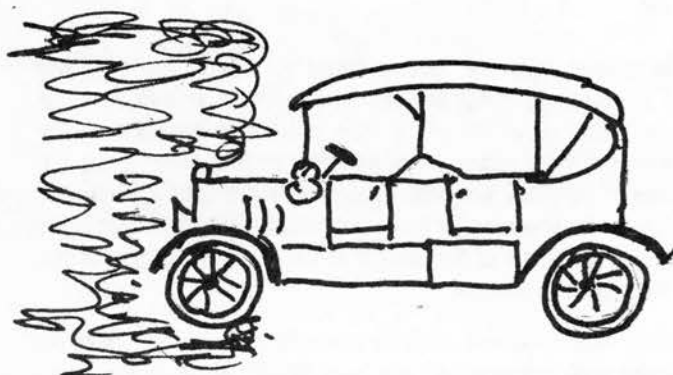
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REMEMBERING: *In winter, walking over to Plumley's, the creaking of the snow under our feet. Spreading buckets of wheat over frozen snow for the wild birds. Snow in the washtubs; syrup made by Cora. We'd stick our fingers in the snow, pour syrup in the holes, then pull out the syrup for taffy-pulls. Sometimes the boys didn't have clean hands and the taffy would have dark streaks.*

On a cold wintry day Cousin Harold Birchim and I took a crate of white Buffington chickens to Farrington Hill after school. Drove past the old Shaw place on west side of Laws; coming home the moon shone on the snow-clad mountains with a light I remember yet.

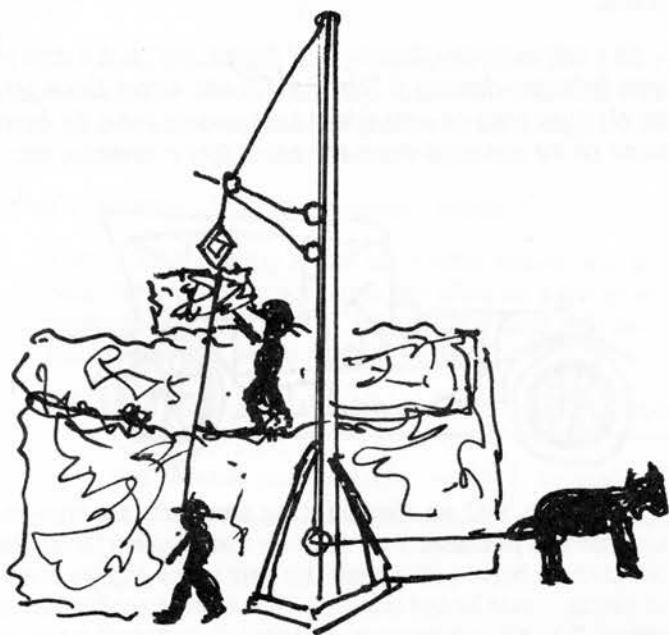


EVENTS: *In 1912 we abandoned our surrey with the fringe-on-top when Dad purchased a big Buick car from "Chicken" Smith (he sold chickens before selling cars!) Dad went to Los Angeles to pick up the car — then he had to learn to drive it before coming back to Bishop. Took him three days to get from L.A. to Bishop. It had an open front with box gears and magneto starter you had to crank — and look out for the kick-back! Fur-lined foot warmers and lap robes with big lion head for center decoration. It had a trunk on back; on the running board we stashed our water, gasoline and oil. At the opening ceremony for Sherwin grade we were part of a caravan of cars chugging to the meadow above, where all participants enjoyed a picnic lunch. That was a sight to behold: The cars were boiling, the brakes would not hold and most drivers had big rocks to place behind or in front of the wheels. Many cars had to be pushed.*



REMEMBERING MAMA: The tonsils of my younger sister Asenath were removed by a doctor on our ranch; the following day Asenath hemorrhaged. My mother determined to get Asenath to a doctor in Bishop; The Buick being absent, she had a ranch hand start up his Ford and took off. In town, she had to get someone to stop the car; after seeing the doctor and stopping at Wenham's Drugstore for Asenath's ice-cream soda, some men got the car started for Mama. Back at the ranch she stopped the Ford by the simple expedient of running it into a haystack. Asenath long remembered the loss of her tonsils — and her ride in one of the first of the Fords!

Mama's determination was also reflected in the case of the broken fence. Nobody had time to fix a fence just to keep pigs from getting in Florence's yard. That is, not until Mama shot six of the Shaw pigs. Quite soon thereafter, the fence was fixed!



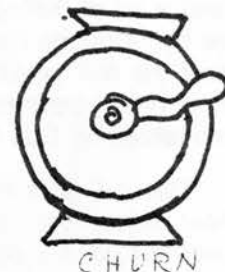
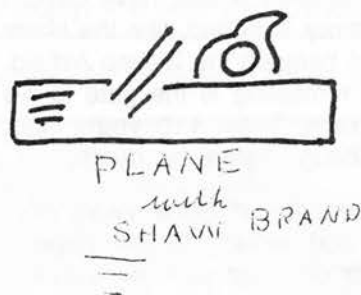
THE RANCHES: after Grandpa Shaw died in 1908, his ranch became a truck farm worked for us by Japanese who lived in Grandma Clara's old home with its big kitchen, large screened back porch with a pump at the sink area plus counters. A stone cellar; a big ditch ran through the ranch. I remember the pear and apple trees behind the house, where Grandma had a bee stand and a corral for Aunt Elma's pet deer. The farm produced corn, wheat, sugar beets, melons, squash, etc. Alden Plumley writes: "I remember the old Frank Shaw ranch house well. In fact I was in the kitchen a couple of times when Sam, the Japanese, was gardening."

Remember Japanese "picture brides" of 1917? The Japanese who farmed for us chose two ladies from photos as their brides-to-be; my father drove the young men to Laws to meet them when they arrived from Japan. They lived on the old Shaw place and worked in the fields with their husbands. Years later a Huntington Beach dentist knew one of the young people from these marriages; she used to tell him of her parents in the era of the picture brides. All have passed on now.

Dad's work force was distinctly international in makeup: Sing, our Chinese cook renowned for his flying "S" shaped queue as much



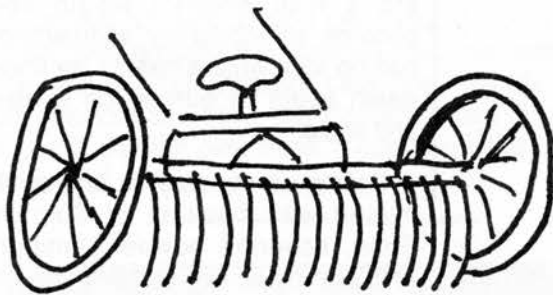
as for his cuisine; the two Japanese farmers flanked by their Picture Brides; Peter Ferinbaugh (German) who oversaw the irrigation of the Shaw fields; Lewis Neil, (English) fed the stock; the young Irish boy, Jack Fisher, general helper, who became part of the Shaw family; Lewis Versenette, (French) who helped with the cattle; Pete Sicilly (Swiss) tended our 18-head dairy herd with such TLC that when Mother took friends to the dairy barn to see the cows, Pete scolded the laughing children: "No noise, please! It'll disturb the cows."



The steady Shaw workforce was augmented by seasonal help, like Mr. Jim Cline, married to an Indian lady, who always helped Father move his cattle to summer range at Adobe Meadows out near Benton. At haying time there would be 15 or 20 extra men; my father's Time Book, covering ten years (1906-1916) shows many of the same names repeated year after year. He paid the men from one dollar to \$2.50 a day, plus meals.

There was a complete Indian settlement on the Old Shaw ranch, presided over by head vaquero Henry Chatovich and consisting of three or four families and their uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, children. One of these was named George Williams; we called him Billie. On one of Father's trips to San Francisco to sell steers, he took Billie along to help keep the cattle standing in the 10-car cattle train. It was the first time Billie had seen the ocean, street cars, hotels, elevators. When he returned to Bishop (by passenger train!) the stories he told of what he saw and did, earned him the name "Crazy Billie" until my father told his family and friends that Billie was not crazy, that he really did see and do all those things and more. After that, Billie was called "San Francisco George."

Minnie, wife of Henry, did our washing and ironing and helped with the cleaning; Minnie's mother, Sallie, used to weed mother's garden. Helen Chatovich, just my age, was my close friend and playmate; Helen grew up to become a staunch fighter for Native American rights and our friendship has been a life-long affair.



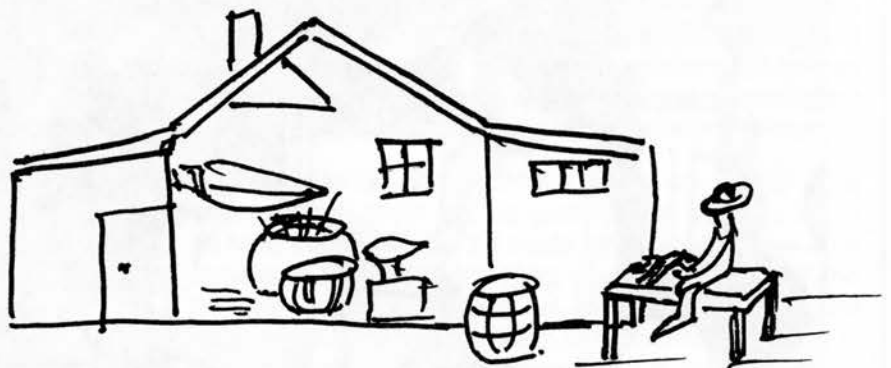
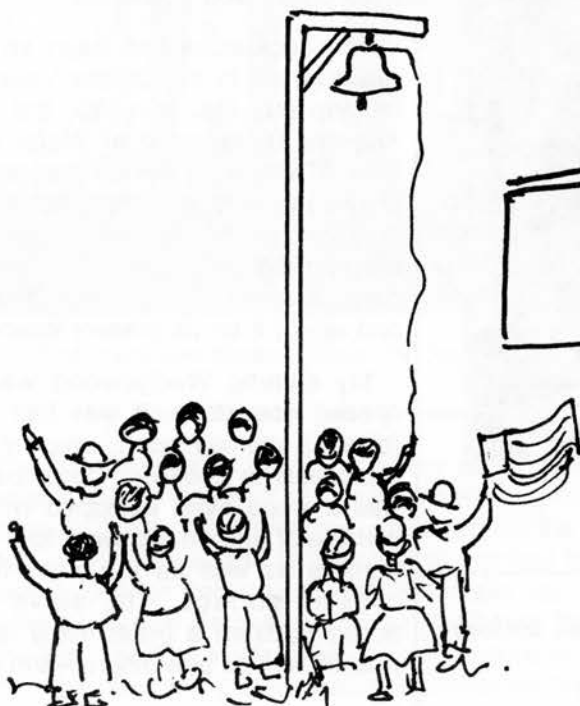
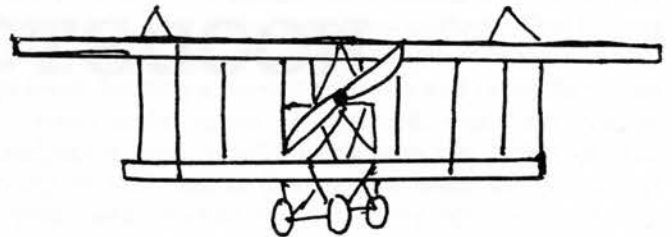
RAKE

REMEMBERING FRANK SHAW: Twenty years after Grandpa's death, I married Arnold Eddy and we visited the Bishop area. One day in Bridgeport I asked an oldtimer sitting in a captain's chair in front of a store: "Did you know Frank Shaw? Because I'm his granddaughter." Speech erupted in a stream of tobacco juice; he recounted the years-long feud over a bull between himself (Mr. James S. Cain of Bodie fame) and Frank Shaw: "Girl, when your grandfather and I decided to quit fueding, the whole town of Aurora celebrated for three days — at our expense!"

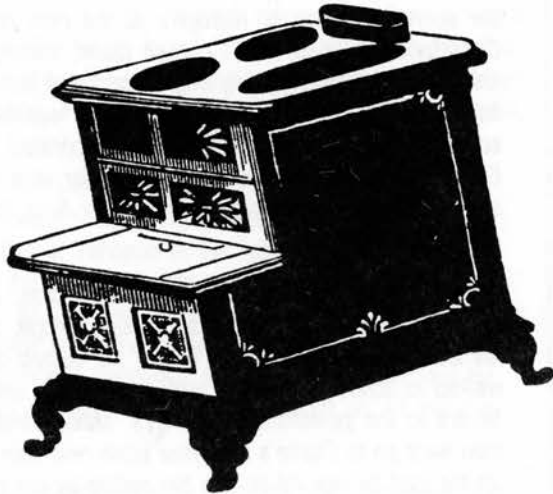
Remembering Grandpa's good friend Mr. Bridges, the Shaw gardener who planted by the moon and always won first prize for his vegetables at the Bishop fair . . . and Bill Slee, who in 1881 moved to Bishop with Grandpa from Adobe Meadows and established a blacksmith shop at the corner of Main Street road and the road to West Bishop at Yaney corner. When Grandpa died on June 2, 1908, Father took me with him when he went to tell Bill Slee of his father's passing. Bill was silent a moment, then: "He lived a full life." It was a good epitaph.

SO MANY MEMORIES: Ringing the bell at the ranch when the war was over; farmers came or called to know why the bell was pealing at a "wrong time." Father brought out apples, other goodies; we all sang and yelled in celebration. The historic landing in the open field north of Keough's at the new fairground of Pilot Christopherson in his open cockpit plane, looking so romantic in knickers and leather jacket, bright scarf and jaunty cap with ear-flaps, goggles, and leather leggings. School was let out; mothers of schoolchildren baked a great cake decorated with "Welcome, Christopherson!" Then the single propeller was whirled by hand and off flew Christopherson. Out of our lives forever, but never out of our memory!

Riding to school in the cart when the horse, scared by sheep and pack mule, dumped us at Keough bridge, tore off the cart harness and ran all the way home; we dusted ourselves off and walked to school . . . Riding with Asenath on my ex-circus horse Slivers to the postoffice, where Mrs. Miller handed me the mail; then we'd go to Clarke's hardware store next door where they'd tie up the mail for me. I'd tie it to the saddle by our lunch box and off we'd ride for home . . . The arrival at the ranch of the threshing machine, the threshing and sacking of our wheat, and that of all the neighbors who brought their wheat to the machine; what an exciting day! . . . Mother dressing Asenath and me in our Mary Jane shoes and gloves to go the Chatauqua . . . too many memories crowd in; there isn't space to tell them all . . . ❄



Sketches by Clara Shaw Eddy and daughter Beryl



THE OLD WOODSTOVE

by Marye Roeser



The Wedgewood Stove. Left, Pat Delaney; right, Elizabeth Russell, author's mother. 1961.

It was raining ominously on that gray June day, as I stood in the rustic cookhouse of the Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit near Lake Mary, California, dejected, surveying the old wood stove with which I would soon become so intimately acquainted. I had no idea what a beauty lay underneath years of burned on spatters and spills.

Rolling up my sleeves and arming myself with buckets of Spic and Span, scouring powder, ammonia and any other evil smelling concoction guaranteed to dissolve the toughest incinerated grease, I reluctantly attacked the blackened monster. Many days later, with red, cracked hands on hips, I again surveyed what was now a spruced-up shining stove. Soft green and white enamel had magically appeared through the black, and behold! A beautiful Wedgewood cookstove that once had been some ranch wife's pride and joy now graced my tiny kitchen.

In June of 1960, after purchasing the Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit from Lee Summers, my husband Lou and I moved our family into the historic cabins. It was both raining and snowing when I arrived at the pack station in a station wagon well loaded with two small children, a large dog and a most disgruntled yellow cat.

The cookhouse had been an old ranch house in the Owens Valley in its previous life. In 1930, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, who then owned the ranch, planned to burn the cabin, but a former owner of the pack station rescued it from its fiery fate, tore it down, hauled it up to the pack station and rebuilt it on its present location.

My shining Wedgewood was a special woodstove. It was half gas (butane) and half wood, which made it practical to cook on. Down below was a wood oven equipped with a thermostat and on top were four gas burners as well as the wood-fired cooking surface. The stove top accommodated a great many large pots as well as providing a warm sur-

face for raising yeast breads and sourdough. The two small gas ovens above were also equipped with thermostats.

Perhaps the stove had come with the ranchhouse or maybe it had belonged to an earlier pack station kitchen. I fantasized about this mythical ranch woman baking bread in the ovens and polishing the soft green enamel to make it glow. I visualized her simmering huge iron pots of stew and always smiling and singing happily while she worked. However, this spring, I wasn't smiling much or singing merrily. My back hurt, I was seven months pregnant, and the water line from Lake Mary was still frozen. Fortunately, the creek was just outside the cabin so it was only a short distance to haul water to the kitchen.

But my three year old daughter, Kerry, sang for me. She was fascinated with watching the beautiful stove emerge from its shroud of blackened grease and smoke, and as I scrubbed and scraped, she sang for me, "Ragtime Cowboy Joe." I never muse about the old stove without hearing her baby voice chirping, "He always sings, raggedy music to the cattle as he swings, back and forth in the saddle . . ." Of course, I had to smile and even hum a little with her, too.

A friend gave me some sourdough starter from a ranch in Nevada, knowing that a wood stove would produce wonderful baked goods. I quickly discovered my stove was perfect for baking sourdough biscuits. The starter responded to the warm kitchen and I kept a glass gallon jar of starter brewing constantly. From biscuits, I branched out to hotcakes, bread, cornbread and muffins. As I became more proficient, I even invented recipes and kept the crock bubbling.

Packers are notoriously hungry and they happily munched all I prepared, even my less successful experiments. As I fired up the oven for another batch of biscuits, I realized I was helping the packers to work up their large appetites even further. They had to chop the quantities of firewood to feed the equally hungry stove. Every morning, seemingly huge stacks of wood disappeared along with huge stacks of sourdough hotcakes dripping with butter and syrup.

The stove, with its voracious appetite, kept packers busy chopping wood morning and evening. The youngest packer was usually assigned to stove detail. Young Dave, who hadn't quite grown into his feet, was very proud of his new pair of cowboy boots, the only size 14 to be found in Bishop. One evening just before dinner, he walked white-faced into the cookhouse and croaked, "Look!", gesturing to the pointed toe of his new boot.

Lou, peering at the obviously axe-cut slit, gasped, "What happened to the foot inside?" The foot, according to Dave, was fine and upon further examination proved that the axe had sliced down between his toes cutting only the boot. He was much more



Cookhouse, Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit



Dining table, Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit

concerned about the condition of his new boots than the condition of his toes. I considered insisting that in the future all woodchoppers wear steel-toed logger boots whenever near an axe.

When our baby, Maryl, was born, my mother came up to help me and she learned to love the old stove, too. This surprised me as she lived with an all-electric kitchen in the city and was a superb cook. I kept apologizing and feeling guilty about my tiny primitive kitchen, but I had forgotten she learned to cook on a wood stove in the country many years before.

Pies weren't affected by the 9,000 foot elevation of the pack station, so mother decided the packers deserved pie every evening. Oh, the pies she pulled out of those ovens! She made particularly mouth-watering lemon meringue pie and one evening, as she cut the pies and passed the servings around the big oval table, one of the packers slyly slipped his helping onto his lap and said, "Oh, you missed me! I didn't get any." Quickly, she served him another piece, whereupon he laughed and pulled out his hidden plate. But the plate was completely empty! There was a moment of puzzlement before our dog poked his head out from under the long table licking meringue off his nose and whiskers. Jiggs' long sneaky hours of waiting under the table were finally rewarded.

We had an early snow in the fall before we closed that year, and only a few of the crew were left. One of the packers moved out of the bunkhouse and into the small cabin adjacent to the kitchen. One evening, Mother had baked one of her scrumptious apple pies for dinner and one piece remained in the pie pan when we retired that night. Walking into the kitchen early the next morning, I marveled at the prints of bare feet marching through the snow from the little cabin to the kitchen door. The packer had awakened during the night and thought about that one remaining piece of pie. Without stopping to put on his boots, he had

jumped out of bed and hurried into the dark cold kitchen to scrape the pie pan clean.

In the fall, when school started and I returned to the classroom in Coleville during the week, the sourdough starter wasn't much used. I stored the jar in the refrigerator to keep it at the right degree of sourness, but helpful employees, cleaning out the refrigerator and coming across the fearsome looking liquid, knew it must be an unplanned fermenting brew or long ignored leftover, and threw it out. Fortunately there were other jars of my strain of sourdough in other kitchens around Mammoth, so I was able to replace the vital starter.

Over the years, the wood stove continued to rest in the kitchen while I lovingly cleaned and polished it, and each spring removed the mouse nests nestled in its oven corners. One summer, though, we needed to put a doorway through the stove wall to the adjoining room, which had once been a bedroom for a cook but was now a pantry. My beloved stove was in the way, so Lou and two of the packers undertook to slide it over to the adjacent kitchen wall. With ropes they began inching the heavy old Wedgewood across the uneven wooden floor. Suddenly the heavy stove tipped over and crashed to the floor, smashing into a thousand splinters. The old cast iron had become so brittle from years of fires that it shattered like glass. Needless to say, I was shattered also.

My beautiful stove lay in a heap of scraps and pieces on the kitchen floor. I really hadn't expected to become so attached to that blackened monster I first gazed at on that rainy, dark day several summers earlier.

Friends heard of the disaster and we soon had a call from the Lake Mary Store. They had just purchased a new Wolf restaurant gas stove and asked if I would like the old one which had baked so many famous blueberry pies in prior years. Tearfully I accepted, but when the soulless replacement was deposited near the

back door, I sniffed, "No, that ugly thing will never replace my beautiful Wedgewood in this kitchen!"

Lou and the packers, still feeling terrible about the demise of the old stove, quietly hauled the blackened beast down to the local Shell Garage and steam cleaned it. When next I gazed upon it, I had to admit it did look much better. So much so, that I soon rolled up sleeves, dug out all the evil smelling compounds and scrapers again and got into the spirit, too.

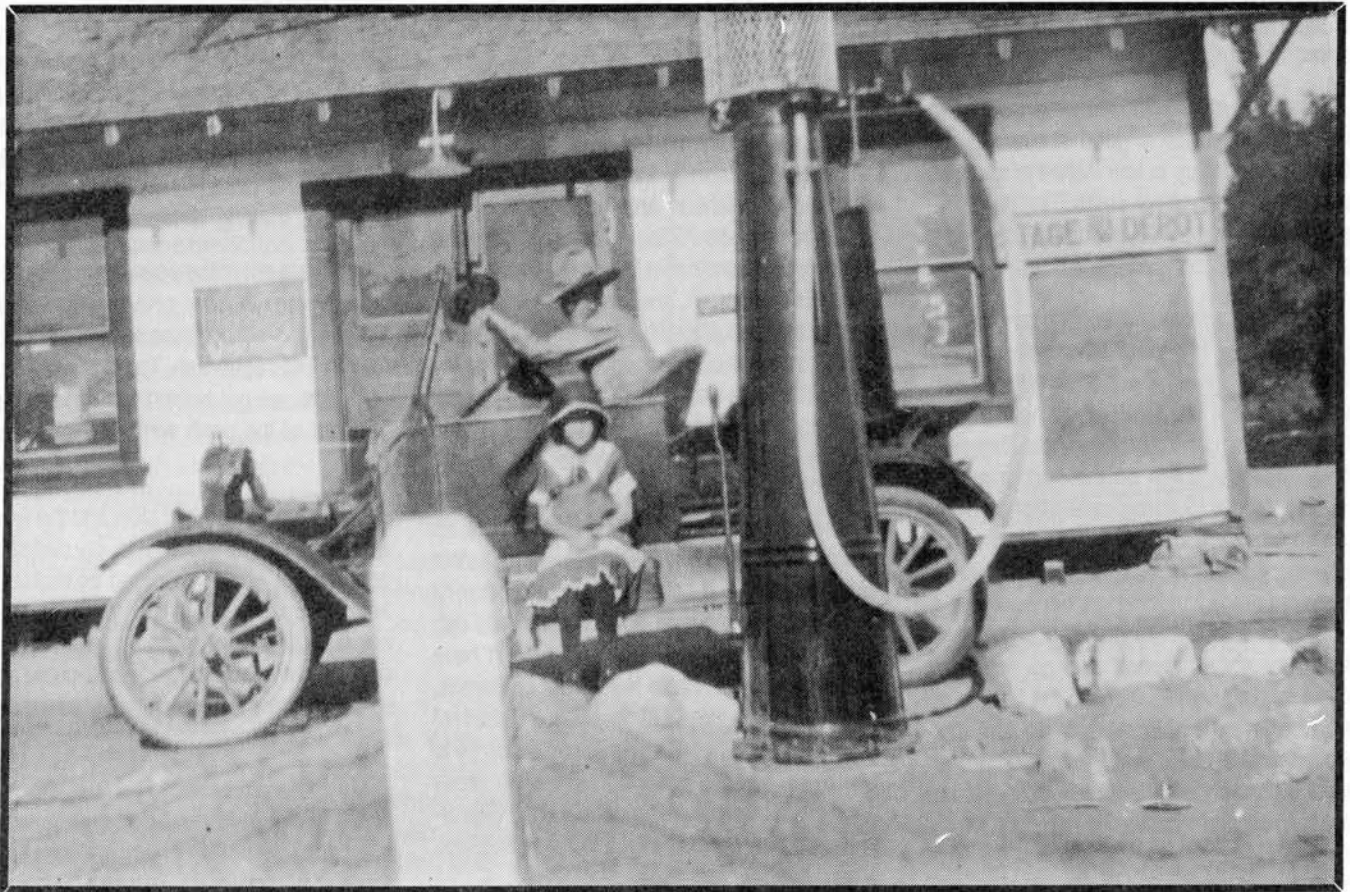
Kerry, now several years older, helped me scrape and scrub, amazed at the unfolding transformation. And my, wasn't this old Wolf gas stove a beauty under all its years of baked-on grease! It had two big ovens and a heavy grill about a yard wide with a shelf above for raising sourdough.

The big new stove, cleaned and polished, was moved into place in the tiny kitchen where it still resides today. The sourdough biscuits and bread baked just as happily as in the old wood stove and the grill cooked the best hotcakes ever. Kerry is now mistress of the pack station kitchen, where she lovingly cleans and pampers the old stove while turning out mouthwatering blueberry pies and coffee cakes, not to mention the best carrot cake in the Eastern Sierra.

Recently I suggested it might be time for a new stove but Kerry indignantly protested the aged cookstove was still cooking just fine. Standing by the stove, running my fingers over the smooth grill and munching a hot sourdough biscuit, I had to agree. ❁



**Recipes from the
Old Woodstove
on page 54**



Raymond Steffen in the 1922 Ford, Lucille Steffen sitting on fender. Aberdeen Store in 1925. Note the new glass bowl gas pump and electric light over the door. Sign left of door reads "Delaware Punch."

Other Days at Aberdeen

from the memoirs of Raymond Steffen

ABERDEEN 1915.

My dad, Peter Steffen, was born in France, came to the United States in 1878 at the age of three, and learned the machinist trade in Minnesota, becoming a journeyman for Southern Pacific Railroad in Los Angeles. My mother was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and was one of the best cooks in the world, I think. She made bread, biscuits, pies, and other bakery goods. After they were married, they came to Los Angeles, where they lived for 11 years until we came up to the Owens Valley to take up a homestead on the east side, by the red mountain.

We came by the railroad, the broadgauge line to Mojave, where we unloaded one broad-

gauge car. It took three little narrow gauge cars to carry all of our belongings to the Valley. There were six children — eight of us in the family.

Coming up the Valley, we could see the Owens Lake; the railroad ran right close to the lake and I asked my mother if that was an ocean. As we went a little farther, she pointed out Mt. Whitney to me. I recall, when we came through the stations, like Keeler for example, they locked the toilets because at that time, you could look through and see the ties.

When we arrived at Aberdeen Station, we had to unload everything and take it to the homestead, which was a mile north. We brought everything to build a house, as well as

horses, cows, chickens, horseshoeing equipment, forge, anvil, vise, drill press and all the tools necessary for a blacksmith and millwright.

We hitched the team we brought with us, a bay named Babe and a white named Bob. We had to assemble the wagons and load our supplies with no outside help. Dad took the lumber, box car doors first, with the help of my brother Peter, ten years older than I. My brother Stanley, two years older than I, led the two milk cows, Tiny and Blackie, to the homestead where Dad quickly built a temporary shelter out of the box car doors.

My sister Irene (four years older than I) was outside when Mother called supper that first

evening, and I said to her, "Let's run to the top of those White Mountains." The air was so clear one could reach out and touch them, beginning just out of the smoky Los Angeles city area.

It was May, raining and snowing, and those box car doors made a good shelter. In the morning we woke up to four inches of snow on the ground. Then Dad started to build the house and we dug a well, by hand. We made a tripod and used a horse to pull up the dirt.

We finally dug three wells on the ranch while we were there. Two were windmills, and we called one the big well; it was 6'x8', 30' to water. Then we dug a 4'x4', 18' deep, using redwood 2x6s to make a round perforated hole. Then we put a centrifugal pump on the bottom and a Fairbanks Morris 15 horsepower engine on the top, with a belt on an angle to the pump. We'd start the engine on gasoline and switch to diesel. Dad made a landing ten feet down; we'd go down one ladder 45 degrees to the first landing, then walk around and go down on another landing with a ladder to the bottom of the well where the pump was. We'd turn that pump on and it would water twenty acres of alfalfa, corn, sudan grass, milo maize, corn flowers, trees and whatever we could plant at that time.

We were the only family on the east side of the river, about twenty miles from Independence and twenty miles from Big Pine, the closest places you could buy anything. But all the food, bedding, name it, Mother brought all the necessary items.

My mother would order groceries from Los Angeles, from Ralphs. When we were in Los Angeles, she always traded with Ralphs Grocery; I recall a Mr. Benedict was the clerk. So when we came to the Valley, my mother would send down orders to Ralphs and they would send it up on the train. We'd just go the mile to the station to get the groceries, and she would send them a check at the end of the month. Just try that today!

We bought coffee and lard in 25 pound cans; rice, oatmeal, and cornmeal in 50 pound sacks; salt 10 pounds at a time; beans, flour, and sugar in 100 pound bags; and bacon by the slab. We got Carnation condensed milk 48 cans to a case; cocoa in 10 pound cans; Royal baking powder, dry yeast in cakes which kept a long time; salt pork in 50 pound kegs; and pepper in 2 pound cans. Crackers came in big cartons about three feet long and 14"x14" square. Fresh fruit was not sold in the stores, but you could buy it from the farmers or gardeners. We also bought our potatoes from the farmers. In

season, we stocked our cellar for the winter.

When I was eight, Dad had invited some friends from L.A. up to go duck hunting — a Mr. Miller and a Mr. Blaheart. He was busy, so he told me to take them to a place we called Calvert's Lake where there were always ducks and cottontail rabbits. Mr. Miller took the east side and Mr. Blaheart and I took the west. Mr. Miller was maybe 75 feet from us when some ducks rose up and he let loose. I got three shotgun BBs in the neck, and Mr. Blaheart got a full charge that penetrated his leather coat. No one was hurt but me, so when I went home, my mother took the shots out of my neck. The next morning, Dad's friends went back on the train and he said, "No more of that."

One time I was working with Ben Tibbets, an Indian, in his garden by Taboose Creek. We were watering and I got hungry. He told me, "If you're hungry, dig right down here." And I dug down and ate taboose nuts until I didn't have any more hunger. I also remember Siguerons, who had a homestead about six miles south of ours, at the end of our trapline, so I'd stop by to see them. Those 25 pound pails were pretty good sized buckets with a good lid and Sigueron would seal toasted bread in these buckets, which kept it very well.

In the early days on the homestead, we used to hunt ducks. We'd wait until they bunched up so we'd at least get two with one shot. At that time cartridges and shells were expensive, so we'd wait until we got something for our money!

In the winter, we set out a trap line. It went six miles south and about six miles north, on the other side of the Valley. It was my job to go down and look the traps over and get what game was in the traps. I was pretty young and always had to find a rock or a railroad fence so I could get up on the horse; he was very tame. I would possibly bring back one or two coyotes or lynx cats, or a skunk — a civet cat at that time — and some badgers, but mainly coyotes. One time I was running to a set in the sagebrush, and a lynx was hiding behind the brush, caught in a trap. As I went by, he jumped out and tore my pants off with his claw and drew a little blood on my backside. The coyotes always brought in good money during WWI. In those days if we got \$18 to \$20 a hide, we were doing excellently. Fur was really in demand.

Our closest neighbor was two miles away, a Mr. Jones at that time. He took care of the aqueduct intake. We had another neighbor, Calvert, three miles away; both were on the west side of the river.

Dad and my brother Peter built the house. It didn't seem to take very long; then of course we built the cellars, a barn, blacksmith shop, garage, granary, chicken house and fences. We got willow wood and branches from the mountains and the river; we made posts and put two branches on the bottom and two on top between the posts. Then we stuck willows in between, making a fence.

We were out in the open, so we made windbreaks from willows and sagebrush on the same order, wiring limbs to posts and stuffing them full of sagebrush. Then, when we milked our cows, we got behind the windbreaks and kept out of the north winds, which were very cold.

When the wind would blow and the fine sand would pile up by the buildings, my dad used it to grind valves when he worked on motors. It did an excellent job. When the wind blew from the south and the Owens Lake started drying, the dust off the lake bottom would come up and even darken the skies, it was so black. The smell was terrible.

My father, brother, my sister Irene, who would work out in the fields the same as the men, and I put up hay on shares. A man by the name of Winterton grew wild hay in the slough fields halfway between Aberdeen and Independence, on the east side. At lunch time, Irene would start a bonfire and make our lunch.

We used to take cattle to market in Independence and Lone Pine. We'd have to sleep out at night on our saddle blankets. We had a little bedroll and a little lunch. We'd cook — usually potatoes and beans and bacon, and we'd probably be gone for three or four days. A lot of times when we had to round up the cows, they'd be several miles from the ranch, so if we got too far away, we'd also have to stay out. One time we met an Indian Chief on the bridge; he had a beautiful set of spirited horses and his buggy was neatly painted. He just sat in his buggy and looked at us and didn't bat an eye. His name was Vice Olds.

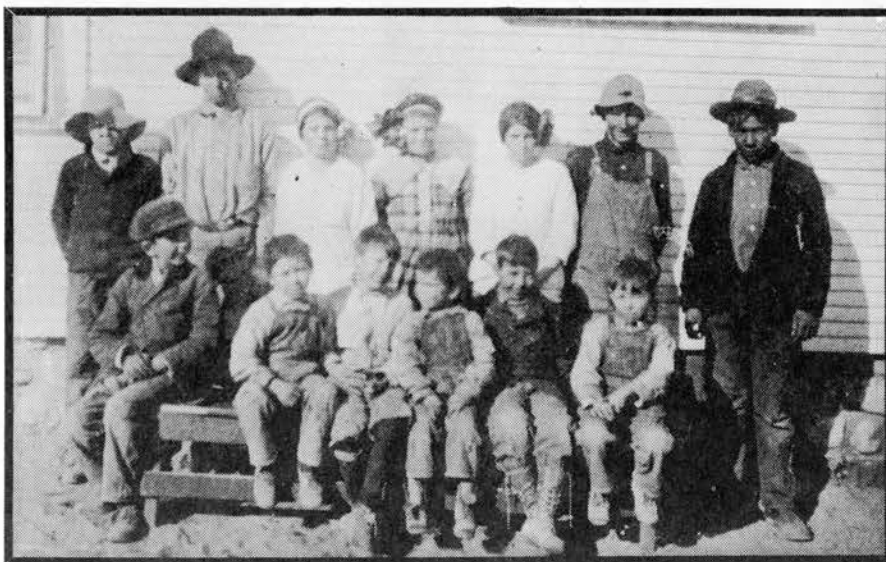
When we went through Independence, there was a restaurant, American style, and boy, did they put on the food! They had cakes and pies of different kinds, steaks, and platters filled with all we could eat.

My Dad and Peter went to Mina to work for the Southern Pacific. They would come down on days off and vacation, and we were all interested and excited when they were coming. Dad would go to work on the homestead and do what had to be done. He'd shoe the horses,



Aberdeen Store, 30' x 20', built in 1921. It withstood the wind in 1922 on just a rock foundation. Dad served Red Crown gas in quart and gallon measured cans. It was delivered in 50 gallon drums; kerosene, called Pearl Oil Very Clean Kerosene came in 50 gallon drums, motor oil in 18 gallon drums, and Disolatate (later diesel fuel) in 50 gallon drums, all purchased from Standard Oil Company of California. Sign on top of store: General Merchandise; left of door: Gates Tires.

Aberdeen School class of 1918 when Irene graduated. Top row, left to right: Anderson, Claude Howard, Francis Giraud, Irene Steffen, Elsie Howard, John Jones, Paul Zucco. Bottom row: Rollin Williams, Stanley Steffen, Raymond Steffen, Hill, Tibbits, Muldoon. Children from the east side of the river were Goldie Cowsart, who later married Dallas Jones, John Jones, Stanley and Raymond Steffen, Allie Swingrover, Olive Jones, George (last name unknown), Allen and Ray Ball. Photographs by Mrs. Peter (Annie) Steffen, author's mother.



and if a rim on the wagon wheel got loose, he'd tighten it. He showed me how to shoe horses, repair wagons and wagon wheels, welding them in the old forge, and how to repair engines and our 1914 Model T Ford.

We had bought our Model T right after WWI, in 1918. It was a good car, with a brass radiator and the gasoline tank under the seat. When we took a trip to Goldfield, over Westgard Pass out of Big Pine, the gasoline couldn't get to the carburetor, and we'd have to turn around and back up the hill. We sure thought that Ford was something, I'll tell you. It was a lot better than horses, but we did a lot of pushing and a lot of cranking!

There were lights on the body right below the windshield, one on each side, filled with kerosene. The headlights in front were Prestolite and you had to go out and light them. Of course, in those days there was no generator, no starter. Everything was magneto; when you cranked a Ford, you made your current to the spark plugs. There was only a door on the right hand side, and no door on the driver's side. We had a touring car. Of course, the first winter we lost the top; the wind just took it off and blew it away.

In the springtime, I've seen the Owens River get a mile wide. We wouldn't be able to go to town or get out of the ranch until the water receded. Of course, in later years the City of Los Angeles started taking the water and controlling it with dams, and you won't see that any more.

We put gravel on the road by the Owens River bridge where there was so much mud. We used wagons; ours was about ten feet long and four feet wide, holding about three-quarters of a ton. We put 2x6s on the sides and 2x4s on the bottom. When we dumped it, we'd take out one 2x4 at a time and let it fall out the bottom of the wagon.

One August, in 1918, we took off for Los Angeles in our Model T. It took two days to reach the city, with a stop at Little Lake. Coming home, a flash flood out of Freeman Gulch caught us and we were stuck in the mud and debris. We got a farmer from Lelighter to pull the Ford out with a team. It took us three days to clean the mud and debris from the car, coming up the Valley from Mojave to Olancho Station, then home to Aberdeen.

Around 1917 there were a lot of people coming in on the east side of the river, taking up homesteads: the Balls, Cowserts, Migerons, Siguerons, Smiths, and Armstrongs.

In 1918 several people died from the 'flu; one was Harry Ball, our closest neighbor. His wife had to leave because she couldn't keep up the homestead. Some others died, too, but the 'flu missed our family.

My father took sick, so my mother sent my brother Peter to get the doctor. He went to Big Pine and the doctor was gone, so he left word. On the third day after that, the doctor came to see Dad, who was still sick in bed. By that time, all the neighbors were concerned. Mrs. Calvert gave Dad a mixture of "whatever" — salt and other things. His fever broke and the illness left him, so you see what the pioneers did for doctors. My mother did the home doctoring herself.

One night we were coming home from school, my brother and I riding double, when the horse fell on my foot and broke my instep. My mother put it in a cast and it healed. Another time, my brother and I were taking honey from our four stands of bees in the fall. We had some makeshift veils but somehow we didn't smoke

the bees well enough and they got mad. You talk about killer bees! They started after me and I threw my veil off because they were getting underneath it and stinging me. I ran north in the wind fast enough that they weren't catching up with me, but I turned around to see a long cone of bees coming after me. How far I ran, I don't recall, but I remember starting toward the house and passing out about three-quarters of a mile away. When I came to, I was in bed and Mother was doctor again.

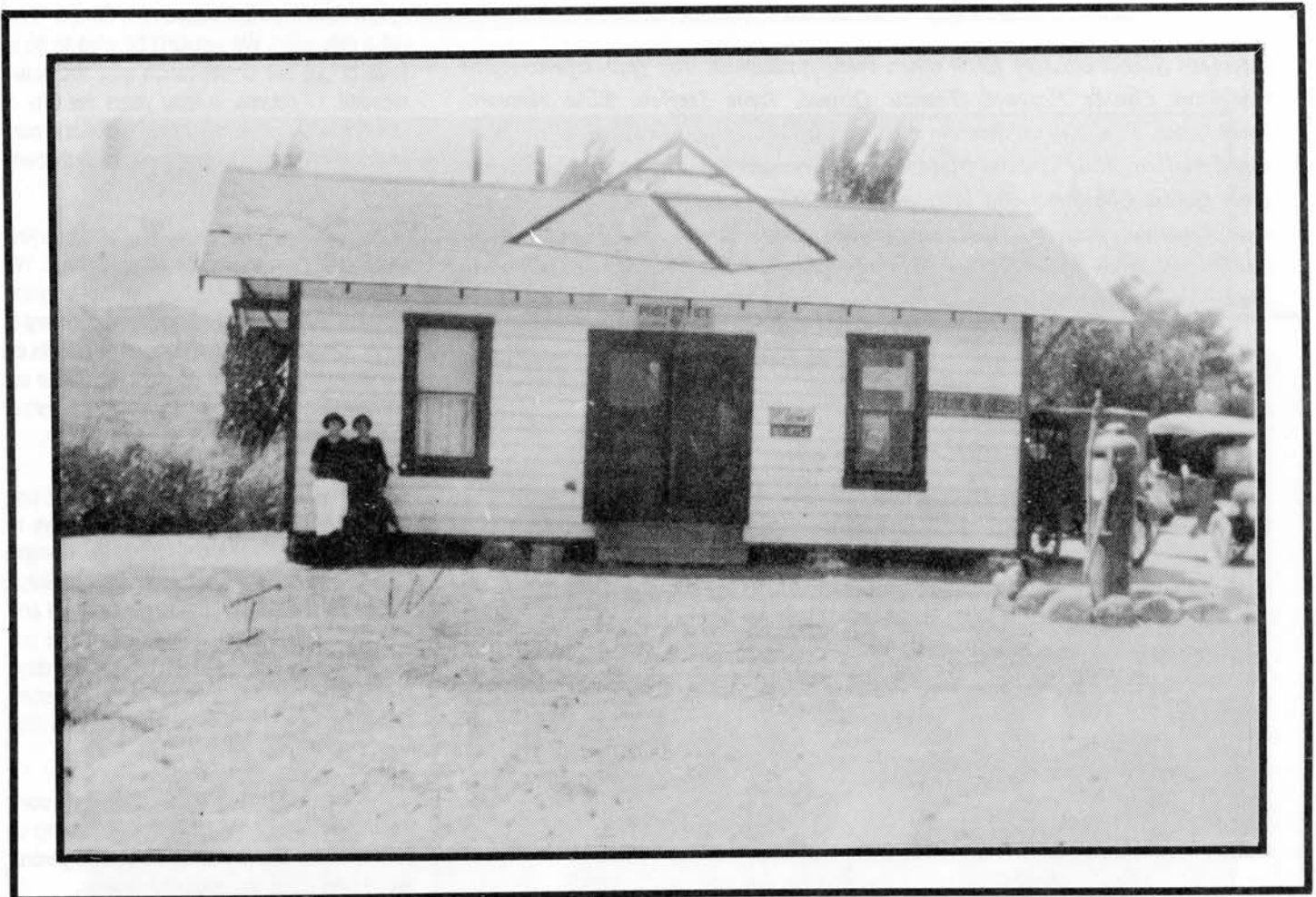
One time my dad and I were going to get some wood. There was just a two-by-twelve between two bolsters for us to sit on. We hit the bottom of some ruts in ten-foot deep washouts, the two-by-twelve broke and I went right down. The wagon ran over me, but I happened to fall into a little ditch in the bottom of the wash out. It took two fingernails off of my right hand. The wagon ran over my back but the small ditch saved me from getting hurt. Dad, holding the reins, didn't get hurt. So Dad took me back to the ranch and Mother soaked my hand in some

antiseptic, and she was the doctor again, always there to take care of us, regardless of the problem.

School was five miles away, south of the Aberdeen Store. At first, there were three of us going. We took a buggy and after my sister graduated, my brother Stanley and I either rode double on a horse or took the buggy. A Japanese boy from the Aberdeen Store, named George, rode a bicycle to school. The road was sandy and my brother would turn the buggy out at the sandy ruts, but when George hit the sand he would spill and we would laugh. He would say, "Some day you no laugh!"

Sometimes we'd have to walk to school because the horse would be working on the ranch. Finally, Stanley graduated and then I took the horse alone — if I had the horse. If not, then I had to walk. Sometimes in the winter I wouldn't get home until just about dark, and boy, I can remember it was cold! It would be snowing or sleeting or windy.

Aberdeen Store in 1923, Irene and Waunita Steffen at left. At 17, Irene was the youngest postmistress in the U.S. First gas pump — to pump gas you turned stops for 1 quarter, 1 gallon, or 5 gallons, then turned handle to stops. Sign over door: Aberdeen Calif. Post Office; right of door: (soft drinks called) Whistle; right of window: Stage Depot. The stage was an 8-passenger Packard cloth-top.



One of my chores was to put the cows in the pasture by the river each morning and take them home to milk each night. The house was about 300 yards from the railroad track, the fence about 50 feet farther, then the tower line was halfway to the river, and the river approximately half a mile from the railroad fence. When I'd take the cows to pasture, the range cattle used to chase me, so I'd either make for the railroad fence, the river trees, or a highline tower. One late afternoon, going out for the cows, I saw a hobo coming my way. We had hobos up and down the railroad and they'd always beg for a meal at the ranch house before they went walking on.

This time, the hobo decided to chase me. I was pretty alert, always watching for range cattle because they had horns and would attack people, even a man on a horse. When the man started after me, I ran home. No one was there but Mother and my little sister, so Mother said she'd come with me to get the cows. We got down to the tower line, about half a mile from the ranch, and here came Mr. Hobo. I don't know what they said to one another but Mother said, "If you take another step to me, I'll kill you." She took a nickel-plated forty-five calibre revolver out of her apron, and Mr. Hobo turned around and left us.

One morning, when I was putting the cows in the pasture, one of them we called Tiny stepped on a sidewinder. It bit her leg and she kicked. The snake flew through the air, but Tiny never had any ill effects that we could tell.

There were a lot of those sidewinders. There were also diamond backs and some pretty good size rattlers, but mainly sidewinders. One day my younger sister Lucille, who was then eight years old, went to the well to get water for dinner. I went to help her, and on the way back I was carrying the bucket and as we were running toward the house, a sidewinder was running right alongside of us. I told her and holstered at her, and finally just reached over and grabbed her out of the trail. That sidewinder was running just as fast as we were.

Mr. Whitecotton was a rancher on the north edge of Fort Independence. One afternoon two men on horseback stopped at our ranch and borrowed a canteen from my father. One was Mr. Whitecotton and the other a mining engineer from Los Angeles. Early the next morning, they stopped to return the canteen, very excited about the sample they took from Mr. Whitecotton's claim. A few months went by, and we heard Mr. Whitecotton fell off his wagon hauling hay and broke his neck. We never

heard any more of the mining engineer, so there is a very good claim of gold and silver ore north of the red hill in the White Mountains — an authentic lost mine.

While I was going to school, riding back and forth from the homestead, I believe in 1918-19, the State laid an eight-foot wide strip of concrete — cement — from Division Creek to Fish Spring Hills, as we used to call it (where Tinemaha Dam is now). Every quarter of a mile there was a turnout, and when two cars were passing, whichever was closest to the turnout waited until the other passed. The concrete was laid because so many cars stuck in the sand. The men mixed the cement right on the road and then spread it. The State didn't work people in summer in those days because of the heat; they just worked in the winter. Going north, on the south side of Fish Springs Hill, if you look to your right, or east, you can still see part of the old concrete. Brush has grown around it, but the outline can be seen. We kids took turns riding on the roller.

In the early '20s my dad thought of having what he called the Waucoba Fish and Game Club. We built a cabin up in the mountains at Waucoba Springs on the east side of the Inyos, north of Saline Valley. We had a good Indian friend by the name of Watterson who went hunting with us; he and I carried a 110 pound cook stove up there with a 2x4 on our shoulders for the weight.

The cabin made it very good when we went hunting because we could always get out of the weather. Even though we had to sleep on the floor, we could keep dry wood and with the cook stove, make some pretty good biscuits, bacon, beans, flour, and potatoes. Some deer hunters who didn't know what they were doing went up there and burned the cabin down. We never rebuilt it.

I had started to do chores on the ranch when I was eight years old — milk the cows and get the wood, take the cows to pasture, and go out on the trap lines. Stanley was working at Fort Independence on ranches, and for the State of California.

My first job was with the Southern Pacific Railroad as a gandy dancer, changing ties and straightening rails; in the summertime, the heat would stretch the steel rails and we would have to cut out two inches at a time. Then in WWI, help was hard to get, and I was fireman on the narrow gauge from Keeler to Mina for a short time. During summer, I would work on ranches and for the State of California.

My brother was section foreman at Aberdeen. I went to work for him when I was eleven years old, as a gandy dancer. We just had to shovel and replace ties. Mr. T.L. Williamson was the railroad master on the line. One time my brother had a day off and left me in charge; we had four Mexicans working and I couldn't speak Spanish. We were out looking for broken fish plates — one inside and one outside to hold the rails together. I knew there was a passenger up and a passenger down, a freight up and a freight down, each day. We found a broken fish plate. I knew the trains had gone, but when we took the rail apart it popped right up about six inches. At that instant, around the curve, here came a special. I could just see an accident coming, because we didn't have time to stop it, so I just ran out of the way. But the Mexicans got together, stood on the rails, put half a broken fish plate back — just a bolt in each rail, the train went right over, and everybody was happy. Especially me!

We used to hold dances at the Aberdeen School. We had a four-piece orchestra, Mr. McAfee on the drums, Horace Harvey on the saxophone, my sister Irene on the coronet, and my brother Peter on the violin. Sometimes Robert Cromwell, an accomplished musician, would come, to our pleasure. People would come from Big Pine, Lone Pine, Bishop, and Independence and have a lot of fun.

We charged the men \$1 and the ladies were free. We paid the overhead for the school building. When Les McAfee wanted to dance, I would keep time on the drums. My brother Stanley was called "The Shiek of Aberdeen" by Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Vaughn.

In 1922 we also paid for the first radio in the Valley there, an Atwater Kent. We received KHJ and KFI, and would listen before the dances while we were putting wax on the floor and bales of hay around to sit on, and during suppers, box socials, and meetings. As time went on people had to leave the Valley because it was drying up and there was no work, so we had to eliminate the dances. One can see where the old school was, just south of Gooddale Creek.

My brother Stanley would go to Saline Valley with a Mr. Bev Hunter and get wild horses. Mr. Hunter, the son of a guide and packer out of Lone Pine, was an excellent horseman, and he told me my brother was an excellent shot. He said Stanley could take a pistol and while riding a horse, shoot hawks out of the sky when they were flying. Some men thought he was kidding, so he shot three out of the air, with three men

watching, and they finally knew he wasn't kidding.

At Fort Independence, they had what was called the Thibault Gun Club. A lot of people out of the city would come up to shoot quail and ducks. There was lots of vegetation and trees, just a wonderful place to hunt, and a lot of game. In fact, you could just about name any kind of game and it was in that Thibault Gun Club. Of course, when the City of LA dried up the country, the Gun Club just faded away.

Stanley owned a pack outfit at Aberdeen, taking people over the treacherous Taboose Pass. We would untie the mules and take them over the dangerous places one at a time for fear they'd jerk each other around tied together. A lot of packers did lose mules on Taboose Pass. Stanley had as many as 27 mules and horses packing back at one time, having bought out Pete Lavishott's outfit and purchased a lot of new gear. He packed into Bench Lake and Sixty Lake Basin, and over Sawmill Pass to Woods Lake, and many others in the backcountry. He had his outfit and headquarters at Aberdeen.

When I graduated from Aberdeen School, the first year I went to the school in Independence. Maude, Carl, Helen, and Marvin Lutzow and I drove to school in the Model T. After the first year, I went to Big Pine and drive the school bus for Frank Rossi. We had a Reo Speed Wagon, an excellent automobile, really done up in good upholstery. High school kids would come in from the Black Rock Ranch (Frances Culp), Aberdeen, and Red Mountain Fruit Ranch (Bess Alcorn). I drove the bus during my freshman, sophomore and junior years. I would take the bus north of town and leave it at the red barn, which is still there, and pick it up when school was out. One time when Francis Culp and I were coming home, north of Taboose Creek the drive shaft on the Reo broke and stuck in the ground, and we had to walk to Aberdeen.

During my last two years of high school we had a basketball team and were the Valley champions in '27 and '28. My mother passed away February 10, 1928 and while we were gone for four days, laying her to rest in Los Angeles, they took pictures of the team. I felt kind of left out because my picture wasn't taken with the team, although I was the center for two years.

After selling the homestead to the City of Los Angeles and leaving the Aberdeen Store, my father was a taxidermist. He moved to McGee Creek where he raised silver fox, then to Arizo-

na for his health. He passed away at the City of Hope, of bone cancer, laid to rest at age 85 in the Pioneer Cemetery. My mother passed away at Aberdeen at the age of 48, in February of 1928 and was laid to rest in the Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles.

Peter had three children, was an engineer for T&G Railroad in Tonopah, then worked for the Mono County Road Department until he retired. He passed away at the age of 86. Cecelia married Ike Williams, who worked on the Courthouse built in Independence in 1922. They were the first couple to be married in that Courthouse and when they had their 50th anniversary in 1982, they visited Independence. The Inyo Register and county officials treated them like royalty, giving the key to the town. Cecelia and Ike spent most of their lives in Nevada, mining. They had four children, and Cecelia died at age 75 in May of 1976. Irene married Horace Harvey (who played the saxophone for the dances), and they moved to Los

Angeles. They had one child, John Harvey, who is now a supervisor of Idaho Power Company in Boise, Idaho. After a divorce, Irene moved to San Diego, where she remarried and lived until her death in March of 1989 at age 85. Stanley passed away after a long illness from a spinal injury and is also buried in the Pioneer Cemetery. Lucille married Bud Hurlbut and lives in Buena Park. They are the owners of Castle Amusement Park, considered one of North America's most beautiful and elaborate family amusement centers.

Editor's note: Raymond Steffen, author of this family record, worked for the State of California, was a foreman for Inyo County, worked for Lockheed for ten years during the war, then came up to Mono County where he built many of the pumice buildings in Benton. He was postmaster, deputy sheriff, and a member of the school board in Benton, and later went back to work for the State as a mechanic. He is now retired and living in Bishop. ❄

12 INYO REGISTER—THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1980

County plan now recognizes Aberdeen as a rural community

Correcting an error in the county general plan, Inyo Planning Commission Oct. 22 approved an amendment to the plan that designates Aberdeen as a rural community and allows for the expansion of the Aberdeen Resort Mobile Home Park.

The planners also approved rezoning that area from AE to C-2 and approved a conditional use permit. As a result, the mobile home park can now expand by 2.7 acres.

According to Ted Hilton, planning director, the existing general plan map not only failed to recognize Aberdeen as a community, but put the resort on the wrong side of the road.

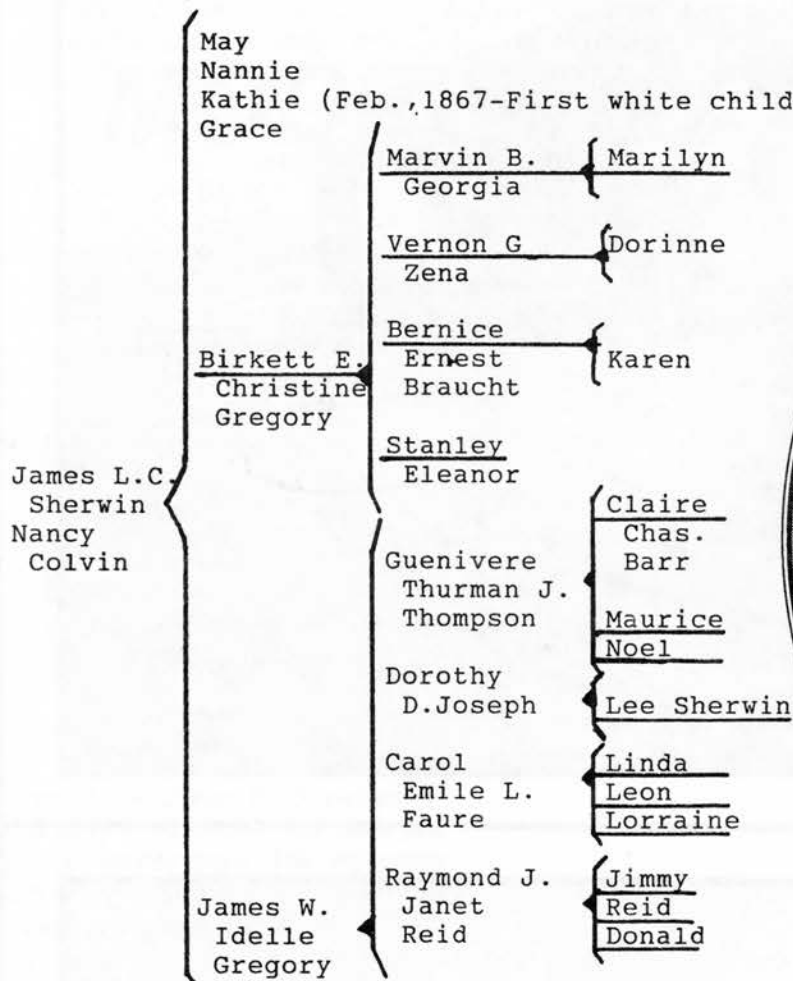
Since the county is restricted by the state office of planning and research as to the zone changes and developments it can approve, the expansion had been held up. The county had to get OPR permission to allow the general plan change, thus clearing the way for the zone change, the use permit and expansion of the mobile home park.

Page 21, top: Aberdeen School 1918.

Bottom: Aberdeen School 1923, with addition after wind damage. Note fence built because of heavier traffic after concrete road was laid. The addition in rear built after wind damage of 1922. To the right was teacher's (Mrs. Nail) house. After Mrs. Nichols (who married a Mr. Bower), Mrs. White and Mrs. Henderson were teachers there. In warm weather, we went to Gooddale Creek for a bucket of water and all drank from one dipper. Mrs. Nail's husband Ernie was foreman on the Orbin Ranch just north of the store; the owner was from Southern California. The ranch had 40 acres of alfalfa and 20 acres of orchard. Photographs by Mrs. Peter Steffen.



THE SHERWIN STORY



Dorothy Sherwin Joseph

An account of one of Inyo-Mono's first pioneers and his family, as recorded by Dorothy Sherwin Joseph and told to Louise Kelsey. Photographs by Louise — who lives near the edge of the old apple orchard.

James L.C. Sherwin was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Sept. 10, 1825, of Scotch-English parents. In 1849 young Jim Sherwin was studying medicine. It took a long time in those days for the news of gold in California to reach his Ohio home, but when it did, all thought of being a doctor was postponed.

Jim made ready to come west. He was twenty-four and the blue-eyed Nancy Colvin was sixteen when they said goodbye. They must have felt that parting would be for years and they knew the days would become months and the months become years before many letters could be received and answered.

Jim decided not to take the direct route to California, hoping to shorten the time by going down the Mississippi River and across the Gulf of Mexico by boat. He crossed the Isthmus of Panama on foot, the speediest method of travel then. Again he took a boat and reached San Francisco on December 7th, 1849. There he worked at the coopers trade, making \$16 per day constructing kegs of proper size for shipping supplies to the gold mines of the Mother Lode.

Then it was off to the gold fields — Jim spent eight eager years in those first days of the new state. He mined around Sacramento, Marysville, along the Feather

er River and near Fort Sutter, earning the name of "Lucky Jim," and was followed by others wherever he went prospecting. Often he was very successful, often the gold seemed to elude him. During those eight years he took time from mining to spend four years in the California Legislature but found he was not a politician.

The fearless young man enjoyed to the full those days of adventure, work and danger. He was cheered from time to time with letters from far-off home. Most prized were the letters from Nancy Colvin who was teaching in Kentucky. At that time a teacher received the enormous salary of \$15 a month and "boarded 'round." Often the earnest girl was lonely — but she was thinking of the good she could accomplish. Then, too, there were the letters from Jim to cheer her, letters she cherished as long as she lived. It was through these letters that the two became engaged, so they were treasure to Nancy in more ways than the stories of California gold.

In 1858 Jim made plans to return home as Nancy was to come west. Again it was a long and tiresome trip as he traveled by boat, this time around Cape Horn which made it a longer journey. He landed in New York and traveled overland to Ohio and Kentucky.

On December 15th, 1858, James J.C. Sherwin and Nancy E. Colvin, also of Scotch-English parentage, were married at her father's home in Kentucky. (He was always James to Nancy but to all others, Jim.) From the wedding day until the following March they and others were making ready, as this time the trip was to be by overland trail. No family attempted to make that trip alone as the Indians were often hostile. The party prepared the covered wagons, furnished them with all they must have for the new homes in the west. Jim's sister, her husband Dr. Car, and their little girl were to be in the party.

On March 10, 1859 Jim and Nancy Sherwin turned their faces toward California. Jim would need all his courage, Nancy all her faith in the days to come. Few of the party that left that day would return home, but all those hearts were full of hope. Those who have followed the stories of the covered wagons know of the hardships and dangers of the trail. Jim had a span of handsome Kentucky horses for the wagon. Many rode horses, some drove oxen and all were leading their cattle. Very few horses made the trip as most were killed by poison weeds and poison water. At night the party would camp, placing their wagons in a circle. With their fires within the circle, the men took turns on guard.

Traveling west, the party camped on the Missouri River. The men hunted game and the women cooked and did the washing because they would not have a long stop near water again soon. At sundown everyone was back in camp and planning an early start for the next day. Nancy looked as bright as the sunset in a red print dress. A small band of Indians came to the camp, and though they were concerned, the travelers tried to be

friendly. The Chief wanted to buy both Nancy and her red dress. Jim was not selling and the men hurried the Indians out of camp. The guard was doubled for the night. Jim taught Nancy to use a gun and all the women were warned that if the men were killed they must never be taken prisoners. They were to take their own lives rather than face a life of slavery. Nancy never again cared for red dresses.

From the Missouri River West the Indians were very hostile. Some of the wagon party did turn back, a few took another trail and went to Oregon, but the main part of the train came west and reached Virginia City, Nevada, six months after they left Kentucky. Jim went into the lumber and wood business, supplying Virginia City and the Comstock mines. Here Nancy awaited the birth of their first child, a child who was never to live. Dr. Car was concerned about the young mother and told Jim he believed she would regain her health and strength faster if they could find a baby she could love. They found an Indian who said he would let them have his baby, muttering something about the little one having no mother.

Nancy had the child for three happy months. One day when she was alone with the infant she saw a band of Indians coming over the hill and soon they were all around her. They wanted the baby; in fact, the baby's mother was one of the group. They told of how the baby had been stolen by the Indian who had left it with Jim and Dr. Car. Of course Nancy returned the little one, as well as all the clothes she had made for it. The Indian mother was very happy and Nancy even forgot her own loneliness in seeing the joy of the mother.

For a time Jim and Nancy lived in Ophir City, Nevada, where Jim worked in the mines. Two daughters, May and Nannie, were born to the couple. The girls were quite young when the Sherwins moved to Benton, California. Jim was in the mines until they came to Round Valley, Inyo County, in autumn of 1866. Jim came first, and alone. He traveled by foot and led a pack mule. He took the animal through Rock Creek Gorge, the first ever known to get through that rugged country. He surprised the Indian chief by walking into his camp from the rear. (The camp was near the present site of Paradise Lodge.) He made friends with Jimmy the Chief, a part-Cherokee Indian. Jim's lack of fear gave the Indians confidence so from then on they often came to him with their problems.

He located a homestead in Round Valley which later became the Jess Chance ranch. He brought Nancy and the two girls from Benton and began farming. There were only three other families in the valley, the Olds, the Hortons and the John Jones. The Sherwin's third child was born in February, 1867. Kathie was the first white child to be born in Round Valley.

The winters were too cold for mining so the Sherwins spent that part of the year in the valley but with spring Jim was back at the mines. He had built his home beside Rock Creek and one chilly winter morning he

crossed the stream on a narrow foot bridge, not noticing his dog and little May had followed him. The dog bounded past, knocking the child into the stream. The water was so cold and swift that May could not help herself. Jim did not see what had happened, but Nancy did. She could not reach the child so she jumped into the water, clutched the little one's dress and soon had the tot in her arms. The rapid current carried them to where a tree hung over a bend in the bank. Nancy managed to grab at a branch but could not get out of the racing water. A dark face leaned over the bank and an Indian peered down at her. Nancy called for help. The Indian waited, asking slowly, "Gimme biscuit hog-a-die?" Nancy promised quickly and was soon safe on dry ground and the Indian had a new name, Biscuit-hog-a-die.

It was winter and the Sherwin family was back in Round Valley. Grace was born on Christmas Day 1868. In April 1870 they were at the Mountain Home, Ainslee Meadow, on top of the hill, when their first boy arrived. He was a welcome addition to the family as both Jim and Nancy had wanted a son. He was named Birkett in honor of Nancy's brother.

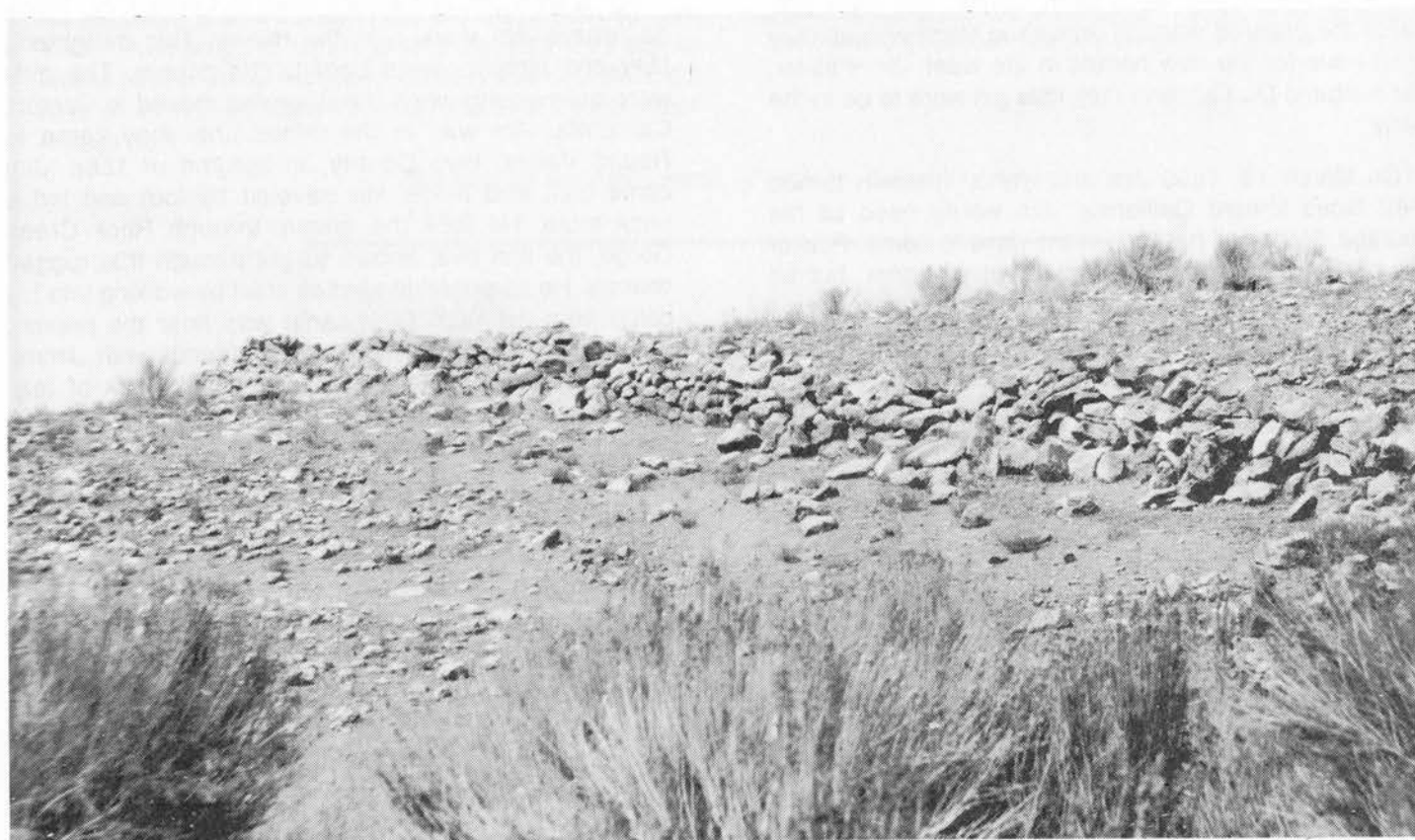
Jim and Nancy were back in the home on Rock Creek in the Spring of 1872, the year of the great earthquake. Nancy was alone with the children when the earth began its mighty trembling. She snatched the baby, Grace, who was staggering on uncertain feet toward the fireplace, then turned to gather the children to her and

reassure them. Jim was riding home from Bishop and saw the mountains seemingly tipping back and forth. The darkness of the mountain sides was pierced with vivid flashes of light like fire as the rolling rocks were striking one another.

One cold day Nannie, age eight, Kathie, six, and Grace, four, were riding their sled downhill. Nannie looked up to see that the ice on the pond at the foot of the hill had cracked. Quickly she called, "All roll off!" She and the other two reacted instantly, burying themselves in a snowbank as the sled bounded on and into the icy water of the sawmill pond. The three little girls were bruised and shaken but very happy not to be out on the sled.

September 1874 found the Sherwins living in their "Mountain Home." Two good friends from the valley, Mrs. Olds and Mrs. Hutchison, came to visit. They had ridden from Round Valley on horseback and knew they must start back early in order to reach home before dark. Time for their visit would be all too short. When they left, the two friends assured Nancy they would come to her whenever she needed them. They decided that the quickest way to send a message was for Nancy to signal by hanging out a sheet. The friends knew they would see it from their homes in the valley. Next morning they looked toward the hill and there was a shining splash of white. They all had forgotten the big white rock at the head of the mountain valley. Back came the two

Clearing fields of rock provided material for fences at early Round Valley ranches.



friends. Although it was a rock and not Nancy's sheet-signal, the expectant mother was very glad to see them as she did feel that she would be needing them soon. The friends stayed and that night the second son arrived. The boy was given his father's name and was called Little Jamie.

The family stayed at "Mountain Home" for two years. Jim saw the need for building materials so he built the road over Sherwin Hill to Rock Creek where he established a sawmill. This mill furnished the lumber for the house where "Little Jim" was born. The six children were a happy clan. There were anxious times for Jim and Nancy but not even the parents' concern about how to get the family out of the mountains in the event of danger could dampen their joy and laughter.

The next move was to Sherwin Meadows, in the area now known as Swall Meadows. Jim located 160 acres and began development, bringing water for irrigation from as far north as Pritchard's cabin. He continued to operate the sawmill from this point, and built a steep grade down over the hill, which was called the Short Cut, to connect with the road leading to the mill.

Jim developed another sawmill at Mammoth when that became a busy mining camp. He made shakes and shingles for the homes that were being built in such haste. The children piled the shakes for many hours but were never too tired for a good run home. Jim made them snowshoes and watched as they dodged trees on their wild flight downhill. Too, there was work to be done on those snowshoes (now known as skis), because all their provisions were brought from Mammoth, ten miles

away. They piled the provisions on their sled and pulled it home through the snow . . . all right unless the snow had started to melt and then they had a terrible time.

Jim built a road from Round Valley to Mammoth. Many changes have been made since those early days but both the hill and grade bear his name, though long ago this road ceased to be a private toll road and became a public highway. There was one grade from "Mountain Home" which seemed to be his special delight because it was so very steep. Jim always said if you drove down that grade fast, at least at a trot, you would not have time to upset. Perhaps he was right as he never did have an upset while those who hesitated and tried to drive slowly did overturn. Even so, it was a breathtaking dash for the children, but then they were as fearless as he.

In December 1879, sickness broke out in the Mammoth camp and many lives were lost. A snow slide came and swept away the elevated ore tram and damaged some buildings, claiming one life and closing all mining operations. Following this, in January 1880, fire broke out and swept the town, leaving many homeless and nearly destitute. In early spring the Sherwin family, having lost everything but some stock and a few household articles, moved back to Round Valley where Jim located a timber claim and rented adjoining land for pasture and crops. Again, he borrowed money for development work and about the time the place looked attractive, the mortgage was foreclosed. At that point he persuaded his daughter, Kathie, to locate a homestead just below Crosby's (now Paradise Lodge).

The site of one of Jim Sherwin's sawmills on Lower Rock Creek.



Bodie now was lively and the B&B Railway (Bodie to Benton) had been completed to Mono Mills. Jim pushed a road through from Convict Creek to Mono Mills and again obtained a charter to collect toll on the new road as well as the road over Sherwin Hill. At this point he developed the homestead on the hill into a fruit ranch.

The Indians became more friendly and helped on the farms. They were good workers and loyal to anyone they called "friend." Jim realized that land was being appropriated by the whites and the Indians would be left without homes. He got together eight of the tribe, including the Chief, and took them to the Land Office at Independence to file for homesteads. Their applications were rejected at first, but at his insistence they were received under protest. He dictated many letters that Nancy wrote to the office of Indian Affairs in Washington, and at last he took the matter directly to President Garfield, receiving a reply ordering the applications to be accepted. The Indians finally had the right to homestead and own their land and homes.

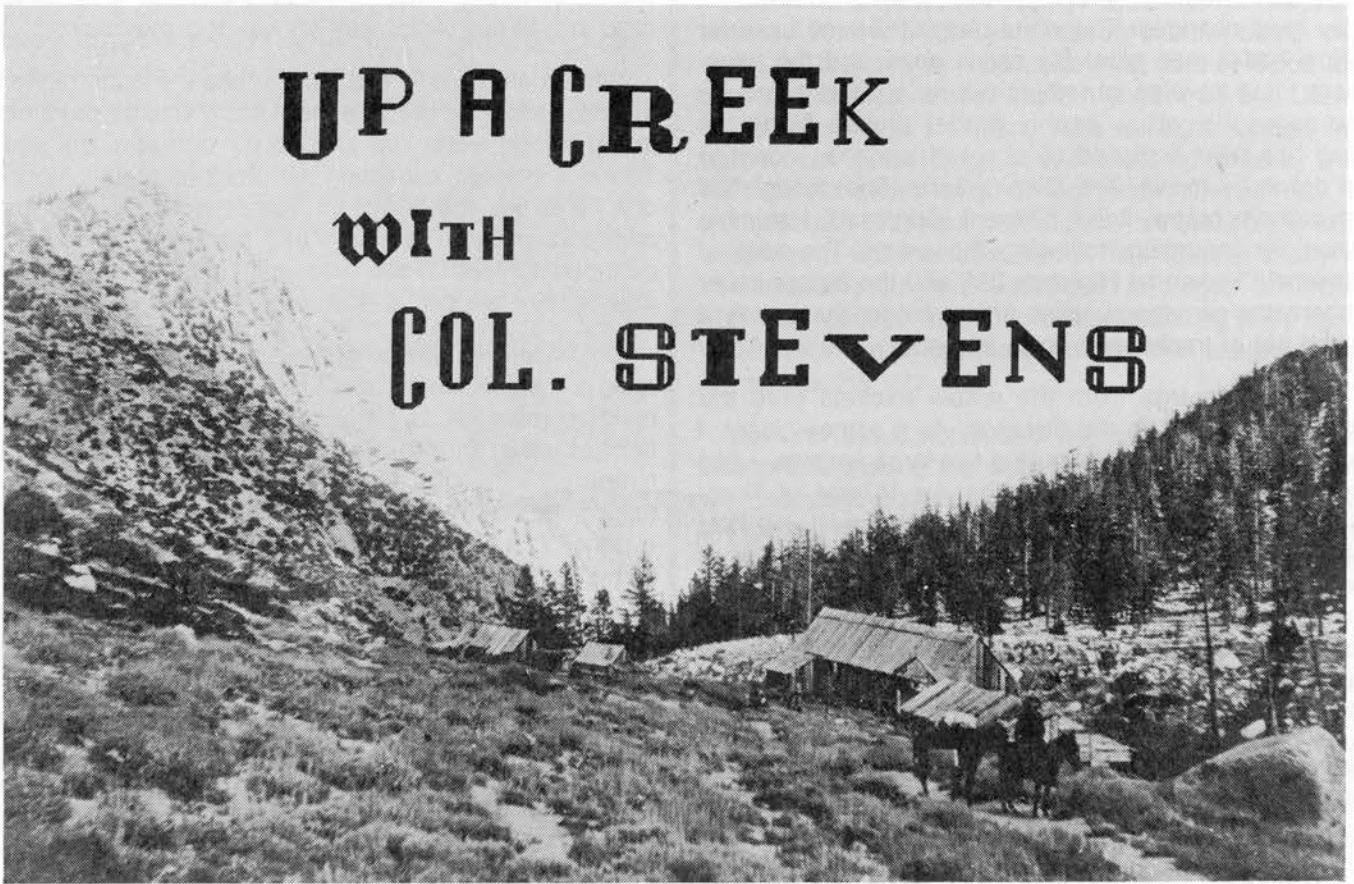
Twelve years after Nancy's death, Jim died Dec. 3, 1918 at the age of 93. He left his children a legacy of vision, determination and hard work. And to those who never knew him, a legend of the kind of man who settled the West. ❁

The story of James L.C. Sherwin is a true account of the settling of the west, and of Inyo and Mono in particular. He and Nancy raised their children at a time when family and friends were the most valuable asset a person could have.

In future editions of "The Album" will be the adventures of Jim's son, James W. Sherwin as he lived and worked in Bishop, Mammoth and Bodie. Then, bringing the Sherwin story into the present, will be the story of young Jim's daughter who was born in Bodie, Dorothy Sherwin Joseph.



UP A CREEK WITH COL. STEVENS



Above: Cottonwood Sawmill. Photo courtesy Eastern California Museum

Left: Same site, May 1990, slightly up canyon. Photo by David A. Wright

by David A. Wright

In an endless search for reminders of those who lived long ago, I take a trip to a spot at the south end of Keeler. At the junction of Cerro Gordo Road and Hwy. 136, I get out of the car to stand and look around. My first thought is "There is nothing here, nothing but the dry and dusty plain of Owens Lake." Keeler sits nearby with its few residents; there is the sudden uplift of the Inyo Range at my back and the Sierra across the lake. But it occurs to me that I am standing in the middle of a great storehouse. Men and women of a

century and a quarter ago certainly thought so! And it was during that era that most of Inyo's population resided in this area.

I decide to get out of the hot valley, up into the cool green forests of Cottonwood Creek. At a little valley overlooking the white plain of Owens Lake, I sit in the warm sun and lean back against a boulder. The sun is warm, but the air crisp. A few pockets of the past winter's snow still lie under nearby trees. The warmth and a lulling breeze through the pines make my eyelids heavy.

When I open my eyes, I find the same landmarks, but they have changed! The white plain of Owens Lake far below has turned blue! My car is gone and the pavement I just traveled is nothing but rutted tracks through the sage; the yellow county grader parked along the road has been replaced by a set of wagons, meant to be drawn by mules. The town of Lone Pine, though still down there below, looks different. Confused, I stumble down the mountain, following the creek. The strip of pavement known as Highway 395 and the tractor-trailer behemoths carrying supplies are no longer there; only a rutted set of tracks lead north and south.

When I emerge from the willow thickets onto the tracks, I see dust in the distance. As it comes closer, I see it is a team of mules pulling two large wagons. I flag down the driver, and learn that he is one of Remi Nadeau's drivers returning to Cerro Gordo with his load of goods from Los Angeles. I had better hitch a ride to wherever this rig is heading until I can figure out what has happened. I sit on top of the cargo behind the driver and admire the view of the lake in awe, confused by its covering of blue water instead of white glare.

By nightfall, we reach a small town built of stone and wooden shacks. It is near Keeler, but I see neither Keeler nor the grade of the Carson & Colorado Railroad. I ask the driver where we are. He says, "Swansea."

Swansea . . .! I ask why I can't see Keeler, and where is the grade of the Carson & Colorado. "Keeler . . .! Carson and Colorado . . .! A railroad . . .!? Gosh, I've seen the dang contraptions, but not out here."

By the rising of the next day's sun, we are heading up the tortuous road into Cerro Gordo. Near the summit are the signs of civilization, not of the Cerro Gordo of the late twentieth century, but of a century and a quarter past, the Cerro Gordo of legend, the most prosperous silver town in California. The quiet streets occupied by scattered silent buildings that I explored only days ago have been replaced by noisy, feverish activity. Men and women race here and their in their daily routines; Main Street is full of buildings; rock huts and wood shanties are everywhere.

How do these early settlers reduce the ores of the earth down to the metals desired in usable form? Where do they find water for mining and domestics? Building materials for the great city being built here? I decide to take advantage of the situation and research first hand how folks here coped with the demands of living so far from civilization.

I ask questions, careful not to mention anything of my "past" that I know will be their future! I find that just a few years previously the Mexican miners and other early comers relied on simple, crude means to reduce ore, such as arrastras. Then Victor Beaudry and Mortimer Belshaw came into town, building their empire, controll-

ing most of the smelters, water, and the only usable road in and out of this city on top of a mountain.

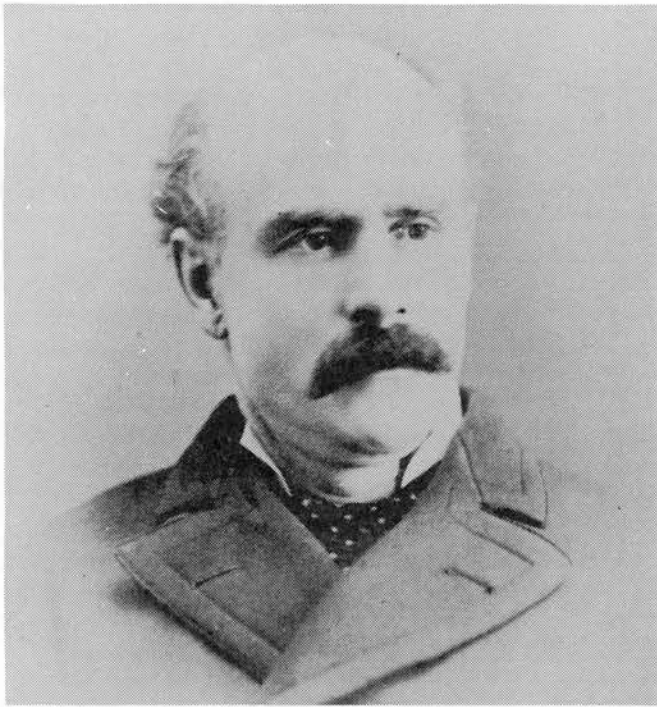
While I am here in this time, I take the opportunity to learn the smelting process that I know was so prominent in the mining world that shaped my corner of the state. To run a smelter, extracting the precious metals from its ore, takes fire and lots of it. Tramping the mountaintops surrounding Cerro Gordo, I see the Inyo Range being denuded to feed these fires, and understand why the forests here will be so sparse in the twentieth century.

The single miners are content with their homes of rock, a material found in abundance, thus the cheapest building material. But the population is swelling with families moving up to the hill. They want homes built of lumber; the businessmen, too, want their stores and saloons to be of lumber, increasing the demand for this expensive imported commodity. The eyes of the camp begin to gaze across the valley upon the slopes of the mighty Sierra, whose granite peaks hold a luxurious crown of tall, straight timber.

There is a man about town here named Sherman Stevens, who also has the moniker of Colonel before his name. I have the knowledge from back in the future, that during the 1870s he built an empire, only to lose it to the fickle, transient nature of the mining town. While his empire was riding high, he introduced to southern Inyo many fresh ideas.

It is December 31, 1872 here at Cerro Gordo. On this New Years Eve of 1872 I have been invited to the Stevens' home for dinner, and to celebrate the New Year of 1873. There are many other guests, among whom are his sons Sherman V. and Augustus C., and their families. During the course of my dinner, I learn that Sherman Stevens was born in New York in 1812. By the time he was 16 years old, he was a tall, robust boy with an enterprising nature. Like many youths of the day, he left home at 16, and soon stuck his fingers into anything he could get them into: first, the fur industry in the Great Lakes region; then he began to build railroads in Michigan; when the siren song of California called, he followed the music westward in 1851. By 1865, Sherman Stevens found himself in the yet-to-be-formed Inyo County region with the rush to Cerro Gordo; by 1867 he was a mine owner.

After dinner, we retire to the study for cigars and brandy. The Colonel confides his concern that the mining industry in Cerro Gordo is starving for wood. Independent wood cutters have depleted the forests of pinyon on the local mountains, and are now cutting lumber over on the Sierra at Ash and Cottonwood Creeks. A lot of labor is involved in cutting the trees, hauling them down the mountain, rafting the bundles across the lake, and hauling them up the Yellow Grade, which is pushing the cost of smelting to a phenomenally high rate of \$40 to a ton of ore worth \$400.



Stevens has plans to change that, but he has competition. A newfangled contraption is now being tried down on the lake to help defray the cost of wood and charcoal. James Brady, superintendent of the Owens Lake Silver Lead Company here in Cerro Gordo, has built a boat 85 feet long, 16 feet wide, powered by a 20 horsepower steam engine. On Independence Day, in this year of 1872, his little daughter christened the ship, endowing it with her own name. The "Bessie Brady" is now crossing the lake daily, pulling barges of timber. This has reduced freighting costs by saving days spent either freighting by team around the north shore or floating across the lake.

But now the Colonel and his sons have done their homework, probing the mine owners, including Belshaw and Beaudry, and the consensus among them is that the cost is still prohibitive. The Stevens clan feels that challenge can be met by a new plan they have devised, and they expect to launch it with a visit to Mr. Brady's office next morning.

I accompany the Colonel and his sons as they approach the Owens Lake Silver Lead Company to secure a loan of \$25,000 for building a trail, sawmill, and 12-mile flume from Cottonwood Canyon to the shore of Owens Lake. The collateral they offer is a promise to sell their goods at a better price to that company than they would to "Bonanza Kings" Belshaw and Beaudry. Their offer is accepted. The Stevens' are elated, and that night plans are hatched and rehashed. I am offered a chance to help those plans to become a reality.

The next day, I awaken early. We have a long way to travel. In my sleepy state, I almost tell the Colonel to let me sleep in a bit because it will only take about an hour and a half to get to Cottonwood Canyon in the car, but fortunately I remember cars aren't around yet. The wagons have been loaded, the teams hitched, and as dawn sheds its cold grey light on the snowy scene, we bounce, jolt and skid our way down the Yellow Grade.

By lunchtime we reach the bottom of the grade at Owens Lake. The Bessie Brady is moored there at Cerro Gordo Landing, already steamed up awaiting our arrival. It is a brisk morning as we head across the lake. It is such a different scene! Water everywhere I look, and the only sounds the Bessie Brady's steady chuffing, the wind in my ears, and the muted voices of people on board. The trip across the lake proceeds until the early winter darkness, when equipment is offloaded by lantern light at the rock wharf at Cartago. We are put up in a boarding home there, fed, and into the night we make our plans for the following day.

Above: Sherman Van Deventer Stevens

Below: Augustus Stevens, youngest son of Col. Stevens

Photos Courtesy Eastern Californian Museum



In the cold early dawn, I arrange the teams of mules for the trip up Cottonwood Canyon. As we make our way up the Los Angeles-Cerro Gordo Bullion Road, I keep looking over my shoulder for the speeding semis and ski-laden cars I am used to seeing on 395 through this section of Owens Valley. It is hard to spend the time traveling on these boney mules without telling my new friends about the era from which I have come! At last we reach Cottonwood Creek and stop for a break, allowing the stock to drink the water that has not yet been trapped for a thirsty city far to the south.

We now leave the wagons behind, loading the burden on the mules, and turn up the steep mountainside along the creek. A short time later, snow on the trail makes the trip harder. I long for my comfortable automobile, and the two-lane road that will someday twist up the sides of the mountain! As we climb higher, our way is hampered by willows lining the creek, but soon we reach the pinyon belt. Daylight wanes, then disappears; cold and aching, we push on through the snow. Finally, the Colonel yells out the command to stop. We have reached the little flat where he plans to build his sawmill.

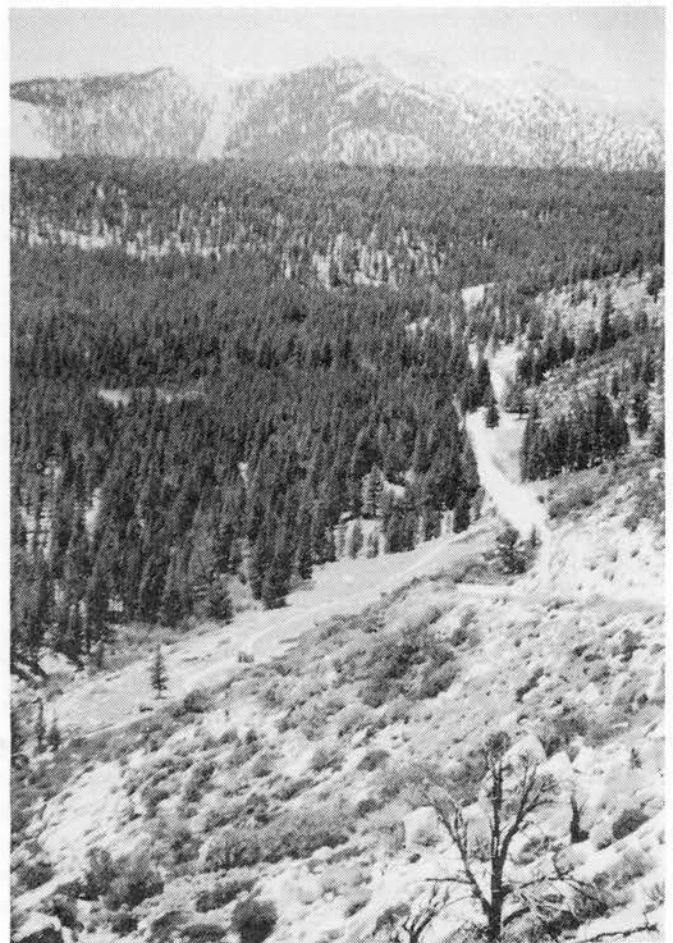
We emerge from chilly tents at dawn to a scene of deep snow, tall trees, and the peaks around Cottonwood Pass nearby. A fire has already been built and breakfast started. The smell of frying bacon has attracted a couple of woodcutters who spend the winter up here, and they plod in on snowshoes.

Our first job up in this high mountain basin is to start falling trees. As some cut trees, others work on materials for construction of the sawmill, building a trail up the canyon, and building a flume down along the trail. Yet another crew are constructing dwellings to ease the frigid nights. The camp begins to take shape; the tasks make days speed by, and soon, signs of spring are showing.

It is now June of 1873. Housing is complete and the sawmill is nearly so. The trail along the canyon is finished, and there is about three miles of flume ready. Wagonloads of heavy machinery begin to come up the canyon. Among the cargo is a large boiler, and before it is in place, a steam turbine is delivered. Anticipation is running high now; soon the sawyers can create their lumber with ease.

The day comes when the maze of pulleys, belts and other contraptions are hooked up. The boiler is fired and the saws begin to turn, all to shouts and applause from the boys.

I check out progress on the flume. Being the brilliant sort, canny with the cleverness of the twentieth century, I suggest to the Colonel that the flume would go faster with water diverted into it, allowing completed sections to float to the end to be attached. Instead of a pat on the back, I am given a shovel and orders to dig a diversion ditch into the flume. Two days later, my suggestion becomes a reality.



Overlooking millsite (in clearing below trees) from county road as it drops into Cottonwood Canyon and view looking up into site from trail and path of flume. David A. Wright photos.

In my twentieth century world, I have often enjoyed a water slide with my kids; the sight of the 12-foot section of flume is too tempting. To the surprise of the workers, I jump aboard a section and within seconds, regret my

impulse! If my kids could see me noooooow . . .!! I think I've started something; soon others are riding the flume and the canyon walls echo with whoops and laughter of the daring.

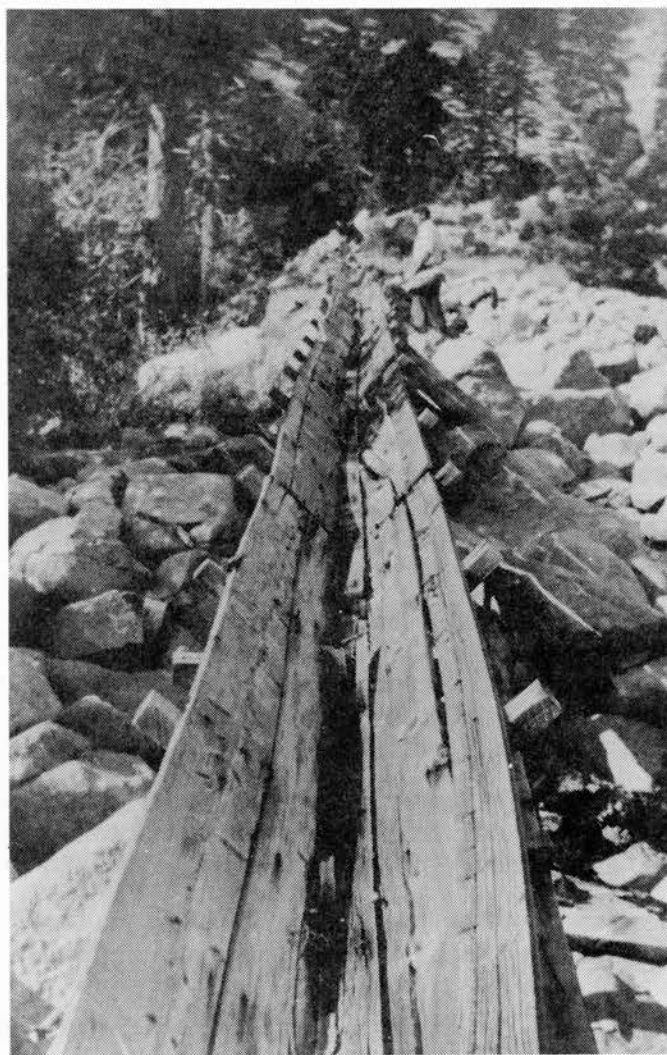
With all the fun and games, summer quickly gives way to fall, and soon the first snows dust the Sierra. It is now November 1873, and the flume reaches Bullion Road. The summer has been a good one; much progress has been made. All during construction masses of lumber and cordwood have come down the flume and been freighted to the lake, then up the Yellow Grade to Cerro Gordo. The sawmill has worked well, and the Stevens are happy with their plan. The Owens Lake Silver Lead Company is happy too; its investment has paid off nicely.

Since winter is coming on, and I have put in such a good performance this summer, my new assignment is down at the bottom of the hill. It has been decided to leave off construction at the Bullion Road and haul the lumber by team across to the new Stevens Wharf at Cottonwood Landing. And so I toil in steady employment, hauling the endless stream of lumber and cordwood from the flume, across the three mile gap to the wharf. An active village springs up at the port, and enough wood to build a city stacks up at the wharf. At times I ride the Bessie Brady as she plies the blue-green waters of the lake, especially enjoying the calm mornings when the mighty Sierra is mirrored on the water.

Then one day I notice much of the lumber that crosses the lake is diverted at the bottom of the Yellow Grade. Instead of turning up the hill to Cerro Gordo, the teams head straight along the shore, cutting around the end of the Inyo Range, to a site nestled between the Coso and Argus ranges. Darwin's silver tongue is luring men out of Cerro Gordo, including Belshaw and Beaudry, and populations of the tough camps of Panamint, Pioche, and Eureka.

Darwin is as hungry for wood and its products as Cerro Gordo was, and with the help of the upstart camp of Lookout over on the other side of the Argus Range, the mountains around are soon stripped of their mantles of pinyon also. Colonel Stevens, notices this too, and makes plans to expand his empire.

On an April day in 1876, I am summoned from my post at Cerro Gordo Landing to come up the hill to see the Colonel. I am met by Stevens and sons, and a man named J.B. Bond, and a plan is hatched to expand our lumber products and equipment. During the next few days, the company is reorganized as the Inyo Lumber & Coal Company; capital stock created in the tune of \$500,000. As part of the expansion plan, Sherman has decided to build his own steamer, build facilities to create charcoal, and extend the flume all the way to the lake.



Remains of flume down canyon from sawmill, 1908. Emil Breitkriutz photo, courtesy Eastern California Museum.

Soon, Remi Nadeau's teams bring the bulk of a 32-foot boat up from Mojave. It is not as large as the Bessie Brady, but Stevens figures owning his own boat will offset the cost of renting Jim Brady's even if it is smaller.

Part of Nadeau's cargo is a prize Stevens is especially proud of, the engine of the USS Pensacola, a Civil war veteran sunk in the Battle of New Orleans. The engine was salvaged and rebuilt in New York, where the Colonel acquired it.

Building the boat goes quickly, and soon we are starting construction of the top deck. Stevens comes by, anxious to put her into the water, but I notice the lenticular clouds and building winds and tell him it wouldn't be wise, for it looks like a storm coming in. But the order is given: "Put her in the water right away."

The storm winds blow as we coax the fire in the veteran boiler. Steam begins to build and soon she is ready for the water. Stevens knows enough not to launch her

in this weather, but orders her ready for her inaugural voyage as soon as the storm calms. When dark settles on the wharf, I retire, leaving a man with the boat to keep up the fires.

I am awakened by furious pounding on my door. The man I left at the boat is there, soaked and excited, with word that the winds have yanked her from her mooring and carried her off into the dark and stormy lake. He is frightened of the Colonel's reaction to the loss of his new boat, but in the dark there is nothing that we can do.

In the clear morning, the lake has quieted, and it is easy to see the hull of the Colonel's pride floating upside down about two miles off shore. The Colonel is indeed upset, but decides the reasonable solution is to ride up to Ferguson's Landing and charter the Bessie Brady to pull his boat back to the wharf.

A few days later, the boat is complete, new deck and all. A friend of the Colonel's, Pleasant Chalfant, who owns a newspaper up north in Independence, suggests Stevens name the boat after one of his daughters. So the little vessel is christened Mollie Stevens.

Another thing Stevens is doing to expand his empire is cornering the charcoal market. With all that cordwood and lumber coming down the flume, it will be easy to

create vast amounts of charcoal, so he commissions two charcoal kilns to be built at the end of his flume near the landing to convert raw cordwood into charcoal for the hungry furnaces of Cerro Gordo and Darwin.

But all is not well. I know the fate that awaits the Colonel, but cannot tell him. I have now spent almost a decade in a time foreign to mine, locked in a century with none of the modern amenities to which I have been accustomed, but yielding a good life.

The fact is, Sherman Stevens' empire is now at its peak, and the end will come swiftly. It is not his fault. Rather, it is the unwritten rule: when the extraction of precious metal no longer remains profitable, it is time to move on, or watch everyone else do so.

Stevens decides to stick it out. He will lose his empire. I leave with the rest of the population of southern Inyo; but instead of heading to Mammoth or Bodie with men who heed the call of another beckoning camp, I return to 1990.

I have a last look around at the empire that Sherman Stevens has built, accepting his invitation to an inspection tour. As we leave Cerro Gordo, I take one last look at that little city, feeling fortunate to have witnessed its infancy and maturity. It created men of wealth and power. It called attention to a little known corner of the state

Cottonwood charcoal kilns, sighting up Cottonwood Canyon. Photo by David A. Wright.



of California, and made Inyo County a destination for the adventurous.

Down at Cerro Gordo Landing, we board the Mollie Stevens. This boat is still the pride of the Colonel, but he doesn't know he soon will abandon it, leaving it to rot in a dying lake. As for the blue-grey lake itself, I feel sad for the beauty it holds now; in my generation it will choke populations as the zephyrs that sweep its dry surface stir up controversy and dust.

At the shore where the waters of Cottonwood Creek pour out and feed the lake, the scene is busy. The charcoal kilns fill the air with pungent smoke while stacks of what were once fat pines are everywhere. As we ride up Cottonwood Canyon toward the sawmill, water spilling down the flume makes me think of the water that will one day flow down a concrete flume to a thirsty city that has been fattened by the riches of this region. At the sawmill in these beautiful mountains there is again much activity. The chuffa-chuffa of the steam engine turning pulleys and the sharp buzz of saws working raw fallen trees into lumber cut through otherwise silent air.

I feel sleepy the warm summer sun and decide to find a nice spot along the creek for a bit of a nap. I excuse myself from the Colonel and walk up the meadow, away from the mill. There in the sun is a large rock with a nice view. I lie down and soon fall asleep.



Remains of a pipeline and piles of logs at old mill site. Photo by David A. Wright

View overlooking Owens Lake and across the valley to the destination of goods that the sawmill provided Cerro Gordo. Photo by David A. Wright.



A sharp electronic beep awakens me. Groggily I open my eyes to see a book in my hands; my digital watch just giving its hourly chime, a sound somehow both foreign and familiar. Something is wrong, something is missing from the scene around me. I am here in the same place, but . . . the sawmill is missing, the cabins around it too! A car goes by, fishing poles hanging out its windows.

The book I am holding tells me the end of the story of Colonel Stevens. In the usual saga of the early chasers of gold and silver, the scenario would read: "The town died, the people went away to another golden dream, the man stayed behind hoping one day it would come back, but died without realizing those dreams. Scattered remains are there for us to see. The end."

But the story of Sherman Stevens did not end that way. Stevens was up in years when his dream was realized. By the time Cerro Gordo and Darwin lost their bloom, Stevens had decided to spend his remaining years elsewhere. In 1883, at 71 years of age, he tied up the Mollie Stevens, gave James Brady the Civil War engine, and went elsewhere to try his hand at mining. He knew it made no sense to hang around watching those towns wither way in futile efforts to regain their splendor. He even watched a late comer try its hand at picking Cerro Gordo's profits: The Carson & Colorado Railroad.

But the seventeen years he spent in Inyo left a void in Stevens' heart that could not be filled. He returned to Lone Pine in 1887, and shortly afterward died. He did not die a penniless man as did many other chasers of the golden dream, nor did he toil away his life in the mines to die tragically young. He lived a long and full life.

The scattered remains of his empire are still to be found, however. The sawmill is gone; no foundation marks its site, but a couple of stacks of cordwood, a rusting pipe, remains of two log carriers, bits and pieces of tin and square nails, and one caved-in log cabin remain. Down along the trail and route of the flume, there may be found a piece or two of old lumber. Refugees from over-shooting a curve on the fast ride down the flume? Pieces of the old flume? Probably both.

Remains of log cabin north of millsite. David A. Wright photo.



I hop into my car and snake down the mountain on smooth blacktop. Within an hour, I find myself staring at two worn out charcoal kilns, cold, silent and neglected. I walk in the summer heat toward the lake. What was once water, lapping at the sagebrush and willows, now is a glaring white saltpan. The boats, too are gone.

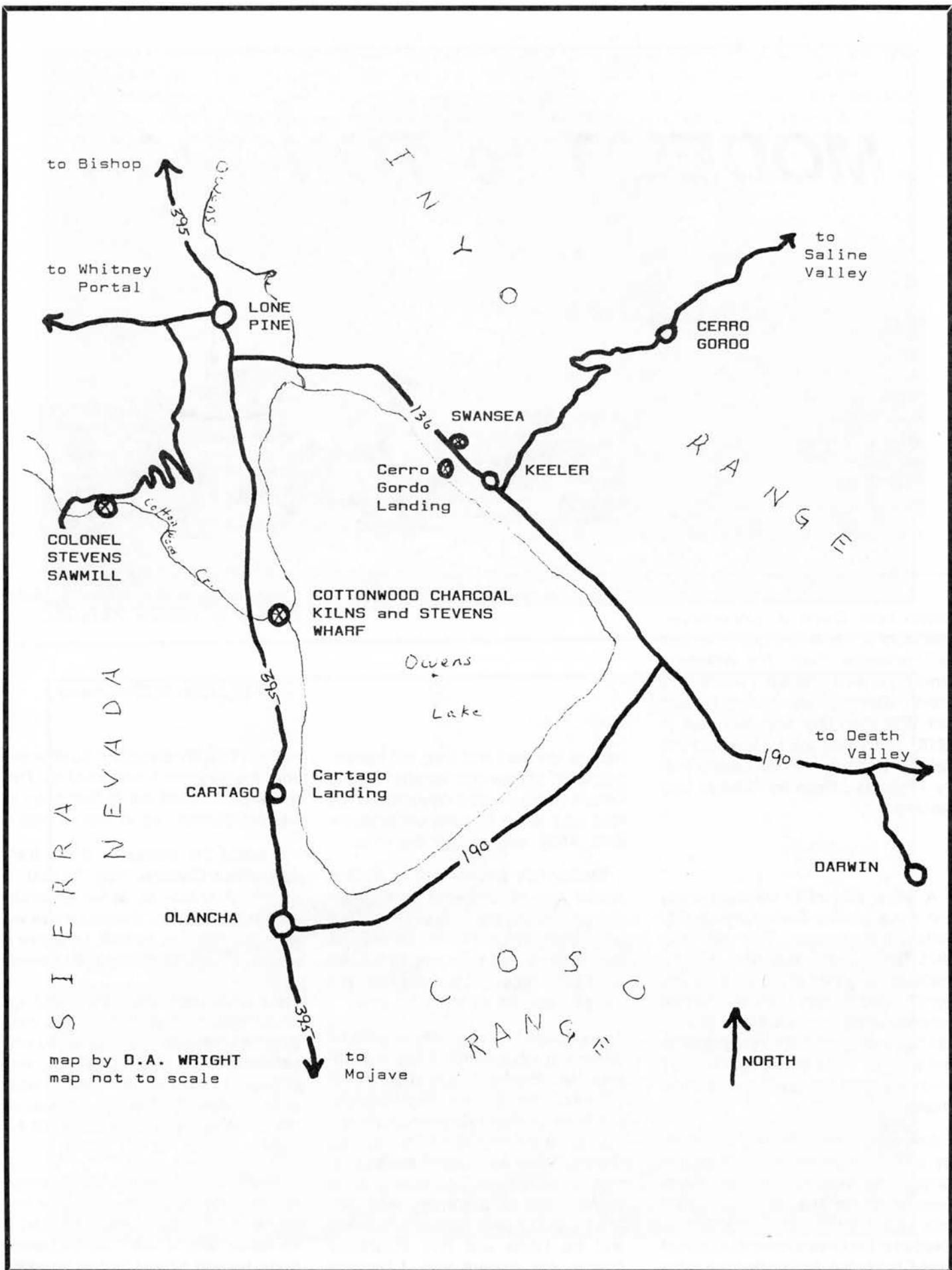
I drive to Cerro Gordo. At the bottom of the original Yellow Grade, in what was once the center of Swansea, is a forlorn rock wall and the crumbled remains of a smelter. Nearby is the skeleton of the Carson & Colorado. It came late, but it too is dead.

On up the grade are other remains from dreams of other late comers. At Cerro Gordo there were two small revivals, but the town never regained its once lusty former personality. The life that once climbed its streets and gouged out fortunes and failures is gone. Evidence of those who hung on hoping for another revival lies scattered about the top of the Inyo Range.

It's good to be back in my own time, and I am richer for the "trip" back into the days of 1872-1882. I think I'll head up to Bodie, find a nice warm rock overlooking town, and take a little nap! ❄

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MODEL T to TONOPAH



Above: The truck used to haul produce

*Photos courtesy Mrs. Dorothy Shultz
(daughter of Thurman Wilkerson).*

Memo from Owen B. Shoemaker: This story is not fiction, but facts, just as I remember them. The Wilkerson family is well known (Wilkerson Ranch, Tungsten mines, etc.). I am half Wilkerson. My first visit was in 1925. Ten years later I revisited the Valley; I was editor of the Owens Valley Progress-Citizen for Savage and Sanders.

A fellow subject to constant colds and sinus trouble finds Kansas City winters hard to bear. The year was 1925 B.K. (before Kleenex) and I'd made use of yards of old sheets each night as cold mopper-uppers. This had gone on for several years and, at 18, I had had enough of it. It was high time to find a better place to live. But where? My mother said she just might have the answer.

She had grown up in the Owens Valley, one of ten children in the Wilkerson family. The Wilkersons, from North Carolina, came west on an emigrant train about 1875. They first homesteaded in the Greenhorn mountains of Kern County but, finding farming there

hard at the start and then still harder, pulled up stakes and headed for the Owens Valley where they were told the land was fertile and the water abundant. They settled near Big Pine.

Mother Otie told me that as a girl in school she remembered young men going to work in the soda works at Cartago. She said "Shoveling minerals into the furnaces and breathing in the hot acrid fumes seemed to really clear out the sinuses. Could work for you."

Sounded like a hard way to get a fix for sinus trouble — but, if you're desperate, worth a try. It was in the fall of 1925 that I took the Southern Pacific to Los Angeles, then to Mojave and finally the narrow gauge (Slim Princess) into Owens Valley. As Owens Lake's shimmering water came into view and the configuration of the valley was outlined, with the great Sierras to the west and the White and Inyo mountains forming the eastern wall, I became

excited. This WAS a valley! So different from the flatlands I was used to. The scenery reminded me of that seen in western movies, as in fact, it was.

I asked the conductor if the train passed near Cartago. "Yup," he said, "it ain't much to look at, so we generally don't bother lookin'." Soon's he saw we were getting near, he said, he'd give a whistle. He soon whistled and I looked.

Weather-beaten shack-like buildings of corrugated steel, rust streaks mottling the sides and roofs blanketed with yellowish-white alkali. One look was enough, as the train man said. I muttered to myself, "Mother, you must be mixed up, and this is certainly not my style."

Mother's younger brother Thurman met the train at Zurich, end of the line not far off. He was a handsome man, a six-footer with a lean, hard-muscled body, burned a deep bronze by years

by Owen B. Shoemaker

of outdoor work, ranching and prospecting. Thurman had a boyish look about him that contrasted with his prematurely grey hair. He said he'd had a letter from sister Otie and confided, "She's been nippin' at those loco weeds again. You don't want to work at Cartago! The heat is such that you couldn't stand it."

Having had a glimpse from the train, I wasn't hard to convince. Otie's recollection, going back about 50 years, was some flawed. So goodbye Cartago! Thurman said work was to be had of a much more desirable kind.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power was constructing a power plant in the foothills above Big Pine, where he lived. We were hired on. It lasted just three days. Seems the foreman, a man by the name of Fay Ballenger, made some extremely belittling remarks about the Owens Valley natives which Thurman took personally and in an unkindly manner. He told the foreman what he thought of him and when he was told to lay off he uncorked a roundhouse left that put the foreman down. The foreman's brother, Ray Ballenger, who was superintendent, heard the ruckus and wanted to know who was the #1! that caused it. He had used a word no Wilkerson would walk away from and, believing in "equal opportunity," Thurman left-hooked him, too.

The Ballengers, Ray and Fay, there they lay and for us it was up and away. The truth was, Thurman Wilkerson was never a trouble maker. He would go to any reasonable length to avoid a fight. But insult him and you'd get a quick introduction to the lethal left.

"No future here," said Thurman, "so I'm movin' on. But you don't have to go. Keep your job."

I said, no, the job wasn't so good. So we went. And he had some plans, he said. Plans that would see us working for ourselves and answering to no one. Thurman said the Los Angeles crowd stealing the valley water looked down on the natives and belittled them at every chance. "Should never have started work for them," he said.

The valley was beginning to dry up and the once-thriving orchards were

nearing the end. Apples, peaches, pears and watermelons were soon to give way to sagebrush. The life-giving water they had to have was being piped to Los Angeles, particularly the San Fernando Valley where the insiders — land speculators — were making millions of dollars as the \$30 an acre land zoomed to \$1,000, \$1,500 and more as the water flowed in.

Thurman said he figured we could buy fruit on the trees, pick it, box it and truck it to Tonopah where there was sure to be a ready market for fresh fruit. He said "Those miners don't see much fresh fruit, a lot of 'em think it grows in cans. When we get there with the real stuff, they'll stampede."

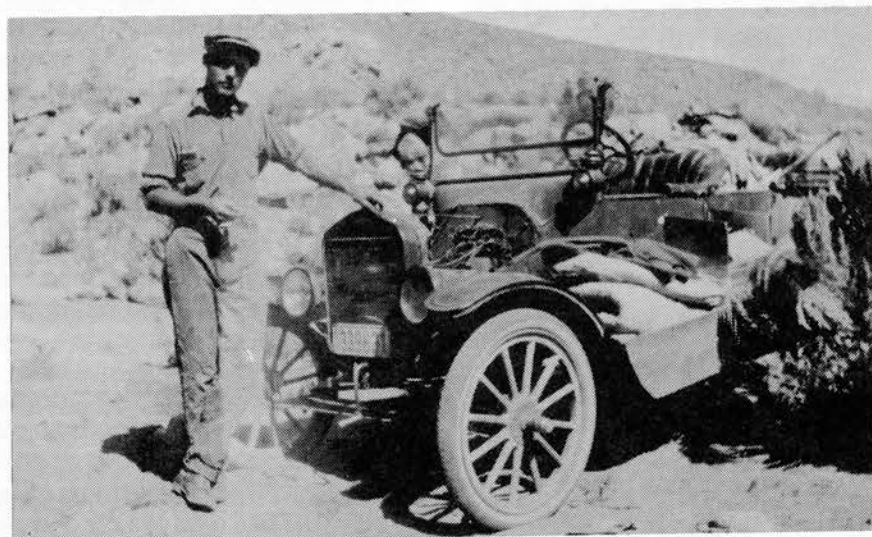
We'd go to an orchard and Thurman would step it off and estimate about how much was there. Then he'd make

an offer for the entire lot, we to do the picking and packing. The owners, tired of frustrating and losing battles with the rapacious Los Angeles interest, wanted only to get out and begin worrying about where to go to make a fresh start.

We picked from morning to night: boxes of apples, boxes of peaches, boxes of pears, big, ripe watermelons. We then loaded the Model T Ford truck, lashing the load tightly for the rough, rutty road over the mountains and desert to Tonopah. The way to Tonopah from Big Pine was over Westgard Pass, two ruts twisting and winding from the floor of the valley to the summit of 7,000 feet or so. Then the same twisting, winding descent into Deep Springs. Beyond lay the Nevada desert — flat, brown and barren but somehow beautiful.

Right: Thurman Wilkerson at mine, Wyman Canyon

Below: Thurman Wilkerson



The climb from the valley floor with our heavily loaded fruit express was a tough test for Henry's Ford's pride. But the vehicle's high clearance helped us over rocks and slides, and the sturdy frame held up admirably. Fan belts broke. The radiator sprang leaks. Spark plugs fouled up. No problem for Thurman; he had a few tools and a whole lot of savvy. I could only watch, unable to do anything. The engine overheated time after time but we found water nearby for the steaming radiator and we'd stop for coffee and a smoke, Thurman with a pipe, me with a cigarette.

A few miles past the summit we stopped, built a fire and cooked bacon and eggs and coffee. The September nights were chilly and we wrapped ourselves in blankets for a few hours rest. Ol' Henry needed rest, too. The trip down was wild. Thurman had been on the road a number of times before and he knew every curve, of which there were hundreds. He said we'd have to make time while we could and so he let the Ford run like a scared rabbit. It was one hell of a bumpy, rocky, wild roller coaster ride. Then through the valleys and on into the great Nevada desert. Next stop Goldfield.

The long, narrow road to Goldfield seemed to have no end. Only hours and patience and hoping proved there was one. Sunsets and sunrises. I thought I'd seen them in Kansas City. I hadn't. Only in the desert can you see them at their glorious best. We got into Tonopah in late afternoon. Both of us and the Model T were just about all in, but now could do a bit of resting. First, though, Thurman had a business call to make — a mysterious one. I waited in the truck while he ducked into an office with a sign, "Assayer." He carried a small sack and was gone for quite a while. Then he came out and said he'd have to go back later. The mystery continued.

We drove down the main drag until we saw a vacant storeroom with a "For Rent" sign displayed. It was unlocked and we went in. One large room, rough wooden floors, no furniture or fixtures. There was a pile of long boards and a hammer, saw and nails nearby as though someone had been trying to do

some fixing up. "She'll do," said Thurman, "I'll hunt up the owner and we'll start our store."

We emptied several boxes of apples and laid long boards from box to box, making large, sturdy platforms. Then, nailing on sideboards we had bins to hold apples, peaches, and pears. At each end we placed several watermelons. This was quite a display, we thought proudly. It stretched half the length of the room and we knew it would surely excite the fruit-hungry miners of Tonopah. A couple of small scales were placed at each end and a couple of cigar boxes were to be the cash register. We were set up. We were ready!

Next morning, after a powerful breakfast, we would see if the miners were as ready as we were. They were. A steady stream of men and women came in and loaded up on Owens Valley fruit. They all paid in big silver dollars. We had no change and really didn't need any. We'd just throw in a little more fruit to make sure they got their money's worth. They were all satisfied. I was excited at the clink of hard money, having known only paper currency. The fruit and melons went fast and iron men filled our cigar boxes and spilled over on the plank tables. It was like a silver mint.

Then he told me to be chief clerk while he ran an errand. He said with a wink, "I'm gonna find out if I'm a winner or loser." Now just what did that mean?

The answer came soon. Thurman came back to the fruit stampede grinning broadly. He held up a handful of rocks and announced: "The assayer said this is the real stuff — sure enough bona fide No. 1 high grade." Then he told me about the claim he had been working in the White Mountains. "I've prospected for gold long enough to know what it is and, sometimes, where to find it," he said. "I knew I had gold diggin's but didn't know what quality. Now I know."

Sadly, though, he explained that the claim was deep in the mountains and well-nigh inaccessible. "Have to pack the ore out on burros for many miles and then dig out a road of sorts in order to get it hauled to a smelter," he

explained. This would take time and money. He had only the former.

Word had spread fast about our fresh fruit and melons and our stock was running low. Thurman said he'd crank up the Ford and wheel back to the valley for another load. I was to stay and be head fruit merchant. The big silver dollars kept coming and clinking.

My first night alone, I decided to get acquainted with Tonopah. I strolled down the main street. Very interesting. Just like towns I'd seen in western movies. General store, hay and grain store, saloons, pool halls, cafes, blacksmith shop. Then I went to the back streets. On one there was a string of small rooms with a board walk in front, occupied by the town's business girls. Several of them spoke to me, but, unlike my observations in Kansas City where such girls were not far from my high school, they were not pushy; not at all aggressive, not city-type hustlers. They were there, they were available. I just kept walking.

But the highlight of the evening was my visit to the town picture show. It was housed in a small, drab building, most unlike a theatre. No marquee, just a sign that named the picture playing. It, naturally, was a western. What rocked me, however, was the music. No band, no pipe organ there. But believe me there was music! An old man wearing jeans, with an old felt hat cocked at a rakish angle on his grey head and one wooden leg, sat at the piano. He was seated at the very front center where he could watch the screen closely and bang out his music. He interpreted, he set the pace. He WAS the show! He was better to watch than the movie itself. Films could be seen in any theatre. But one-legged piano whizzes?

I returned to the fruit emporium to bed down for the night. The door had been left unlocked and some people had been there — not intruders, customers. Several watermelons had been taken and a stack of silver dollars placed where they had been. Much more money than the melons were worth. That's the way Tonopah folks did things. Kind of nice to be around them. ❀

With **GAVEL** And **GUN**

Law and Justice in the Mining Camps of Mono County

by Joy Fatooh
and Demila Jenner



"For some time, a lawless element had been rearing its ugly head around and in the outlying district of Aurora, as far as Carson City. In December, 1861, a decent, married man named Carder had been shot in a poker game by one of these toughs for no reason except that he had been lucky at cards. His wife had a marble headstone put over his grave. Inscribed thereon was:

*William E. Carder
Native of Tennessee
Aged 33 years
Was assassinated in Aurora
on the night of December 10, 1861
"I will avenge," saith the Lord
Erected by his wife Annie*

Several nights later, the ruffians went up to the Aurora Cemetery, blasted the stone full of holes, and broke it into pieces." — Ella M. Cain, "The Story of Early Mono County."

Ed. Note: When Harley Jenner took this photo in the 1950s, the headstone was lying in pieces on the ground and he stood on his truck to take the picture without disturbing the stone. When he returned later, it had disappeared, apparently carried off, as were bricks and anything else loose in Aurora.

January 2, 1871: A man's dismembered body is discovered scattered near the Inyo-Mono county line at Fish Slough, on the road between Bishop Creek and Hot Springs (Benton). The *Inyo Register* comments:

As it is not known in which county the remains of the man were found, it is possible that no official investigation or coroner's inquest may be held . . .

Was it that easy to get away with murder in the Eastern Sierra's mining camp days?

California had been won from Mexico just a few months before gold was discovered in 1848. It was not yet a state or even a territory. Nor was there any precedent regarding mineral rights: California gold was the first precious metal found on American public lands. It was up to the miners to organize districts and to make — and enforce — their own laws.

As silver and gold strikes in eastern California and western Nevada began in the 1850s, seats of government established farther west were slow to extend their authority over the Sierra. In fact there was no clear distinction between California and Nevada at first. When Aurora, the county seat of Mono County, California, was found to be actually in Nevada, the county records were hastily moved — but meanwhile, in 1863, Aurora residents had the opportunity to vote in two different counties' elections on the same voting day.

Thompson and West's 1881 *History of Nevada* gave these statistics for 1859-1880: Homicides, 402. Murderers legally hanged, 8; suicided, 3; lynched, 13. Sent to penitentiary, 23. Acquitted or discharged, 39. Not arrested or called to any legal account whatsoever, 316! Bancroft gave even worse figures in his *History of California*: "From 1849 to 1854 inclusive, 4,200 murders were committed in California. In San Francisco there were 1,200, and only one conviction." In the mining camp of Aurora, perched on the swaying line between

the two states, there were 17 documented killings during the boom years of the early 1860s; all but one were ruled justifiable homicide by a coroner's jury, and the one that went to court saw a verdict of not guilty.

The prevalence of violence is not surprising in such an unbalanced population of ambitious, unsettled young men. Traveler William H. Brewer described "Aurora of a Sunday night," 1863:

One sees a hundred men to one woman and child. Saloons - saloons - saloons - liquor - everywhere. And here the men are — where else can they be? At home in their cheerless, lonesome hovels or huts? No, in the saloons, where the lights are bright, amid the hum of many voices and the excitement of gambling.

Aurora had 25 saloons; Bodie, nearly 50 on Main Street. Virtually all of the patrons were armed: a revolver was an item of apparel as essential as the belt it was tucked into. Roger G. McGrath, who analyzed all of Aurora's and Bodie's gunfights in his excellent book *Gunfighters, Highwaymen and Vigilantes*, notes that most were the result of arguments, personal feuds, or "challenges to the pecking order in a saloon."

Bodie native Ella M. Cain wrote, "The popular greeting as the miners met in the morning was, 'Have we had a man for breakfast this morning?'" The saying was a

Inside Old Benton Store today; the last of the Benton "saloons." Photo by Joy Fatooh.



common insult tossed by newspapers at rival towns, but some communities seem to have revelled in their reputations as the roughest camps in the highest murder rates. A "bad man from Bodie" was supposed to be worse than a bad man from anywhere else — though Mono County's other mining camps produced top contenders.

Why the low conviction rate? McGrath asserts that the new boom towns' "institutions of law and justice were highly structured and fairly sophisticated," but a closer look reveals the structure as something of a false front. Mono County was formed in 1861, complete with elected sheriff, district attorney and supervisors and an appointed judge. One skeptic commented that the citizens "think we have a pretty good set of officers — they can all drink plenty of whiskey — but whether they can steal or not remains to be seen . . ." In fact the new government was rife with voting fraud, and there were complaints about saloon electioneering in which the votes a candidate got were determined by the rounds of drinks he bought.

Foremost among regulations drawn up by a new mining district were those governing the making and keeping of mining claims. Where fortunes could be made or lost in a few square feet, claim-jumping was no small offense. You could protect your claim with the law or with a gun, the latter being handier and often more effective. When Sam Clemens first came west he and partners Cal Higbie and A.D. Allen staked out a fantastically rich strike at Aurora, but then each left town thinking the others were doing the work required within ten days to validate the claim. On the tenth day all three returned separately to find a crowd gathered to relocate the claim. Clemens and Higby conceded to the law, but Allen, cocked revolver in hand, demanded and got a share in the new company. On another occasion, a few days after a man was shot and killed defending a claim on Last Chance Hill, three claim jumpers entered a mine Clemens and his partners had been working and announced they were "in the hole, armed, and meant to die for it, if necessary." Clemens backed down and lived to become Mark Twain instead of an Aurora statistic or a silver tycoon.

Mining districts drew up their own laws concerning murder, assault and theft as well, and enforced them as best they could. These systems were gradually replaced by formal courts, but for years it was possible for just about anyone to set himself up as a judge.

G.W. Cross first made news in Benton in April 1874 by purchasing a "merchandising and likker trade." By August he was appearing in the papers as "Judge Cross":

Two men went prospecting for a row in Benton and found it. One of them struck a man with his revolver while standing in Judge Cross's saloon. They then went outside and fired three or four shots just to let the justice and constable know

they intended to give them some business . . .

Both men were fined \$40 each and costs. From that point on references to Hizzoner's judicial duties alternate with notices concerning his "ambrosial cocktails" (patent applied for).

Pioneering editor W.A. Chalfant, in *The Story of Inyo*, wrote of a judge who, when a protesting attorney suggested that he refer to his books, gathered them up and threw them at the offender: "I don't know nothing about book law, but here's a law no lawyer can dispute!" Sometimes the strong-arm approach was necessitated by conditions in the courtroom, as in a story Chalfant tells concerning Judge Theron Y. Reed, circuit judge serving Inyo, Mono, Kern and Alpine counties — quite a distance to travel by horse and stage. On one occasion when unruly disputes persisted despite his admonitions, Judge Reed entered the courtroom the next morning "with a double barreled shotgun on his arm. He cocked both barrels of the gun and set it by his chair, announcing: 'Gentlemen, there will be order in the court today.' " And there was.

Elsewhere Chalfant tells of a Bodie judge who, after hearing prolonged arguments by opposing attorneys, ruled: "You'll have to settle it between yourselves; I can't make heads nor tails of it." And the same judge who threw the books once instructed a jury that if they did not find in favor of the defendant they would all be sent to jail for contempt.

Into this unruly arena strode Patrick Reddy, to become one of the West's most celebrated and respected attorneys at law. Reddy was just another Aurora tough when his right arm was shot off. While recovering he began to read law books, apprenticed himself to a local attorney and soon took his first case in Montgomery City, east of Benton.

Reddy had found his calling: judge and jury were almost always won over by the tall Irishman with his sonorous voice, fine diction and eloquent logic. He practiced in Independence, then in Bodie; served as Inyo-Mono delegate to the constitutional convention; later he was a prominent San Franciscan and a state senator. He was known as a man of the highest intelligence and finest character. The Inyo Register eulogized in 1900, "His makeup included no fault of moral or physical cowardice, nor of littleness of any sort."

The dark side of Reddy's greatness was his willingness to defend the indefensible. Reddy is said to have been the means of freeing over a hundred men charged with murder in the Eastern Sierra. One was a drunken teamster who beat his wife to death, threw her body out of the wagon onto the Bodie-Lundy road and drove away. With Reddy as council he received a light sentence for manslaughter — pleading self-defense!

But Reddy was just as willing to face off against



Pat Reddy. Photo courtesy Demila Jenner

infamous bad men. Old-timer George Montrose recalled the tale of Perley Plane, leader of a gang of cutthroat horse and cattle thieves who — to divert blame from themselves — accused another man of leading a cattle-stealing ring. Plane was to be the chief witness for the prosecution, and he let it be known that Reddy would

“die in his boots” if the accused went free or if anything was said about Plane’s own criminal record. Reddy, during the morning session of court, sent a messenger to Bodie. By the time the afternoon session convened the Aurora courtroom was strategically occupied by both Plane’s gunmen and Reddy’s.

Reddy, "firm and steadfast," faced Plane in the witness stand and with his left (and only) hand hidden under the tail of his coat, intoned the forbidden questions. Plane was forced to admit to having served a prison term. He "crept from the witness chair and the courtroom, his power broken, his challenge met . . ." And Reddy's reputation for fearlessness was sealed.

Above all, Pat Reddy believed in everyone's right to a fair trial. He deplored "mob justice" and more than once defended clients who were targeted for lynching.



Bottles from beer brewed in Bodie. Photo by Joy Fatoohi

In 1880 special officers were hired to keep opium addicts out of Bodie saloons. When addict George Watkins walked into the Comstock saloon, special officer Robert Whitaker clubbed him with his revolver. Watkins was carried unconscious to his room; when he revived he returned with a shotgun and killed Whitaker. The *Bodie Standard* called for a vigilance committee. The *Daily Free Press* rebutted:

There is every form of official protection already in existence, the chief drawback consisting in lack of good or well-balanced juries . . . If good citizens will but half do their duty as witnesses, jurors, etc., there are good courts and officers enough to soon bring about a better state of affairs.

Watkins retained Pat Reddy, who had no chance to defend him: the next morning Watkins died, either of his head injuries or of a mysterious "medicine" given him in jail to relieve the pain.

The *Daily Free Press* had a point. "Lack of evidence" and "lack of witnesses" were findings as common as "self-defense." December 1876, with Benton's saloon-keeper judge:

Business in Cross's court has been quite active for the past few weeks, taxing his patience to a considerable extent. Yesterday he was hearing a case where the charge was assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill. Plaintiff could

find no witnesses; two were examined for defendant. One of them swore he was so inebriated he didn't know where he was going, and the other swore he was drawing a picture on the bar and didn't think the row worthy of his attention. Prisoner was discharged.

Was justice blind in those days, or just nearsighted? Here is a murder mystery Mono County style, as reported in Aurora's *Esmeralda Weekly Union*, May 30, 1868:

SAD AFFRAY. Just as we go to press, word comes that a fatal affray occurred in Hot Springs (Benton) May 28: W.R. Rison's wife wrote him a note and gave it to an Indian to deliver to Rison. The Indian by mistake delivered it to one J.J. Coddington. An altercation ensued between Rison and Coddington in which Coddington received a blow on the neck or head from a club and was carried home and put to bed by friends. Next morning he was found dead in bed. That is all we know at this time.

What do you suppose that note said? Who was it *really* for? It must have been ambiguously headed, "Darling," or some such. But it is not Mrs. Rison who stands to be tried. From the next edition of the *Weekly Union*:

HOT SPRINGS. From our correspondence we learn that things in Benton are moving along lively as the people of that place have had a man for breakfast lately. We have received several accounts of the matter between Rison and Coddington, but nothing could be proved at Rison's examination — not even that he had struck the fatal blow . . . as no positive proof could be adduced other than the knowledge of a difficulty between them and that they were seen clenched on the floor, Rison was acquitted. The coroner's jury upon examination found that Coddington's skull had been badly fractured above the left ear.

Did some other party sneak up to Coddington's bed in the night and smash his skull? Or did Rison get away with murder?

Less than a month later and eight miles south, another mystery occurred. Charles Robinson was a genial Aurora stablekeeper; Frank Schoonmaker the proprietor of a saloon nearby. The two were known as the best of friends when they left Aurora to view some Owens Valley property in which they had a joint interest. All were astonished when an agitated Schoonmaker galloped into Benton to report that he had killed his friend at Yellowjacket Springs.

Schoonmaker hastily explained that they had argued about the property on the return trip and when they dismounted to drink from the spring, Robinson began firing and he returned the fire. He hurried on to turn himself in to the sheriff at Aurora, who brought him to Bridgeport for questioning. Public opinion seems to have leaned toward a finding of self-defense — despite the fact that a post-mortem showed that Robinson was shot in the back! A year later Schoonmaker married Robinson's widow, suggesting a motive; but by then he was long

gone from Mono County. One old-timer's account says that since Bridgeport had no jail Schoonmaker was released after questioning, caught the next stage out and never returned. According to a 1915 *Inyo Register* retelling Schoonmaker was tried in Aurora because there was "no government worthy of the name" at the new county seat. "There was so little evidence that perhaps a more settled community would have done as did the Aurora jury: 'Not Guilty.' It was the custom."

In Bodie, 1881, tolerance for the custom abruptly wore thin. Thomas Treloar, a small man who had lost much of his mental capacity after falling 225 feet down a mine, thought his wife was seeing too much of Joseph DeRoche. When he caught them dancing together the two men exchanged threats; later that night two witnesses saw DeRoche shoot Treloar in the back of the head.

When one bad man killed another it was "good ridance," but this was different. Outrage at the blatant murder of a man thought to be harmless coalesced into a vigilance committee. A mob of hundreds was moving toward the jail when Pat Reddy stepped out into the street and dispelled the crowd with an impassioned speech. That afternoon DeRoche tried to secure Reddy for his defense, only to find that he was already engaged for the prosecution. The day's testimony revealed nothing to calm the vigilantes. They stormed the jail

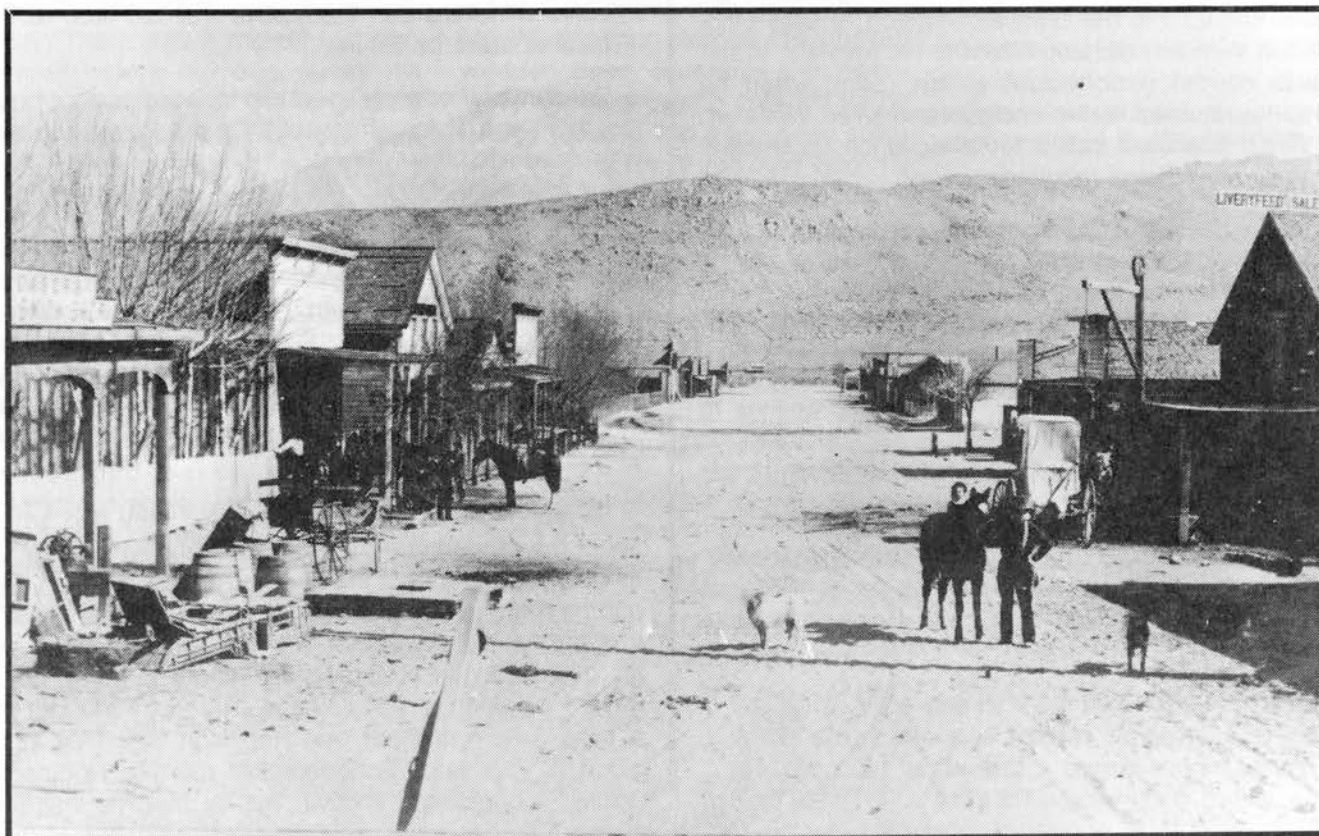
in the middle of the night and hanged DeRoche over the spot where Treloar died — "the fit representative of the Spirit of Murder," the *Daily Free Press* declared.

This was not the first time a mob prevailed in Mono, or the last. The notorious gunman John Daley and his gang had dominated Aurora at the height of its boom years, even succeeding in having a gang member elected as city marshal — who then appointed other gang members as policemen. Still, most of the havoc was among their own rough kind.

One day in 1863 a Daley gang member stole a horse from the hitching post at William Johnson's way station. Johnson sent out an employee who pursued and shot the thief. A year later the gang took revenge: they plied Johnson with liquor at an Aurora saloon, then four of them jumped him as he staggered toward his lodgings. Daley himself shot Johnson through the head and William Buckley cut his throat.

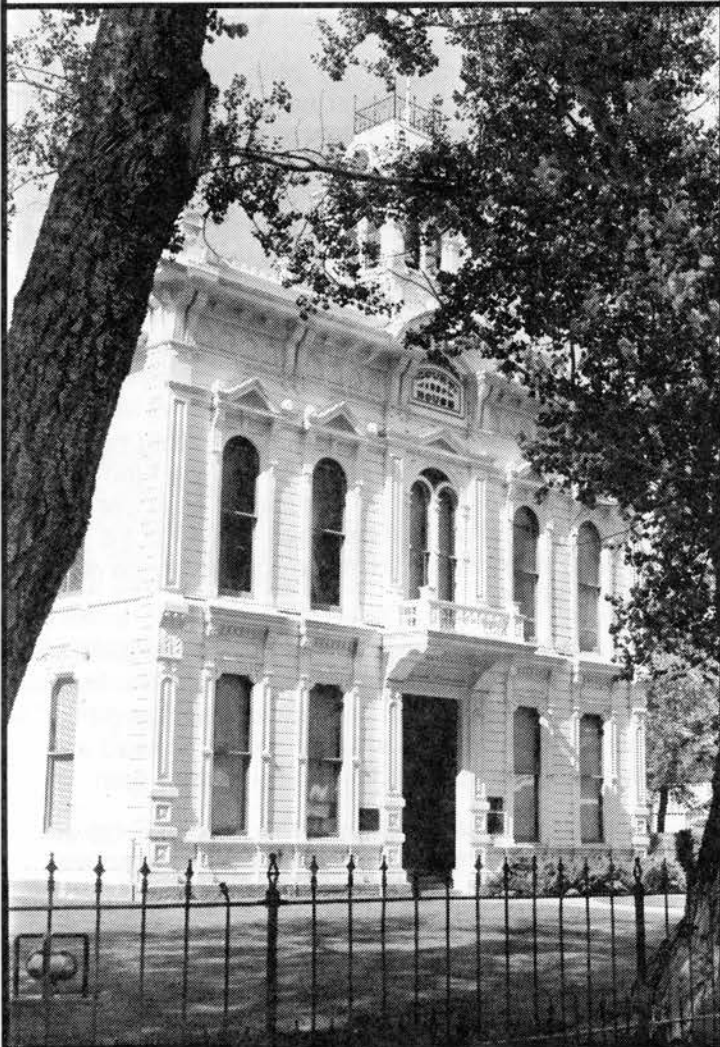
The next day some 400 Aurorans organized into the Citizens' Safety Committee and began rounding up gang members in Aurora and at Adobe Meadows. William Buckley evaded two posses in a four-day chase that ended at Lee Vining's cabin near Mono Lake. Meanwhile the Safety Committee, grown 600 strong, took control of Aurora and began plans for a four-man

Benton's Main Street in the days of Gavel and Gun justice. Far left: John Creaser's blacksmithy. John Creaser, a Canadian, came to Benton in the early 1870s and in 1906 at age 68 was elected a Mono County supervisor. Photo courtesy Demila Jenner



gallows.

Daley and Buckley, in speeches from the gallows, both maintained that they were guilty of Johnson's murder but that the other two men were innocent — to no avail. According to most sources Nevada's Governor Nye arrived too late to stop the hanging but on seeing the scaffold, ordered the "devilish machine" removed at once. But in what Chalfant calls "the Nevada version, from credible sources," the Governor said "I am sorry lumber is so high over here; it ought to have been longer to hold more."



Bridgeport courthouse. Photo by Joy Fatoohi

The strangest case in Mono County of an accused murderer in the hands of an angry mob took place in Bridgeport, 1891. The defendant was Chinese, the mob Indian. Walker River and Bridgeport Paiutes had joined forces to look for Poker Tom, a tribe member last seen playing cards with Chinese merchant Ah Quong Tai. As some of Poker Tom's effects were found outside of town and in the river, the Indians became convinced that Ah

Tai had murdered him. Only the protestations of Sheriff Cody, who had gained their trust, prevented them from taking immediate revenge.

Indians dragging the river soon found the upper half of a human torso. The chest cavity was empty, and medical examination showed that it had been pickled, as for corned beef. The Indians then recalled that some of them had been fed a strange pickled meat at Ah Tai's store which he told them was goat.

By now they had been joined by all Paiutes in the area and were several hundred strong, outnumbering Bridgeport whites. They threatened to burn the town and massacre the residents if Ah Tai were not turned over to them. The Indians had a logical basis for their demand: they had earlier surrendered to the whites an Indian who had killed a white rancher and another who murdered a Chinese man in Coleville. It was only right that the whites should give them a Chinese accused of killing an Indian.

Authorities searching Ah Tai's store and home found patches of new wallpaper covering stains that had been scrubbed. Several empty barrels smelled of brine. Two men later testified that Ah Tai confessed the murder privately to them. Publicly he pleaded innocence but sought and was given protective custody. The Indians surrounded the jail at night and lay down touching hand-to-hand, forming a human chain so that he could not be removed under cover of darkness. Ella Cain lived in Bridgeport then; Sheriff Cody was her father. In *The Story of Early Mono County* she wrote that an Indian woman who worked for her family confided that fires had been laid around 50 or 60 houses, ready to be lit.

On the day of the trial hundreds of Indians surrounded the Justice Court, posted themselves on Main Street, and waited on horseback at the edge of town. According to the *Chronicle Union*, June 13, 1891, there was no evidence that Poker Tom had been murdered nor any way of identifying the remains. "The defendant was ordered discharged for want of sufficient evidence."

When Ah Tai was informed by his counsel that he was free and could go, he grabbed the attorney's arm so hard that the marks he made remained for days. The Indians in the courtroom flung open the doors and the hordes in and pried Ah Tai loose. The judge and defense counsel begged them not to commit a crime in the courtroom, so they dragged Ah Tai outside and up the street.

Ah Quong Tai was beheaded and dismembered, parts thrown aloft and strewn about the sagebrush in a field at the edge of town. Dogs belonging to the man who owned the field brought home, months later, "a long black braided queue attached to a small shrivelled scalp lock."

It's hard to say what might have happened if Ah

Quong Tai had been white. Chinese and Indians seem (at least on the surface, and after the Indian wars) to have come under the same laws as whites in Mono County. Although racial hatred and xenophobia were strong, there seems to have been less of the discriminatory laws or racially-motivated mass violence common in nearby areas. From the *Inyo Register*, December 14, 1901:

HORRIBLE ANTI-CHINESE VIOLENCE IN TONOPAH. A gang of 15 Union hoodlums and murderers invaded the Chinatown section of Tonopah in the middle of the night, beating, forcing the unclothed Chinese to flee for their lives out of town . . . All 15 were released, and Editor Chalfant comments that now the Chinese should be brought into court, all except the one who happened to die, and be prosecuted for taking up so much of the public's attention on so trivial a matter.

Was this a racist remark against the Chinese, or a satiric jibe at their tormentors? In an era when newspapermen strove to outdo one another with biting wit, the reader bent on learning the truth had to dig through layers of irony as well as prejudice.

And then — as now — there was more than one side to any story. From Benton, 1907, comes what the *Bridgeport Chronicle-Union* called "a case that has shown the most peculiar features of any that ever came before our courts."

The *Inyo Register*, May 3, reported it first: Benton's deputy sheriff W.F. Edwards was "foully murdered by one of three drunken Indians he was trying to arrest." Wildly differing versions emerged, but as B.W. Alden was the only white witness, one can piece together the basics of his story: Ada Bertrand, 17, was travelling home in her buggy when the Indians stopped her half a mile out of Benton. Edwards and Alden borrowed a rifle and rushed to the scene; the buggy had gone on, but the Indians wrested the gun away from Edwards and one stepped back and shot him.

The *Bridgeport Chronicle Union* editorialized:

An officer in the execution of his duty has been shot down in cold blood by a drunken Indian. There is a weeping widow, there are fatherless children — sorrowing friends. The red-handed murderer hides in the rocks, fed and aided by his people. There is no pang of regret in his being, no sorrow nor fear of the loss of his soul. He has but one fear and that the justice of the white man. He knows that he, sooner or later, must fall into the hands of the officers, he knows that for him is death or the prison cell, yet he cares not for such is the way of the Indian.

The editor goes on to demand enforcement of the laws against selling liquor to Indians: ". . . today there sleeps beneath the sod one of the bravest men that ever wore a star as a martyr to the liquor traffic." And as for the killer himself,

He must be captured and given a speedy trial. The welfare of our county demands that no criminals shall here find a haven . . . let the law take its course and every citizen join in running down the wrong-doer.

Just before going to press with the above, the *Chronicle Union* learned that two Indians had been "arrested without difficulty." Apparently, once news was typeset, it wasn't customary to remove it when proven false. The *Register* had first identified the killer as George Towie, but turn the page: "The statement on the front page of this issue that George Towie murdered poor Billy Edwards is untrue" — "Frank Towie" was to blame. Eventually the suspect was arraigned as "Tow Abe, an Indian."

When the *Chronicle Union* interviewed him in his Bridgeport jail cell the reporter called him "Ed. Tow . . . a bright young Indian about 20 who claims to have been raised on Bertrand's ranch." As Tow told it, his brother was drunk, so he had put him on a horse and was leading him home. On the way they met two girls; one was Ada Bertrand, who stopped the Indians and was talking with them when Edwards drove up and demanded, "What are you stopping white girls for?" Edwards ordered the brother off his horse, then hit him over the head with the rifle and knocked him down.

He raised the gun to hit him again and I grabbed the rifle away from him. He told me to give him the rifle; I told him, "No, I'm afraid you'll shoot me." He said if I would give him the gun he would put it on the wagon. I gave him the gun and he hit me on the arm and on the side and over the head and face with it.

He raised the gun to shoot me and I grabbed the gun and he pulled the trigger and it went over my head. The team ran away. I jerked the gun and Billy fell down; he got up again and came after me and I was running backward and Billy had a pistol so I shot him and he fell down again.

The man who was with Billy asked me not to shoot him as he had not done anything. I asked him if he had a gun and he said no. Then I pumped the shells out of the rifle and gave it to him and ran home.

The other Indian under arrest — identified as Gray-Haired Johnnie, John Allen, Ollie John or McGee, but arraigned as "Allie John" — was accused of taking the empty gun from Alden and threatening him with it. The two were arraigned in mid-July; by July 11 the *Inyo Register* was complaining that of 100 prospective jurors, 93 had been dismissed — "a large percentage because they had opinions about the case which no amount of evidence could change." The *Chronicle Union* thought they were inventing excuses because jury duty "might discommode them to a slight extent," but the *Register* blamed "a feeling in the Indians' behalf in various parts of Mono County . . ." Apparently the Indians' story had gained credence over Alden's version and the opinions of the newspapermen.



Below: Benton school children in early 1900s, among whom are the two (adopted) children of the murdered Billy Edwards. According to the INYO REGISTER of May 3, 1907, they were Gertrude and Lillian Allen, nieces of Billy's wife Jennie. Photo courtesy Demila Jenner.

Above: Benton Deputy Sheriff Billy Edwards, left, with friend. Photo courtesy Demila Jenner



Long-time Benton resident Tom Buckley had no doubt in his mind when interviewed by Demila Jenner some 78 years later. "The Bertrand girls could talk Indian because the father of those brothers who killed Edwards irrigated the Bertrand ranch. They were talking Indian with the brothers, laughing, having a good time" when Edwards confronted them, left to borrow a gun and returned to beat them. "It was his own fault. He got no business doing that."

The trial was delayed for nearly a month as more jurors were called and rejected. The Bridgeport paper ran several editorials berating shirkers of jury duty and even hinted at vigilance: "Is it a fact that Mono has entered the class of counties where the law is a dead letter and each and every man must constitute himself judge and jury?"

On Monday, August 3 a jury was empanelled and the trial began. On Friday the jury returned its verdict: "We, the jury find the defendant guilty of manslaughter and recommend him to the mercy of the Court."

The *Chronicle Union*, incredulous, wrote:

A white man sleeping in the silent tomb forever and an Indian living on the best a prison can afford for a few short years and the tale is told . . . The dead has been damnified and the murderer lauded unto the heavens.

Allie John pled guilty to assault with a deadly weapon

and was given eight months in San Quentin. In sentencing Tow Abe, the Bridgeport paper reported, the Court took into consideration a special petition for clemency made by the jury "and gave him the extremely light sentence of three years."

San Quentin had been the California State Prison since 1852. Early newspapers referred to a sentence there as a "vacation by the sea." In 1872 a horse thief was apprehended in Benton when he tried to enter the horse in the Fourth of July races; the *Inyo Independent* noted that "his prospect of spending a few summers at the seaside is exceedingly flattering."

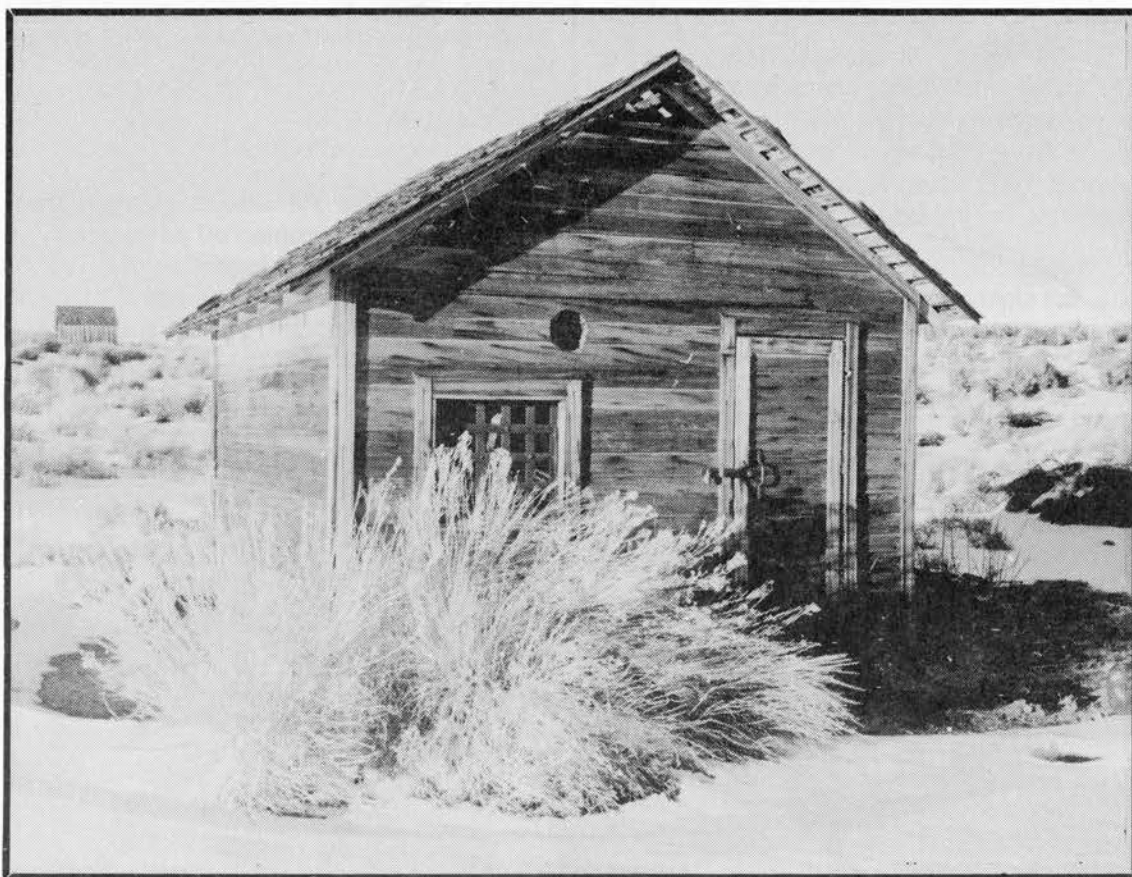
Serving time might indeed be pleasant compared to punishments meted out by some of California's earliest mining districts — flogging, branding, ear cropping — designed as deterrents in the absence of jail facilities. You couldn't simply lock a man up if there was no lock-up. In Bishop prisoners were handcuffed to the wheels of freight wagons; one was handcuffed to a small tree and escaped by shinnying up until it bent over and he could drop to the ground. In Candelaria, 1881, Captain Charley was arrested for drunk-and-disorderly and locked in a cellar where glassware was stored. When he started breaking glass he was taken out and handcuffed to a flagpole. Charley slipped out of the cuffs and made a run for it. The constable fired one warning, then shot him fatally. The next year Candelaria got a jail.

Old Benton meat market — bank — post office — courthouse — morgue! Photo by Joy Fatooh





Above: Bodie jail; below: Benton jail. Photos by Joy Fatooh



The first Mono County jail, at Aurora, was declared totally unfit by the Grand Jury three years in a row (1862-64) without improvement. Bodie's first two-cell jail, built in 1879, was replaced in 1880 by a four-cell jail that was, according to the *Daily Free Press*, "furnished with all the articles of comfort that can be found in any jail on the coast." Constable and jailer John F. Kirgan kept it clean and orderly and the prisoners well fed; that Thanksgiving "we, the boarders of the 'Hotel de Kirgan'" wrote to the *Bodie Standard* to express their gratitude for the "bountiful feast of which we partook."

Bridgeport, the new county seat, was under public pressure to prove itself worthy of the honor. Benton editor O.E. Jones complained in the April 26, 1880 issue of *The Weekly Bentonian* that a petition for improved county buildings was being ignored, and suggested that the old buildings might be rented out as "possible corncribs." Bridgeport's elegant courthouse, built in 1881, still displays in its boardroom a portrait of its humble clapboard predecessor which may or may not have served later as a corncrib. Bridgeport's 1883 jail was not replaced until 1964. Today suspects being booked into Mono County's newest facility can still see that bare little dungeon with barred windows and slots through which food was passed to inmates. The chill of a hundred Bridgeport winters is still locked within those thick stone walls. It's said that in homicide cases the jail served to hold the deceased as well as the accused.

In Benton it was the butcher shop that doubled as a morgue: "Benton Meat Market, corner Main and Eddy," reads the ad in the *Weekly Messenger*. This odd little stone building, which has also served as bank, post office and family home, once had a turn as an improvised courthouse: Tom Buckley remembers "sometime after 1910" when he was called as a witness there, with Judge S.J. Alderman on the bench.

Benton got its jail in 1874. The cubicle still stands at the original site, but sight-seeing is not recommended as it is on private property and the owners take a dim view of trespassers. You just might get locked in until the

deputy arrived and it is doubtful you would enjoy the inside view of a mining camp ruffian's life.

You would be in a box about eight feet square, solidly built of thick wooden planks, with a peaked roof. You might occupy one of two dark cells, each with a single iron-barred window looking out into a tiny anteroom where one barred window and a great heavy door lead to the outside. The walls are not insulated, nor the windows glazed. As the light slowly shifted you would make out bits of graffiti pencilled on the rough wood by former occupants.

A long, peculiar allegorical poem, mostly faded to illegibility, begins

In this Hive
We are all A-live

and goes on to draw some sort of analogy with the Honey-Bee. Several entries allude to the jail's nickname:

Here I am
locked in the Piss-house . . .

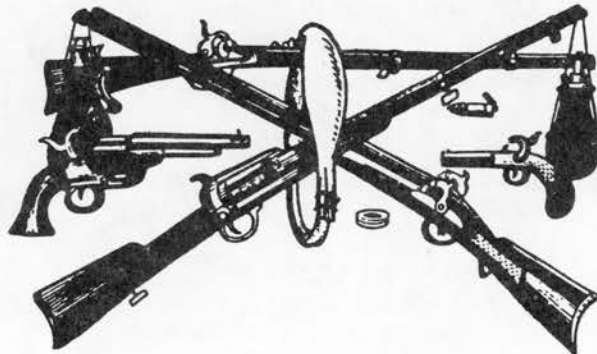
One amusing inscription reads,

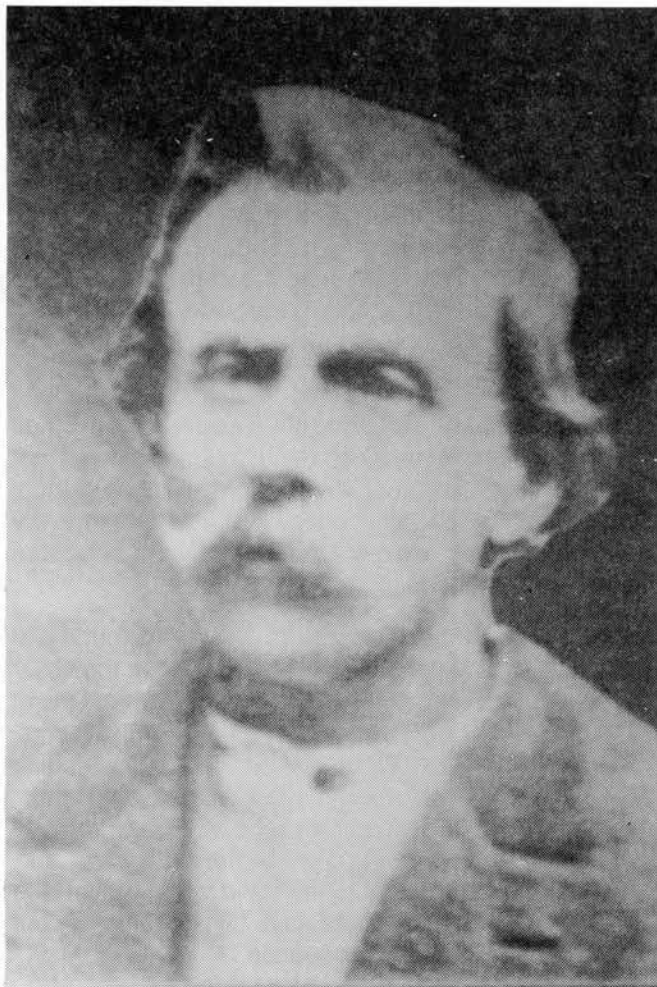
I love my wife but
oh those dusty maidens

—possibly referring to Indian women, the popular term being "dusky maidens," but in those days all maidens must have been equally dusty. And the most poignant of all, perhaps scrawled by the dim gray light of a sub-zero winter day:

Please let me out
it is very cold in here

We don't know the writer's identity; probably a bar-room braggart who cooled off considerably once he had the chance. So did Mono County, once it had the chance. The thwack of the gavel still rings through Bridgeport's courthouse, but the crack of a gun is rarely heard. ❄





THE SHOOTING OF SHERIFF PASSMORE



by Dave Babb

Inyo County, created in 1866 from parts of Tulare and Mono counties, was known for years as a haven for criminals. It may have been easy for anyone wishing to disappear for a while to do so in this isolated region, but trouble followed many an undesirable character to his new surroundings.

At times, early-day justice was swift and, probably due to the distances to be traversed, relatively primitive communications, and a concern for the comfort of the local lawmen, the sheriff was not always bothered with requests to come to the site of a disturbance to assist. For instance, there was a report in the *Inyo Independent*, August 21, 1871, stating "... A few days since, three men, supposed to have been guilty of stealing ropes with horses attached, were ornamenting a telegraph pole. It is supposed that they committed suicide." We assume, of course, that this was an exception rather than the rule in local law enforcement.

Considering the many reports of the day documenting daily shootings at many of the mining areas, such as Cerro Gordo, shootings, assaults, and drunken brawls in the towns, and holdups on the roads of the County, the peace officers fared quite well until 1878, when Thomas Passmore became the first lawman to be killed in the line of duty — an act not well received by the citizens of Lone Pine.

Sheriff Passmore was well liked, highly respected, and, as one local resident recalled, "brave to the point of brashness." He had a reputation of personal fearlessness (which his shortness of stature emphasized).

On the afternoon of February 12, 1878, Sheriff Passmore accompanied the Cerro Gordo brass band members, who had been on a concert trip, as far as Lone Pine on their return trip from Independence. After dinner, he said he was not feeling well and retired to his room, telling his friends that he did not

wish to be disturbed.

That night, an Indian woman came to Begole's Saloon to report that a Mexican man, named Palacio, had killed a man known as Indian Dick at their camp near town. A party of citizens accompanied the woman back to her camp and found her story to be true.

The citizens were told that Palacio had gone to Frank Dabeeny's saloon, an establishment notorious as a harbor for criminals and the scene of many a criminal deed. Upon arriving at Dabeeny's Saloon, the citizens demanded Palacio's surrender. Palacio came to the door to ask what they wanted, but seeing the number of men in the street, he immediately shut the door, shouting "Take me if you can!"

Though Sheriff Passmore had asked not to be disturbed, it was decided that someone should go get him anyway, as he could surely get Palacio to surrender. Within minutes,

Sheriff Passmore arrived on the scene; he boldly walked up to the building and knocked on the door, saying "Open the door; I am Tom Passmore, the sheriff." Inside could be heard someone crossing the room and stopping near the door, but the door remained closed. Sheriff Passmore repeated his demand, and he threatened to kick the door in if there was no compliance to his order. He pushed at the door and it opened slightly, but then it was quickly pushed shut.

Sheriff Passmore again forced the door open, when suddenly one or more shots were fired from inside. He stepped back and said "Boys, I'm shot." He handed his pistol to someone standing nearby, took four steps, and fell dead at the edge of the street. One bullet had gone through his heart, and another cut his left forefinger. The saloon door was immediately shut again and braced.

Wild excitement ensued as the band of citizens, who had come to enforce the law, now became an infuriated mob — some were shouting "Set fire to the house!" and "Blow it up!" All who were armed began pouring lead into the building. It was fifteen minutes before Sheriff Passmore's body could be recovered.

During the shooting spree, Dabeeny was wounded and, along with Joaquin Brazil, he tried to escape out the back door. Trying to run, he was seen by some of the citizens; he was chased, knocked down, and captured. On general principles (aside from being an accessory to the killing of the sheriff), there was no doubt that he richly deserved the fate which soon befell him.

Palacio, who had begun to attempt

an escape with Dabeeny, saw the mob and retreated inside the saloon. The building was guarded on all sides until daylight, when Palacio decided to make a run for it. But before he could get across the street, no less than a dozen bullets hit him.

Shortly after, five other men were allowed to come out of the saloon and surrender. Three of these men proved to be decent and innocent, and were detained as witnesses only. The other two, Carlos Firman and Anstacio Santillo, were given ten minutes to leave town, never to return (even though one of them was thought to be responsible for the death of George Eames and an Indian at the same place sometime earlier).

A few hours after the two men left town, a party arrived from Olancha — Passmore's home — and reported that two men were lying dead on the road four miles south of town.

In all, six men were dead within a twelve-hour period. All of the corpses — except Passmore and Indian Dick — were mangled beyond recognition. At a coroner's jury, called by J.D. Blair, it was determined that Passmore was killed by Palacio; the others were killed by parties unknown. The Dabeeny place, riddled with bullet holes, was kept closed for twenty years (at which time it was converted to a granary).

Mr. W.L. "Dad" Moore, a founding father of Lone Pine, who had previously served as Inyo's second sheriff, was appointed to fill Passmore's position. He too was killed in the line of duty — just fifteen months later. On July 3, 1879, while he was in Independence to celebrate the 4th, Sheriff Moore was called to quiet a drunken row in progress at the Aldine Saloon. Mike Welch

and Henry Tessier were having an argument over a mine in the Kearsarge District. Sheriff Moore stepped between them, holding them apart. Welch lowered a pistol he was holding and, whether intentional or not, it discharged. The bullet passed through Moore's watch, before entering his body, severing the aorta and stopping at the spine. He died within a few minutes.

Welch was immediately subdued and taken to jail. Tessier foolishly tried to escape, even though he was not guilty of any part of the killing. A hunt began at once, with a search of every place owned by his fellow French countrymen.

A few hours later, he was found hiding under the flooring above the cellar in a hotel kept by Louis Fromm. One of the searchers fired a harmless shot, and Tessier scrambled out of hiding and was arrested without resistance. He looked pitiful, being bloody from the fight with Welch. He was soon surrounded by a crowd who, if given the word, would have taken "summary but unjust vengeance."

The renowned lawyer of the day, Pat Reddy, of Inyo and Nevada, took charge, calming the crowd. At the trial, Welch presented a case for an assumption of insanity and got off with ten years at San Quentin. Tessier, who probably deserved no such punishment, got three years.

As you can tell, Inyo was not all peace and serenity in the "old" days. But with the assistance and perseverance of the lawmen of the times, a somewhat peaceful existence was maintained for the common citizens of the Owens Valley. ❀

INYO INDEPENDENT — February 22, 1873

The other night a fierce young man put in a few moments shooting holes in the floor of Dan Williams' new saloon in Lone Pine. This was all well enough except that the floor was new and the owner didn't want any holes in it; neither did he like to see ammunition wasted when there were so many about whose diaphragms

might be perforated advantageously to the community.

INYO INDEPENDENT — February 3, 1877

In Inyo County there are: 9 schoolhouses, 1 church, 5 breweries, and 58 saloons. The deplorable scarcity of the latter may be accounted for by the fact that nearly all stores keep liquor for sale.

Seriously Enough...

by Jane Fisher

There's something about growing up on a ranch on the east side of the mountains, where the last of the Old West has yet to become fully civilized, that convinces us we are unique. I, for one, certainly thought I was unusual, and so informed my parents in a continuous whine: I was the only kid who never, ever, had playmates; the only kid who was never, ever, allowed to have a slumber party; the only kid with nuthin'-to-do-o-o.

Before he — inaccurately — decided that to restore Mama's family's ranch after its sale to the city of Los Angeles would be a nice retirement pastime, Dad had been a Navy officer. He and Mama had collected some wonderful treasures in their travels, most of which they preferred to keep safely out of the clutches of their three semi-tame offspring. But our self-entertainment talents were at their best when we were left at home alone. We investigated every drawer, cupboard, box, and trunk in the house. You should have seen me in the lavender and purple dress embroidered with silver bugle beads! And my brother in full gold braid and whites — so what if the uniform pants dragged a little in the dust on the way to our ship!

And Dad's love letters to Mama were better than television — which we didn't have anyway — sending us into coughing spasms to cover up snickers at the dinner table. Dad was not open to unexplainable behavior, so a spin-off was often the smug enjoyment of a sibling's punishment on being the first to giggle out loud.

My brother and sister and I were fairly creative at thinking up stuff to do, if left to our own devices, but Dad's investment in ranching sometimes suffered. We loved to fling on scarves, hats, and one of Dad's big shirts for a duster, hop into Grandpa's old White electric car and take off for the railroad station. The car, of course, had been replaced by a series of Model T Fords, Packard touring cars, and Buicks many years before, but for our purposes, a good jump on what my brother imagined was the starter sent us speeding through the alfalfa and over the river for as long as we could make it without a battle. Then he tried the same technique on the tractor, and wiped out three chickens and the corner of the granary, the tractor being of a more recent vintage than the White electric.

Pirates was another game we could sustain for hours, our battles being translated into sword play (wooden, until someone tattled and Mama made us use cardboard) and walking the plank. Of course, the victim was always our little sister who would do anything to be allowed to tag after a couple of villains, characters for which my brother and I were fully qualified.

Pirates involved shopping through the closets for appropriate clothing (we introduced cut-off jeans and bandana headbands before they became fashionable), elaborate lunches (only Mama knew real pirates ate peanut butter sandwiches), and dragging proper fittings for a raft from our loot.

Loot consisted of artifacts relieved from attics and unoccupied — or unguarded — rooms in the many out-buildings found on a ranch. Today, you find these valuables at yard sales, or worse yet, the dump, but ranchers are skillful recyclers. Nothing is discarded unless it rots, and even when it's probably fed to the pigs or the chickens. Parts of wood stoves, three-legged chairs, chipped cups, headless dolls, bent canning jar lids — all important stuff in the lives of bored kids — was hidden in the cellar under the Honeyhouse because we were the only human beings brave enough to go in the place, inhabited as it was by skunks, spiders, adventurous bobcats and the occasional ghost.

I want to explain right here that, no matter what implications you may have come to understand about honey-houses, this one was a real building that housed, at various times, soldiers at Fort Independence, a school, overflow from a large family, and hired hands. During our days on the ranch, it had become the place where bee hives, smokers, frames, wax and other paraphernalia were stored and used between raw bees and finished combs of clover honey. The building sat on the edge of a gulch and steps led down to the cellar from inside, but at the back the cellar opened onto the gulch, just enough to allow access for a pair of villains to store contraband.

Equipping the pirate raft took the better part of a long, boring Saturday. We had to excuse ourselves from chores because there was the flag to be made from a branch ripped off the Japanese Locust, Grandma's black silk scarf, and some stolen whitewash. The plank, the oars, swords, costumes, provisions, the battle over who got to be Captain Hook for this voyage — all logistics demanded careful planning and hours of debate, preferably out of earshot of adults.

Dragging the big black iron pot out of hiding was the toughest. Sadly enough, I can't recall its purpose — we probably used it to boil our little sister in oil. The raft was a door from one of the granary bins and the only reason it didn't sink under the weight of the iron pot was because there hadn't been any water in the gulch for at least fifteen years.

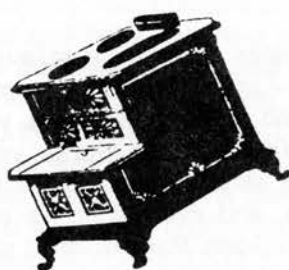
The other day, our six-year-old came in, dragging the nuthin'-to-do-o-o syndrome. Inspired by childhood memories (wherein reality is often distorted by the rosy fog of great distance) I suggested she go play pirates.

"Oh goody! I don't have that one for my 'puter yet. Is it for the video or the Nintendo?" she asked.

"Neither one; it's even more fun," I said. "First, you get a flag and a costume, then you go down to the gulch . . ."

"What's a gulch?" she said. "Do we have one?"

Well, shoot.



RECIPES FROM THE OLD WOOD STOVE

As sourdough baking became a part of my routines, trying new recipes, modifying them and inventing new ways of using sourdough were a delightful challenge. The packers, of course, were very willing recipients of my experiments. In addition to baking in conventional ovens in a real kitchen, sourdough products can be baked out of doors in a dutch oven with splendid success. And sourdough hotcakes served with a steaming cup of cowboy coffee in a backcountry camp will never be forgotten! Campers return from pack trips a little heavier while the mules carry a lighter load.

As my experiments with sourdough continued some recipes inevitably became pack station favorites.

—Marye Roeser

PACK OUTFIT SOURDOUGH BISCUITS

½ cup starter
1 cup milk, buttermilk, or sour milk
2½ cups flour
1 Tbsp. sugar
¾ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. soda
2 Tbsp. salad oil

Mix the starter, milk and 1 cup of the flour in a large bowl. Cover with a damp cloth and set in a warm spot to rise for about 8 hours if possible.

Combine sugar, salt, baking powder, soda, salad oil and ½ cup flour mixing well. Turn this very soft dough out onto 1 cup of flour on a bread board. Knead the

dough into the flour on the board. Roll out to a ½ inch thickness. Cut out biscuits with a cutter and place close together on a cookie sheet. Cover with a damp towel and set in a warm spot to rise for about 30 minutes. Bake in a 375° oven for 30 to 35 minutes. Makes about 15 biscuits.

WOLF COOK STOVE HOTCAKES

The night before combine:

½ cup starter
2 cups flour
1½ cups warm milk or buttermilk

Cover with a damp cloth and let rise overnight. The next morning add:

2 eggs
2 Tbsp. sugar
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda
2 Tbsp. salad oil

Blend together until smooth. Fry on a hot lightly greased grill or griddle. The recipe makes about 20 average sized hotcakes and feeds 4 people. In the backcountry, plan on many more to feed the ravenous appetites waiting around the fire.

SOURDOUGH RANCH MUFFINS (Sourdough Limpa Muffins)

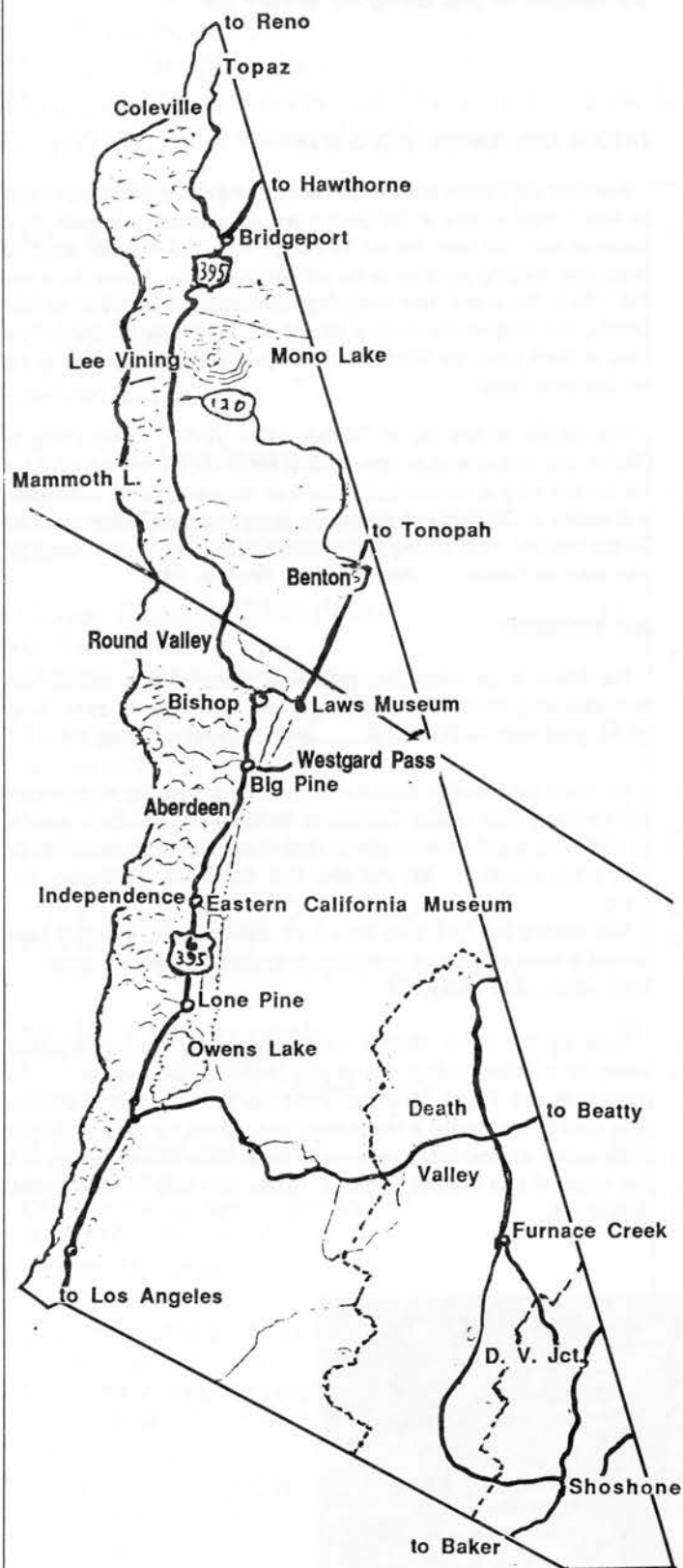
The following recipe, I sent in to Sunset Magazine and it was included in the sourdough section of their *Bread Cookbook* as well as appearing in an issue of the magazine.

1½ cups flour
½ cup rye flour
½ cup brown sugar - firmly packed
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. soda
½ cup buttermilk
½ cup salad oil
2 tsp. grated orange peel
¾ cup sourdough starter
1 egg - lightly beaten

In a bowl, mix together flours, brown sugar, salt and baking soda. Make a well in the center. Blend egg, milk and oil together; stir in orange peel and starter. Pour this mixture all at once into the flour well. Stir just to moisten ingredients, with about 12 to 15 full circular strokes that scrape the bottom of the bowl. The batter will still look lumpy.

Grease muffin cups or line with baking cup liners. Fill about ¾ full, and bake in a moderately hot oven (375°) for 30 to 35 minutes. Makes 12 to 15 muffins.

MONO COUNTY



INYO COUNTY

Editor's Corner



This quarter's ALBUM editorial aims to acquaint you with Joy Fatooh. Joy has published on her own as well as teaming up with Demila Jenner, whose profile you read in July, for some of your favorite articles.

Joy was born in San Francisco, soon moved across the bridge to San Anselmo where her first published work appeared in the local daily, the Independent-Journal: a letter to the editor objecting to a new comic strip. "My next, when I was a teenager," writes Joy, "was a letter to the editor of the weekly Pacific Sun in response to a debate on whether plants feel pain, which they printed with a photo above and a box around, much to my pride." (She contended plant pain would serve no purpose because plants couldn't move rapidly enough to avoid the source.)

"In 1974, I came to the Eastern Sierra with my future husband Kevin Hickey to work on an archaeology project, fell in love with Kevin and Old Benton and never left. I have worked as an artist, ranch hand, Middle Eastern dancer, teacher's aide, wildlife biologist's aide, and freelance writer. My varied interests are reflected in my work for Eastern Sierra newspapers and magazines, and I find that one of the best parts of writing is the field work: participating in a wildlife project, watching an accomplished artist at work, or researching a previously unpublished bit of history.

"I live in a 120-year-old stone house that has shown a tendency to fall down in major earthquakes. I have a son Corey; I grow a big garden most years; I get involved in local environmental issues; and I love running around in the desert and mountains. (I do not, as rumor would have it, ride a horse naked, nor am I independently wealthy and living below my means.) I have taken extension courses from just about every college that offers them and intend to enroll as a biology major at UNR next fall. My goal for the '90s is to decide what to be when I grow up."

Joy does all these things with grace and style. We hope she'll grow up to be a journalist. — Jane

Letters to the Editor

CORRECTION

In our July issue, we managed to advance an Indian war 100 years and add an equal number to Clara Shaw Eddy's age, which she graciously overlooked. On page 3, paragraph 5, please read "Indian war of the 1860s," and on page 21, paragraph 1, "interviewed in 1976 by Clara Shaw Eddy."

DO YOU REMEMBER?

I am delighted when I find a new issue of "The Album" in my mail. Two summers ago, my daughter Susan Dossey and her family discovered "The Album" while on a vacation in Mammoth. When she saw that the publisher was the Chalfant Press, she ordered a subscription for me. She and other members of my family have heard my stories about Will Chalfant during the 1920s and '30s. He was a familiar face on Bishop's Main Street as he walked into the office next door to chat with my father, Bert W. Holeman.

I have five of the books that Mr. Chalfant wrote and published. I also have a collection of Burton Fraser's photographs. These are enlarged to various sizes and arranged in four frames that hang on my wall. Will Chalfant is prominent in two of these frames. In one of these he is standing on the summit of Mt. Whitney on Labor Day 1928. With him on that day are George Diebert, Burton Fraser, Burt Johnson, Bill Parcher, Paul Ritch, (?) Phillips, Bert W. Holeman and . . . myself. Mr. Chalfant at age 62 was the oldest person in this group, and at 15, I was the youngest. Perhaps you have discovered Bill Parcher's humorous story about this event on the front page of his Inyo Independent, October 8, 1928. I have included it in my frames.

In the second frame are several glacial scenes taken on Palisade Glacier. In one of these, Will Chalfant, wearing his usual black hat, is the central figure of a much larger group of people. I am standing a few feet behind him. These scenes were sponsored and published by the All Year Club of Southern California. They were used as advertisements in several national magazines including the National Geographic and the Saturday Evening Post . . . **Charles D. Holeman, Torrance, Ca**

Mr. Holeman has other pictures with interesting stories, which we hope he will share with us in the future.

Enclosed are the prints that I spoke of. The Casa Diablo Geyser was near the Mammoth Lakes turnoff and the three people are my Mother and Dad and myself. The cabin at the Devil's Post Pile, my dog and myself on the porch. There is no trace of it now. The Rangers at the Post Pile have a copy of this print in their office I gave them a few years ago. The grave

on Old Mammoth Road does not have a rail fence around it now . . . **Roscoe and Margaret Severtson, Los Osos, CA**

The photo of the cabin is shown below. The others will show up with the treasures we hide among our sponsor ads.

FATOOH AND JENNER TAKE A BOW

Attention: Joy Fatooh and Demila Jenner: I enjoyed your story on Charlie Tant. I used to stay at Old Benton and knew Charlie very well. As a matter of fact I still have the old Tant dogs, have had them for about 30 years now, keeping as close to the old blood as I can. I know for a fact that I have the purest Tant bred dogs alive today. I hunted a lot with Charlie, and camped out many a time at the Rabbit Ranch, Dutch Pete Pass at Black Lake, the Windmill up on top of Wildrose, and also at the old Bramlette Ranch.

You mention at little dog of Charlie's called "Rocky." I gave Rocky to Charlie, and someone stole him. Back in those days there wasn't but a few families living at Benton Station and then there was Buster and Mabelle Bramlette at Old Benton and their son Marty and his wife and son. Has Benton changed much? It would be interesting to know. Again thanks for your story on Charlie . . . **Bergin Riddle, Reserve, NM**

JOB SECURITY!

The Album is an outstanding publication. Each issue is packed with most interesting information. I read each copy from cover to cover. Keep up the good work — **FOREVER . . . Jack Stuckman, Hemet, CA**

We found the historical accounts so fascinating, covering every square inch of history from familiar Coleville to familiar Shoshone. Each issue is so captivating you don't dare miss a single item! Thank you for publishing such a fine journal! . . . **Mr. and Mrs. R.A. Schwandt, Wellington, NV**

After reading the April 1990 issue I am convinced that I couldn't have devised a more entertaining Inyo-Mono magazine if I tried. It is great! . . . **Scott Miller, Simi Valley, CA**

Since my first trip in 1946 to your lovely country I've had a special feeling for it. (After reading) one of your recent articles I visited . . . the Petroglyphs and Pizona Meadows. From the latter I collected obsidian chips used by the Paiutes in tool making, and present the chips to children in our region. At least three times yearly I'm in Mono County, always with past issues of your beautiful magazine. Please don't stop . . . **Ron Lyons, Soquel, CA**



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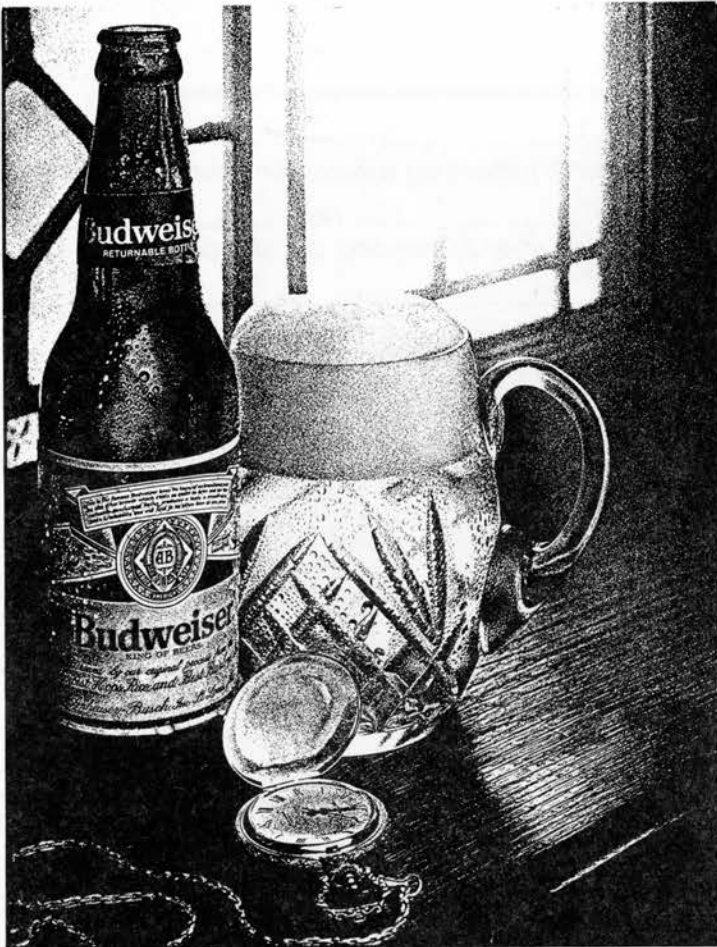
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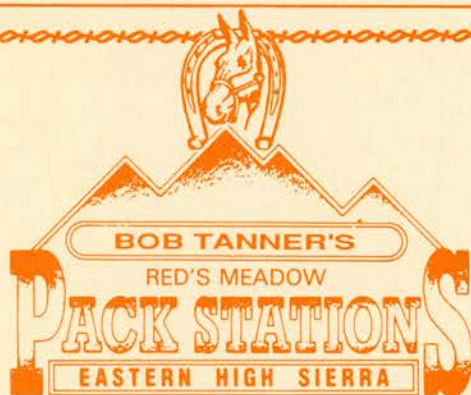
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