

The Album

*Winter/Spring
1994-95*



Times & Tales of Inyo-Mono

THE ALBUM

Times and Tales of Inyo - Mono

Winter/Spring 1994-95

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In This Issue

THE MURDER OF NANCY WILLIAMS

a Darwin story

by Robert P. Palazzo.....2

ROUTE 395 ODESSEY 1941

two girls, two bikes

by Willma Willis Gore.....9

ARCH MAHAN'S MAMMOTH

memories and tribute

by Bob Tanner and Arch Mahan.....20

ALNEY LEE McGEE, PART II

Pioneer, Indian Fighter, Cattleman

by George L. Garrigues.....25

DESERT WHIMSEY

a bit of fun

by Tom Budlong.....36

THE JORDAN TRAGEDY

of avalanches and heroism

by Barbara Moore.....38

DISASTER AND RICHES IN SNOW COUNTRY

of avalanches and tall tales

by Chris J. Wright.....48

THE VENITA

the ghost of a livelier Mono Lake

by David A. Wright.....54

LEE VINING'S FIRST LADY HYDRO-OPERATOR

a long and happy life

by Eunice M. Yongue.....63

LAST OF THE LITTER AND

THE GOLDEN WEDDING

by Babe Rossi Harwood.....76

A PLACE IN TIME

Pioneers of Long Valley

by Marye Roeser.....84

AN OCEAN VIEW

from Big Pine

by Willma Willis Gore.....97

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Cover Photo: Remains of a stone house near the shore of Oneida Lake, Lundy Canyon area. Paw Prints photograph, by Chris J. Wright, who recalls a visit to the May Lundy Mine and stories of another avalanche, page 48.

This collection of Eastern Sierra history for *THE ALBUM* is our first edition of an annual. There are many stories yet to tell and we hope to continue to collect and record them.

People have often said, "Why don't you write a book about the history of the east side?" How could one person's perspective equal the colorful variety of these writers' voices? Some tell of their own memories, personally recalled or handed down through the family. Others have put hours into research and money into reproductions of photographs to aid in picturing history as it happened. Still others share a lifetime hobby of exploration.

Come with these writers who take you to where the Old West and the New mingle in the shadow of the Sierra.

—Jane Fisher, Editor

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.

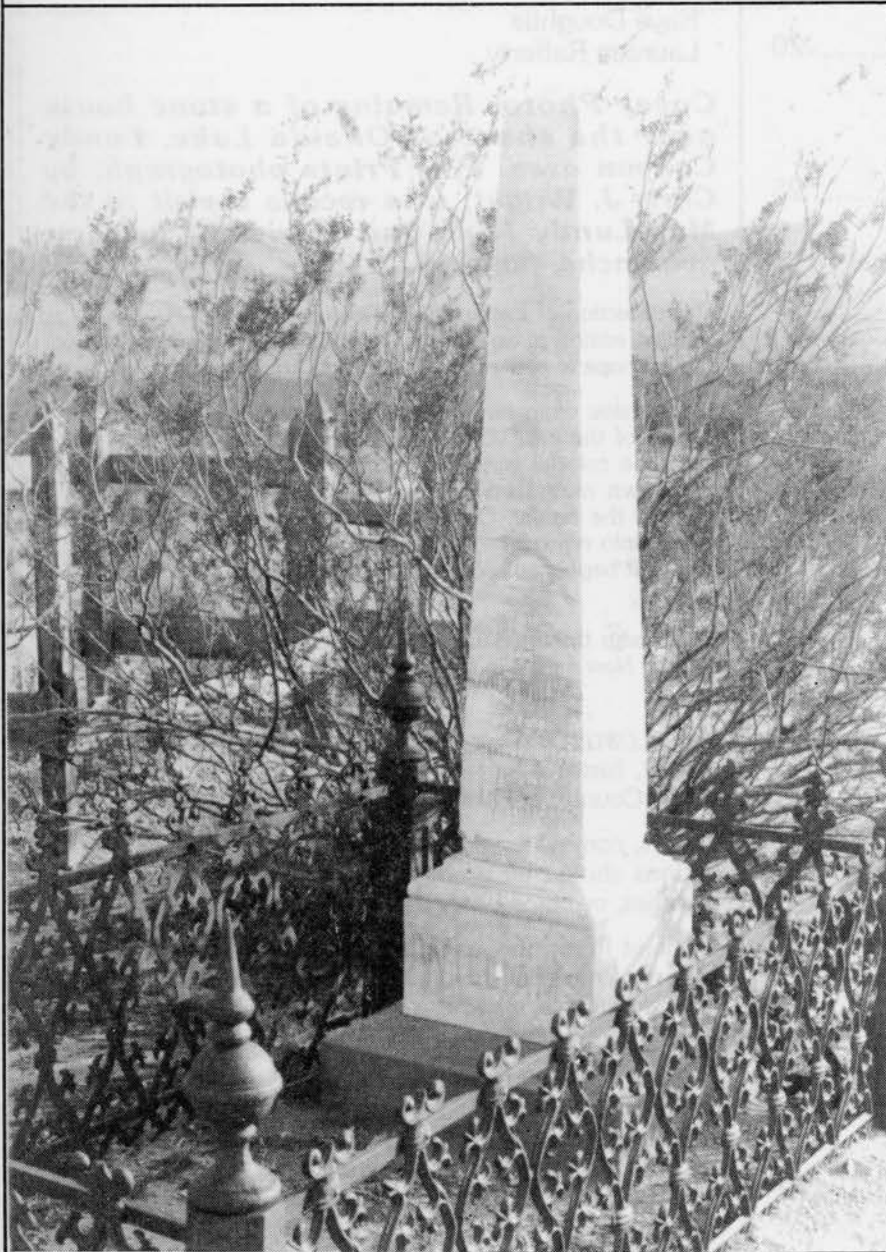
Letters, comments, and contributions are welcome; contributions should be accompanied by photos, documents, sketches, or maps.

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The Summer/Fall issue of *THE ALBUM* this year will feature some short subjects, bits of history and interesting discoveries from Neill Olds, Mike Hesse, Deric English, Al Blythe, Johnnie Rossi (a 4th grader who tells his story of how Tom's Place got its name), Robert C. Nibecker, and perhaps more, as well as the usual lengthy chronicles of our past.

The MURDER of Nancy Williams

by Robert P. Palazzo



The most prominent marker in the Darwin Cemetery is a tall marble obelisk giving the following information:

**TO THE MEMORY
of
NANCY WILLIAMS**

**Died
Sept. 13, 1877**

**AGED
45 Years**

MINING NEWS.

at Intelligence.

*Coso Mining
News clipping*

ARREST.—On the 5th instant Jerry was arrested for stealing a m Antonie Creland's ch. and on night before Judge Gould, on the tried, found guilty, and sentenced a fine of \$20 or go to jail for 30 days.

SHIPMENTS.—On the 5th instant Emigrant Mining Company bars of bullion, weighing 151½, valued at \$1,500. On the same Minnetta Belle shipped 6 bars, 422 pounds, valued at \$5,000. On the Minnetta Belle shipped 5 bars, 391½ pounds, valued at same day the Emigrant shipped is, valued at \$1,250.

ARRIVALS.—Among the noted this week we cannot overlook that Dave Rodgers, the expert who all over Montana, Idaho, Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington and Rhode Island. He came in Independence to take a look at mines, and, while desiring a position, he will not accept anything a Superintendency. Give him a

MINNETTA BELLE.—One stopping in the Minnetta mine is still being prosecuted the most flattering result as to and prospects for a continuous ore body. The work of development on the Union is being driven with extraordinary success, some being disclosed. The prospect beyond is also very flattering, glory being already developed. Tunnel on this mine, which fully this large ledge is making good

Three shifts of men are employed the prospects are truly good. Portions of the mine the usual is apparent and the work of excavation being rapidly under. The mining steadily on ore from South ta. Owing to some delay necessary repairs for the usual id tear the shipment of bullion work is lessened by two bars than otherwise have been the case. In everything is running splendidly, at this mine has done in the past is pride to what it will turn out in

MURDER AT DARWIN.—A gentleman who arrived here from Darwin Thursday evening says that on the previous night Nancy Williams, alias "Feather Legs," the keeper of a lodging house in that place, was murdered for her money. Three Mexicans are under arrest for the crime. The inquest was in progress at the time the gentleman left, Thursday morning.

HORRIBLE MURDER!

An Old Woman Has Her Skull Broken in Her Own House—The Murderer Escapes.

Again we are compelled to chronicle a murder in Darwin, one most foul and atrocious, and which will not reflect very favorably upon the fame of this place. Nancy Williams, the murdered woman, who was keeping a lodging house here, is well known in most every town in Nevada, Idaho and California, and, although leading a dissolute life, she bore the reputation of being one of the kindest and most liberal of women, alleviating distress by her means whenever an opportunity offered, and giving from her purse to all public enterprises. She was supposed to have about her person or secreted in her house quite a large sum of money, and to obtain this booty undoubtedly was the incentive to the murder. The murder was committed sometime during the night of the 12th instant, but her dead body was not discovered until four o'clock next morning. It was promptly taken charge of by M. J. McManus, J. P., who, acting as Coroner, summoned a jury, held an examination, and the following evidence was elicited:

JOHN MCGINNIS SWORN.

"I went to Nancy's house about 4 o'clock this morning, and struck a match as I went in the hall-way. I saw that her trunk was open, her hat on the bed and everything in disorder. I came out and got some matches from McKean's who were gambling next door. I went back and saw her lying on the floor. I thought she was intoxicated, but looking again saw blood on her face. I left, and with Mr. Giles found Constable Welch and we went down and found her lying on her face, dead."

ISAAC R. GILES SWORN.

About 4½ o'clock I was taking lunch at the Chop House. Mr. McGinnis came in and said that Nancy was murdered. Found Constable Welch and went down to her house. Saw her lying in the room, dead. There was no signs of any one having occupied the house that night."

W. F. WELCH SWORN.

I went down to Nancy's house at 4½ o'clock this morning and found her lying dead. I found hid in two oyster cans \$40.25 in silver, one Defiance Company's check for \$382, and some Defiance Company's tickets; also receipt for \$200 remitted by W. F. & Co. to Masonic Bank, San Francisco."

F. P. HOWARD, M. D. SWORN.

Am a practicing physician and surgeon. Have examined the body of Nancy Williams and made post mortem examination. I found four wounds on her head, three on the left side and one on the back. One of

THE PUBLIC AROUSED!

Enthusiastic Meeting of the Citizens to take Steps to Effect the Arrest and Conviction of the Murderers of Nancy Williams.

The atrocious murder of poor old Nancy Williams worked up our citizens to such a pitch that it was thought proper to call a meeting, last Thursday evening, to take active steps for effecting the arrest and conviction of the person or persons guilty of the horrible deed. Accordingly "Old Kentucky" was employed to ring the bell to summon the people to assemble at the school-house, and in a few minutes a large crowd had come together. S. G. Stebbins was chosen as Chairman, and in a few brief but pointed remarks stated the object of the meeting, which was to take effective steps for the arrest and conviction of the murderers, as also to sustain our officers in the discharge of their duties, to the end that we may have better law and order in Darwin. James D. Sharp was elected Secretary, when the following resolution was introduced and unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That we the undersigned, citizens of Darwin and vicinity, hereby agree to pay the sum set opposite our respective names, for the arrest and conviction of the party or parties who murdered Nancy Williams on the 12th of September, 1877."

Sheriff Thomas Passmore, being present, arose and after stating the necessity for doing something for preventing crime in this county, said he would offer a reward, as Sheriff, of \$250, and besides would contribute \$50 himself. Remarks to the same import were made by Mr. C. F. O'Brien, Judge A. J. Gould, Timothy Hart and others. The Secretary, having prepared a paper in accordance with the resolution adopted, all present were invited to step forward and sign in such amounts as they saw fit or could afford. Within the space of half an hour the following gentlemen placed their names upon the list and have agreed, and will, pay the amount set opposite their respective names: Thos. Passmore, Sheriff, \$250; Thos. Passmore, personally, \$50; C. F. O'Brien, \$50; O. M. Parls, \$25; T. S. Harris, \$20; Roddy & Wilson, \$40; W. F. Welch & Co., \$40; S. Lewinsoln, \$30; Timothy Hart, \$10; J. P. Colp, \$10; H. A. McGaffry, \$5; Chris Reiter, \$10; S. G. Stebbins, \$10; Phillip Hirman, \$5; John Cronigh, \$20; A. J. Gould, \$250; C. F. Sharp, \$20; Martin Mee, \$20; J. M. Hicks, \$5; John Pavlo, 5; Mark Brannan, \$5; Frank Molloy, \$5; J. W. Sharp, \$30; S. Tribolet, \$5; J. M. Brown, \$5; Kern and Inyo Stage Company, per J. P. Taylor, Agent, \$50; Fred Spills, \$5; J. S. Gorman, \$5; T. J. Noland, \$5; H. W. Woods, \$20; E. S. Williams, \$10; A. A. Palle, \$10; Peter Taylor, \$5; H. Wisdom, \$10.

Left: Inyo Independent clipping

Who was Nancy Williams, really? The popular story told by long-time Darwin residents is that Nancy Williams was the only woman hung in the State of California. Unfortunately this, like most other stories about Darwin that have been passed down by word of mouth, is not true.

We do not know very much about this popular mining camp woman, nor do we even have a photograph of her. Although the details of the life of Nancy Williams are sparse, the story of her death can be pieced together with a bit of research.

Nancy Williams was murdered on September 12, 1877 by a person or persons unknown, who beat her head with a blunt instrument three times on the left side and once on the back. According to Dr. F.P. Howard who performed the post-mortem examination, any one of the blows could have been fatal and the wound on the back of the head fractured her skull.

The COSO MINING NEWS of September 15, 1877 described her as *"... well known in most every town in Nevada, Idaho and California, and, although leading a dissolute life, she bore the reputation of being one of the kindest and most liberal of women, alleviating distress by her means whenever an opportunity offered, and giving from her purse to all public enterprises."*

Although the paper mentions that she *"was keeping a lodging house here,"* it seems clear from the above quote what her true occupation was. This fact is further confirmed by the INYO INDEPENDENT of September 15, 1877 which had a small column entitled *"MURDER IN DARWIN"* where it states that *"... Nancy Williams, alias 'Feather Legs', the keeper of a lodging house at that place, [Darwin] was murdered for her money. Three Mexicans are under arrest for the crime."* She again was referred to as having kept a lodging house, however, "Feather Legs" is not the usual appellation for an innkeeper. It is possible that at the time of her death she had retired from the world's oldest profession and was indeed just keeping a lodging house.

Although the INYO INDEPENDENT reported that three Mexicans were arrested for the murder, it was reported in a later issue that Sheriff Passmore returned from an extended trip southward where *"He was engaged for a time in an effort to work up the Nancy Williams murder at Darwin..."* It does not appear that the three Mexicans were ever convicted of the murder.

Shortly after the murder, a public meeting was called, the purpose of which was to take effective steps for the arrest and conviction of the murderers. Sheriff Thomas Passmore offered a \$250 reward as Sheriff and an additional \$50 personally. Then, all pre-



Oliver Roberts

sent were invited to step forward and pledge *"such amounts as they saw fit or could afford."* Within a half hour, sixty-five of Darwin's prominent citizens and businesses came forward with pledges in the amount of \$1,270.

The reward notices were then distributed to Darwin, Lookout, Minnietta Belle Mine, Luck Jim Mine, Lee District and Crystal Springs. (It is interesting to note that J.J. Gunn was one of the two men responsible for the distribution of the reward notices in Lookout. This is the first mention of him in Darwin and firmly establishes him as a Darwin pioneer with probably the greatest longevity in the region.)

This action certainly confirms Nancy Williams' popularity and high standing in the community. It seems that in addition to the prominent marker in the cemetery, the Darwin people performed another service for her in death. Although the COSO MINING NEWS mentioned that she was about 50 years old, when the monument was erected, it discretely gave her age as 45.

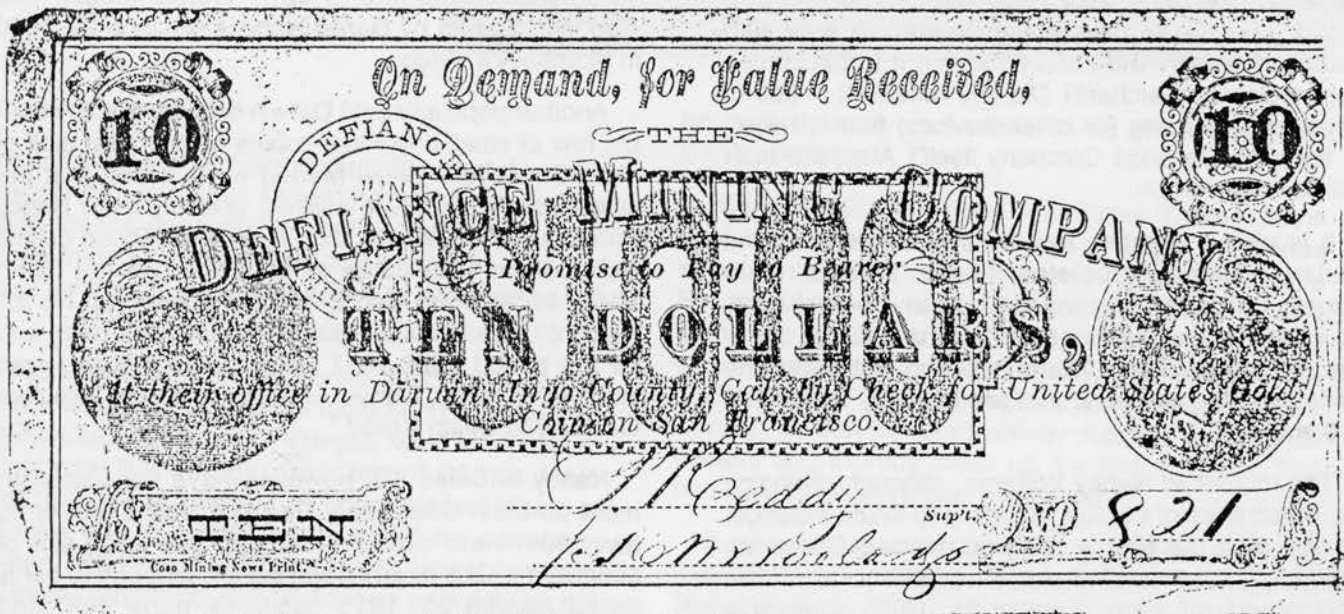
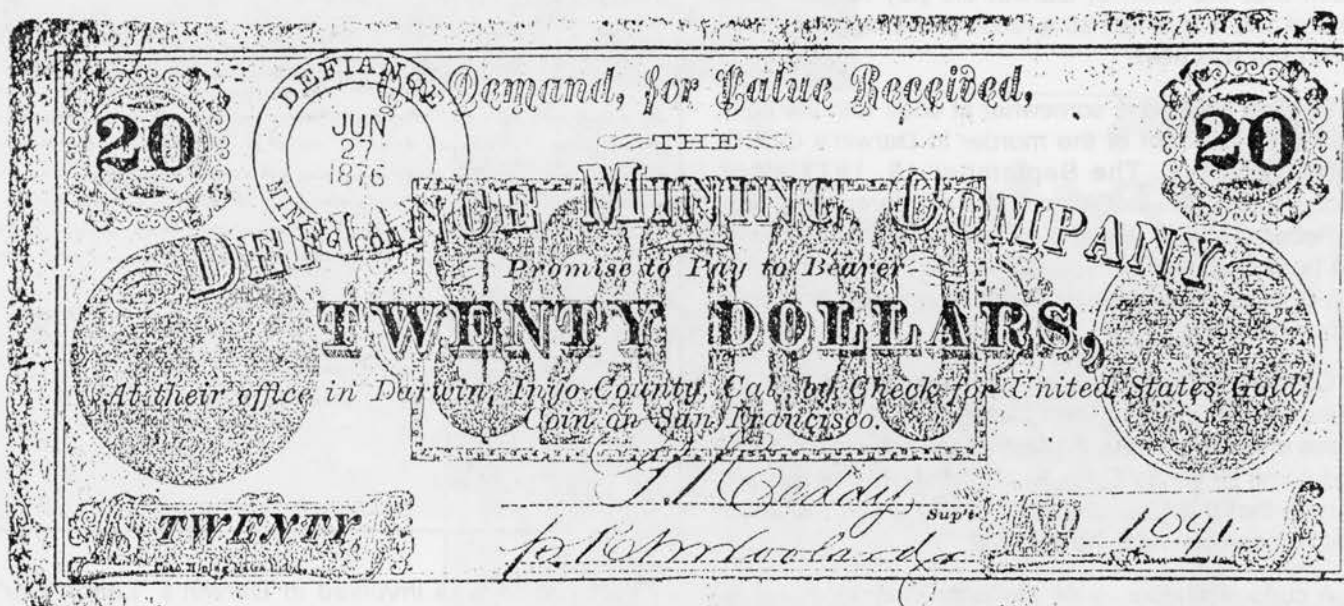
Roger McGrath in *GUNFIGHTERS, HIGHWAYMEN, AND VIGILANTES*, commenting on the fact that a prostitute was given a Christian burial, though outside the fence of the Bodie Cemetery, stated that "Social ostracism for prostitutes extended even to the graveyard." This certainly was not the case in Darwin.

In the *GREAT UNDERSTANDER*, Oliver Roberts infers that Jack McGinnis was the murderer of "Felter Legs" (the *GREAT UNDERSTANDER* was compiled from Roberts' written notes and his handwriting was probably such that "Feather" looked like "Felter" to the compiler). However, when Roberts' reminiscences were published in *THE PONY EXPRESS* (supposedly verbatim, directly from Roberts' original 1897 man-

script), not only did Jack McGinnis confess to the murder on his deathbed, but Roberts claimed to have been the person to discover the body as well. Earlier in the same year (May 15, 1877) Jack McGinnis shot and killed George Hersh.

Roberts was acting Constable of Darwin that week when Johnny Mann woke Roberts up at four in the morning shouting "I'm afraid there is something wrong down to 'Felter Legs' house." Roberts goes on to clarify that "this was the name given to an old time 'fairy' that had reformed and was now keeping a lodging house."

Roberts and Mann went to her house and saw where blood had run from out of the edge of the house



onto the board sidewalk. Roberts first tried the door, found it locked then kicked the door in where he found "Felter Legs on the floor with her head split wide open from upper lip to back of head (sic). The hatchet that had done the work lay on the floor beside her . . . The whole room had been ransacked."

Two days later, the coroner from Independence arrived and with Roberts searched the house for money but found nothing. Roberts suggested they burn the mattress and then cut it to pieces. ". . . and in one corner we found nearly \$600 in gold. This paid the costs of burying and other expenses."

From Roberts' account, it seems that the pledged reward money was never paid and that the town did not pay for her funeral or monument. Other writers claim that the town of Darwin did pay for both the funeral and monument as a result of the high regard in which she was held.

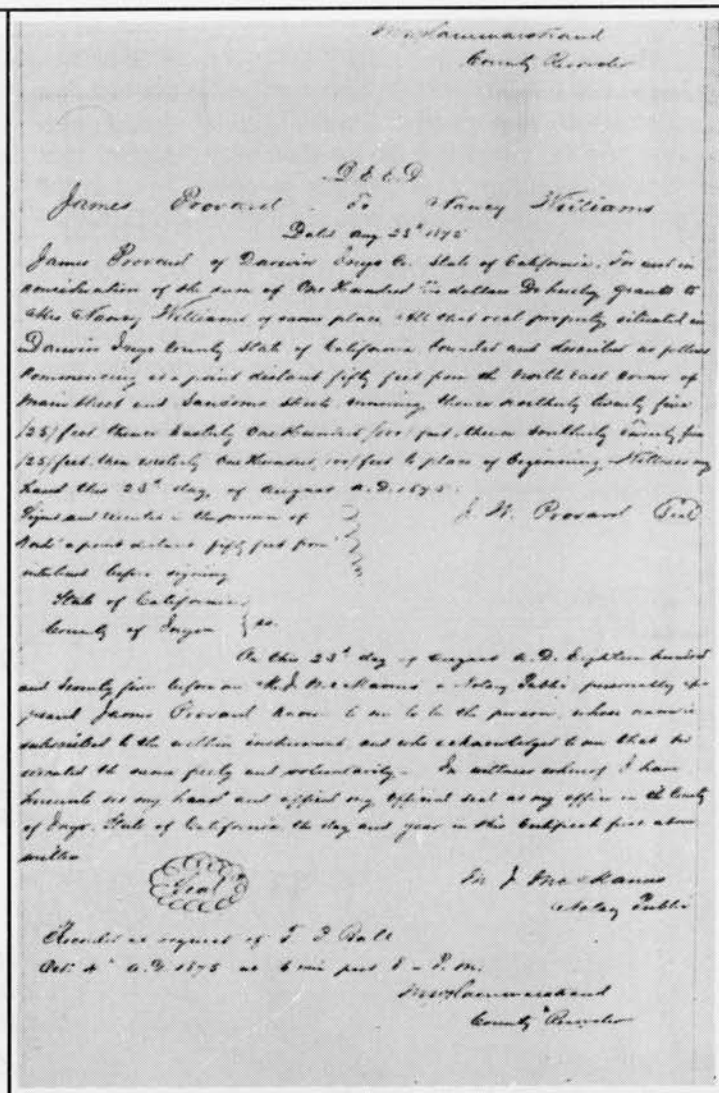
Roberts' version is somewhat at odds with the contemporary account of the murder in Darwin's COSO MINING NEWS. The September 15, 1877 story quotes from John McGinnins' (the murderer according to Roberts) sworn Grand Jury testimony that he found the body first, went to find Constable Welch (no mention of Constable Roberts) and they returned and confirmed her dead.

Constable Welch's sworn testimony states that he found \$40.25 in silver, one Defiance Company check in the amount of \$382, a Wells Fargo receipt for \$200 and some Defiance Company boletas. It is interesting to note that the total of these roughly equal the \$600 that Roberts claims to have found.

A curious sidebar is the Defiance Company check. It is possible that this could be a check from the Defiance Company payable to Nancy Williams or it could have been payable to someone else and endorsed to her. Did Nancy receive it in circulation from a Darwin merchant? Did she receive it in lieu of payment for lodging (or other services) from a miner, or from the Defiance Company itself? Alas, the truth will never be known.

It is also interesting to note the reference to the Defiance Company boletas. These "boletas" were actually Defiance Company scrip, which freely circulated as money in Darwin at that time due to the shortage of hard currency. The only denominations of the Defiance Company scrip that are currently known are \$10 and \$20.

The murder of Nancy Williams, although offending the sensibilities of Darwin, did not stop future violence. Shortly after the Nancy Williams murder, Constable Welch shot and killed Antonio Mesquito in the Boultinghouse Saloon (October 28, 1877). Constable



Welch also was involved in Darwin's "Labor War" when he shot and killed C.M. Delehenty on May 28, 1878, also in the line of duty. Welch himself was stabbed to death by Daniel Harkins on June 29, 1880 in Morrissey's Saloon.

Another popularly held Darwin belief is that the double row of small one room cabins on the west side of Main Street just below Market were "cribs" that the soiled doves of Darwin utilized, possibly even Nancy Williams herself. Again, this is not true. Those cabins were built in 1929-30 as tourist cabins for the Death Valley traffic when Bob Eichbaum opened up his toll road into Death Valley. Darwin was on this road, and for the period 1926-1937 when it was the only road into Death Valley, Darwin was known as the "Western Gateway to Death Valley."

Nancy Williams did, however, have her establishment on Main Street about a block and a half or so away from these cabins on the opposite (east) side of Main Street. The deed conveying the property to her is dated August 23, 1875 (Book G, page 598) and



*"Tourist Cabins"
of
Darwin*



describes its location as:

"commencing at a point distant fifty feet from the Northeast corner of Main Street and Sansome streets, running thence northerly twenty-five feet thence easterly one hundred feet thence southerly twenty-five feet thence westerly one hundred feet to place of beginning."*

As can be seen from the above description, Nancy Williams' establishment would have been next door to the New Coso Store a.k.a. Villegas Meat Market (and what is now the southern portion of 230 S. Main Street). Roberts mentions it as being the last house at the lower end of town, which would be accurate. Between this location and the wash probably would have been commercial establishments or buildings, not

houses, the only one of which we know being the Darwin Brewery.

*Sansome Street is now Reno Street. There is some confusion to this day as to the location of various streets in Darwin such as Darwin Street, Sansome Street, Broadway, etc. which do not exist on today's maps. Nor did they on the "Official" Map of 1908, made when President Taft deeded the townsite and its lots to Judge Weber (the highest ranking official of the County) so that he could convey them to their rightful owners and thereby clean up the title problems that had existed for more than twenty years.

It now can be clarified once and for all that the Sansome Street of 1875-1878 is now known as Reno Street (and was also listed as Reno Street on the 1980

Map.) This can be proven by the November 15, 1875 issue of the COSO MINING NEWS which states:

"The Town is laid off in rectangular blocks, with wide streets to secure protection in case of fire. Main street and its numerous parallels course southwestwardly, and are intersected by cross streets at right-angles. The principal of these cross streets, commencing at the northern end of town and following each other as named, are Reddy (on which the NEWS office is located on the first block west from Main), Market, Fulton, Sansome, etc."

The present streets are Reddy, (not Ready as the current street sign states), Market, Fulton, Reno, etc.

The full story of Nancy Williams may never be known. Her life was shrouded in mystery as was her death. A common practice for most of the mining camp "soiled doves" was not to use their real names while plying their trade. A simple "Sadie" or "Allie" would do, as would a colorful nickname "Diamond Tooth Lil" or "Madame Moustache." When enough time passed, necessitating a change of professions or retirement if enough money was saved, a name change usually went with it. The name change would either be a reversion to her original name or a brand new name for a

brand new start. As was the case with Nancy Williams, it was not always easy to forget the past or create a false past if one was particularly popular.

The killer or killers of Nancy Williams were never found or punished for the murder. The large obelisk is mute testimony to the popularity of this woman. The people of Darwin probably erected it with Nancy's own money, found with her body. A more common practice in the 1970s in the boom towns of the Far West was for the money to "disappear" or escheat to the Probate Court, sheriff, town, county, etc.

Nancy Williams did not rest in peace after her murder. In the 1940s the monument on her grave was used for target practice by miners who worked for Anaconda in Darwin's newly reopened mines. Sheriff Cline was prevailed upon to come to Darwin and have a little talk with the miners. The target practice sessions abruptly ended.

The final chapter was written a little later when some overzealous tourist stole the Nancy Williams grave footstone. It mysteriously arrived by mail in Darwin with a note attached, "Please put this back on Nancy's grave so that she will stop haunting us." It was and she did. *



Author Robert P. Palazzo in front of site of Nancy Williams' murder. The cabin was built at a later date.

INYO-MONO

— America's Range of Recreation —

ROUTE 395 ODESSEY 1941

by Willma Willis Gore, with grateful acknowledgment for photos, trip diary, brochure covers, and scrapbook of Ellen Lautzenhiser Fuller.

On August, 28, 1994, more than 200 men and women bicyclers left Los Angeles Department of Water and Power for the 15th annual multi-gearped Bikeathon. Clad in brightly-hued spandex "speedos" and the required safety helmets, each scooped a tiny vial of precious Owens Valley water from the DWP reflecting pool on Hope Street, and headed out for Mono Lake, 350 miles north.

A SAG (support and gear) vehicle carried tents, sleeping bags, snacks and drinks. Some participants rode along for only one or two days of the trip, but six days later, in a solemn rehydration ceremony, they dumped their tiny containers, like stored tears, into the brackish Mono Lake.

The annual trek of these bicycle and reclamation enthusiasts reminds me of a far less auspicious bicycle trip made by my UCLA friend Ellen and me in 1941. We had no such esoteric goals as symbolically "saving" Mono Lake. We didn't suspect then that it would ever require salvation. Fifty years ago the streams that splashed eastward out of the High Sierra into the Mono basin still fed the lake, and the waters of Mono Lake lapped shores literally at the edge of Highway 395.

A life-long resident of Owens Valley, I had completed my first year at UCLA by the summer of 1941. Among my dorm mates in Westwood was a new friend whose love of adventure was akin to mine. In one of our "what-if" talk fests we conjured a plan. We would bicycle that summer from my home in Lone Pine to Mono Lake and return, a round trip of 308 miles. Several other dorm mates agreed it would be great fun and "signed on" with enthusiasm.

Insert: Coeds Willma (left) and Ellen leave Willis Dairy, Lone Pine, on June 9, 1941



The Dow HOTEL
AIR CONDITIONED
SLEEP IN THE SHADOW OF MT. WHITNEY - THE NATION'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

13 MILES TO MT. WHITNEY
 ALT. 14,496 FT.

STARTING PLACE FOR BOTH THE LOWEST AND HIGHEST POINTS IN THE UNITED STATES

78 MILES TO DEATH VALLEY
 287 FT BELOW SEA LEVEL

DOW HOTEL LONE PINE, CALIF.
 AIR CONDITIONED - - - STEAM HEATED
 * * * EUROPEAN PLAN * * *

I contacted Bob Brown, then executive secretary of the Inyo-Mono Association in Bishop. He declared the idea an excellent promotion for the fledgling promotional organization and promised us gratis lodging and meals at intervals along Route 395. Unlike today's Bikeathoners, we scheduled side trips to Glacier Lodge on Big Pine Creek, Whitmore Tubs, and Hot Creek along the approach to Mammoth. Bob would meet us at various spots to shoot photographs. I sent him the names of the five who would make the planned 12-day trek.

By "D" (Departure) Day, for various reasons, mainly anxious parents, four of the five girls could not go. Only Ellen Lautzenhiser of Monrovia was able to persuade her parents that she was sufficiently mature to handle the adventure and assured them that, after all, she would be in the company of an Owens Valley "native" who "knew everybody."

Ellen and I arrived at my Willis Dairy home in Lone Pine in time to sort, pack, and re-pack our gear, and make last minute purchases at Lone Pine's Sprouse Reitz where my younger sister clerked for the proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Raye.

Our bicycles were Sears Roebuck models, by then several years old. We christened them "Inyo" and "Mono" for our historic safari. They had balloon tires and 26" wheels but no gears to aid our climb from 3,000' at Lone Pine to the highest point between there and our Mono Lake destination, 9,000' Lake Mary in the Mammoth group.

My dad, Roy Willis, entered into the spirit of the adventure and fashioned luggage racks for our rear fenders out of old refrigerator shelves. Instructing us with packing demonstrations learned in his cowboy days, he taught us to wrap our gear in canvas and knot the tie-down cords securely.

We cut four-inch high letters - U, C, L, A - from cardboard, wrapped them in blue and gold bias tape and sewed them to the backs of our sweatshirts, creating an early version of the ubiquitous slogan-tees of today. Our first aid kit contained Mercurochrome, zinc oxide and bandaids for ourselves, and inch-wide adhesive tape and fingernail polish for tire leaks.



decided that walking was the best choice. We worked as hard keeping the bikes from rolling away from us down the hill as we had worked the day before pushing them up that grade.

From Big Pine to Bishop was "a piece of cake." The highway then was two-way and uncrowded. We could ride a mile or more, side by side, occupying the entire northbound lane, without encountering a single vehicle, chatting as we wheeled along. I pointed out Warren's Hot Springs against the foothills just north of Big Pine, where I'd gone swimming as a child, wearing the standard-issue, one-piece gray suits provided by the establishment. Farther along was the site of the cattle ranch where I was born, then Keough's Hot Springs. During my high school years, mother drove my sisters and me in the trusty Model A sedan over 50 miles from Lone Pine to Keough's so that we could enjoy Saturday night dances to live music on the pavilion floor. Ellen and I enjoyed a swim in the (then still public) warm plunge before heading out for Bishop.

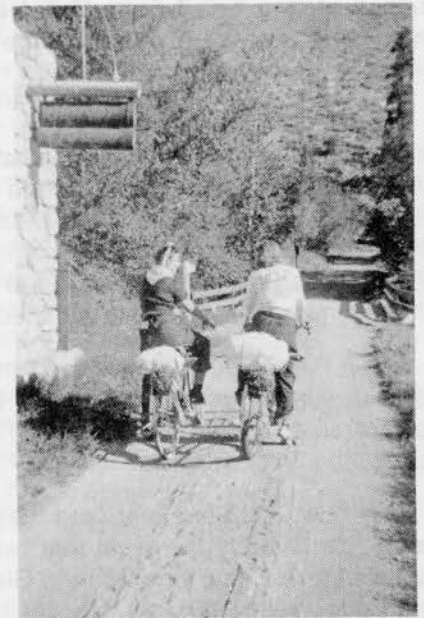
Below: Willma (left) points out day's destination, Glacier Lodge, as they pause at the Big Pine Creek bridge on Hwy. 395.

Top: They hitch a ride in the Glacier Lodge service truck.

Center: They discreetly get out of the truck and bicycle up the drive to Glacier Lodge.

Opposite: Willma catches up on much-needed mending at Glacier Lodge.

Ellen tries her luck in Big Pine Creek with creek-side fashioned pole.



On Monday morning June 9, the dawn was accompanied by a strong wind blowing from the north. My father, who had been up since 2 a.m. to milk the cows, told us not to worry. "She blows only three days in one direction, then turns around and blows the other way."

Thus assured that the wind would be at our backs three days hence – if we lasted that long – we set off. The towering Sierra on the west and the Inyo range on the east were familiar to me, but they were astonishing monuments to Ellen, who had never before seen landscapes that bent upward in such spectacular faces.

Our destination that day, Glacier Lodge, was 53 miles from our starting point – not, we felt, beyond our capabilities. However we had not counted on such a strong headwind. Reluctantly (and with embarrassment) we accepted a ride in the bed of a pickup for part of the way.

On the Inyo Mountains horizon, we located that vertical finger of legend, the natural stone monument, Winnedumah, its name preserved in Independence's historic hotel. Farther north, we paused to point out Charlie's Butte, the fabled volcanic mound where an Afro-American cowboy lost his life to an Indian arrow when he missed lassoing his stampeding horse.

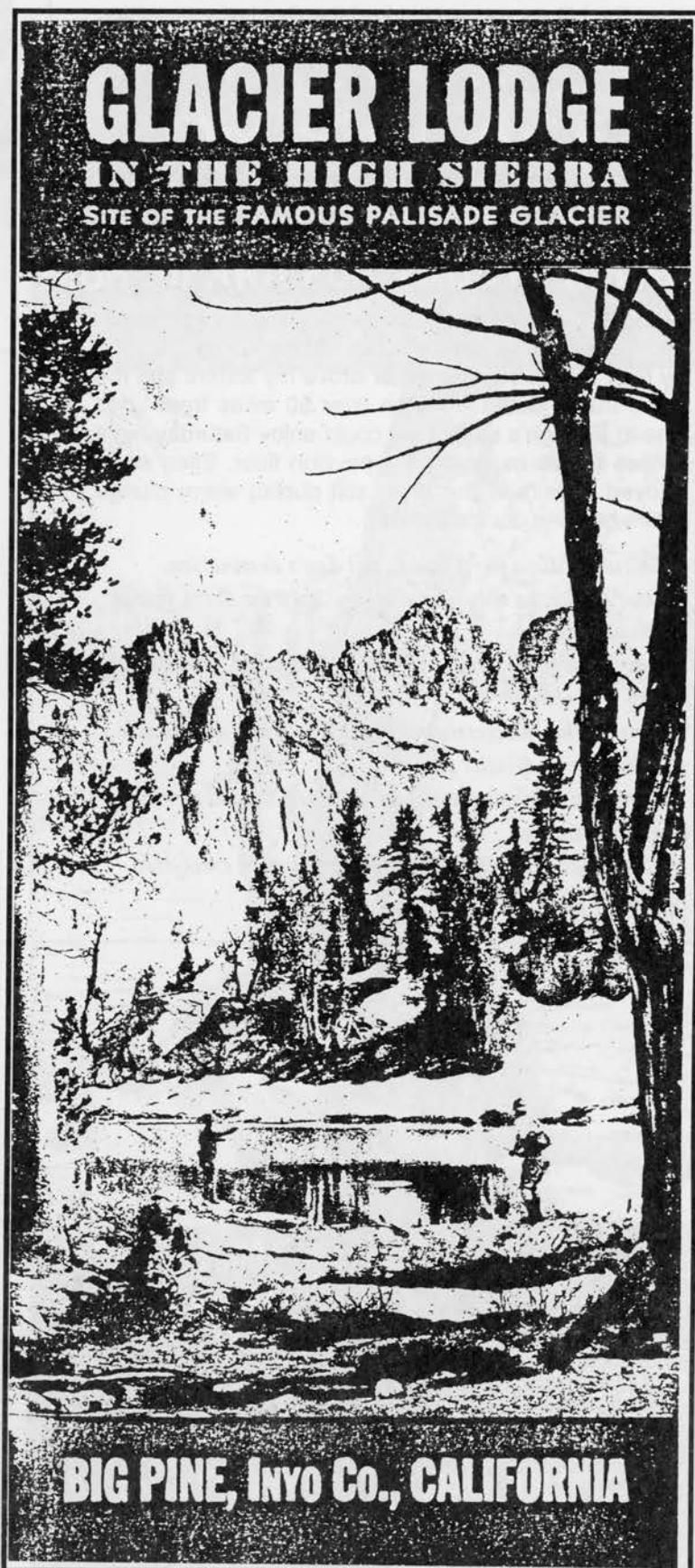
At Big Pine, 4,000' elevation, 11 miles short of our day's destination at Glacier Lodge, the road angled upward steeply, too steep to ride. We walked and pushed the first five miles.

Only now, 52 years later (and with Ellen's concurrence), am I ready to reveal that twice that day we accepted a ride, this time with the Glacier Lodge service truck driver. He kindly deposited us discreetly at a birch tree thicket where the road turned off into Glacier Lodge at 8,000'. We extracted his promise not to tell on us.

We were housed that night in one of the Lodge cabins, leaning our bikes against the outside walls. It did not occur to us to carry locks or take any security precautions. In those "good old days" it wasn't necessary.

On our second morning, we and the sun hit Bertha Hall's Glacier Lodge breakfast table at the same time. Ready to roll after a syrup-logged pancake breakfast, we encountered our first calamity. Mono's rear tire was flat. With the help of the cabin boy we appealed to one auto-driving visitor after another until we found a tire pump and an owner willing to assist with a patch.

On the trip down we were "flying low" until our brakes began to give off a peculiar odor. We stopped to investigate and learned – when Ellen blistered her finger on a brake drum – that they were fiery hot. We



That night we were fed and housed at Bishop's Inyo-Mono Inn, "an ultra-modern hotel with air conditioning," according to Ellen's trip log entry. We left a message to be called at 3:45 a.m.

We made the 20 miles to Paradise Camp that day and bedded down early. Sherwin Grade was ahead, the old Sherwin Grade now called Rock Creek Canyon Route. On Thursday morning set set off in the pale light at 4:30 a.m. and reached the 6,433' summit in two and a half hours.

Here at the crest we looked back toward Bishop, over the miles we had covered and ahead toward the miles still to go. If we turned back here we could coast to Bishop. Certainly a temptation. So far we had done more pushing than riding. Ahead was another grade. About 800' of the 1,400' we had just gained would be lost in one steep drop. Then the climb would be steady and long to the highest point of our trip near Mammoth.

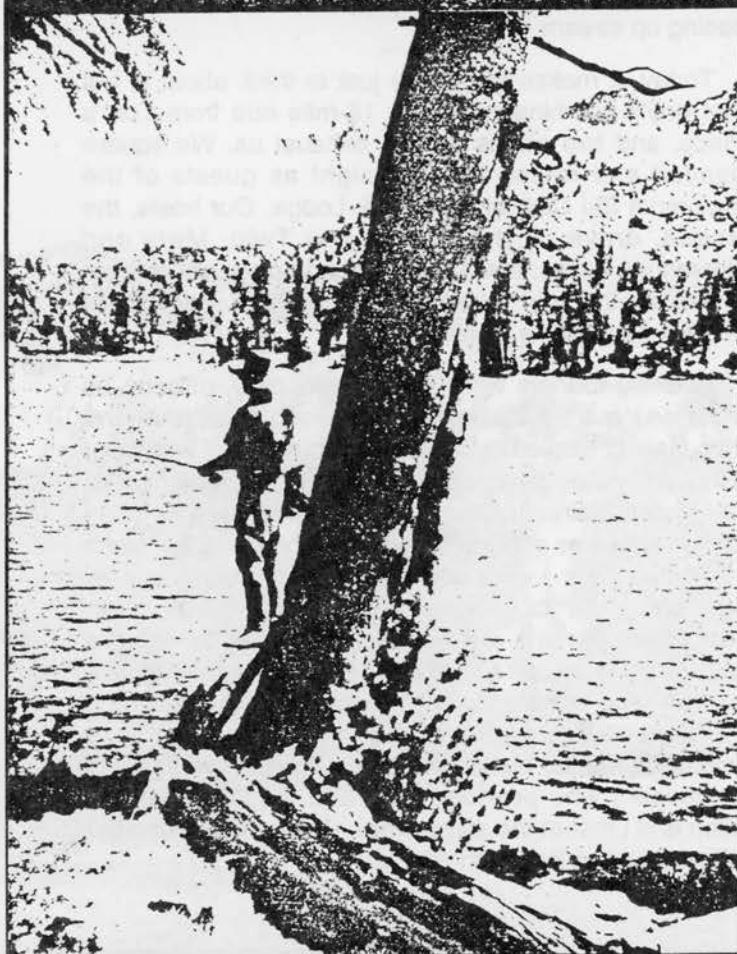
But Bob Brown met us at Sherwin Summit to take pictures and bolster our spirits with the information that the *Los Angeles Times* was going to publish a story about us. Giving up was impossible.

At Tom's Place, our destination that day, Ellen caught, cooked and ate the first trout she had ever seen. Bob treated us to steak dinner that night as a reward for our having made it past the half-way point.



TOM'S PLACE

BEST LOCATED RESORT IN THE HIGH SIERRA FOR TROUT FISHING



**FISHING AND HUNTING
WINTER SPORTS**

**LOCATED 25 MILES NORTH OF BISHOP
ON U.S. HIGHWAY NUMBER 395**

T.J. "TOM" YERBY, PROP.
ADDRESS, BOX E, BISHOP, CALIF.

On day five we swam twice – at Whitmore Tubs and further along at Hot Creek where, having repacked our bathing suits, we decided to take a dip in the buff. We were happily splashing in the warm water when we heard an excited shout up stream.

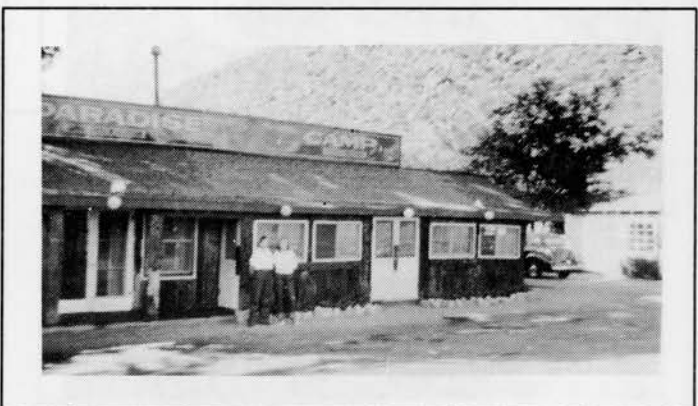
"Hey, I just saw one break water, a whopper, down stream."

We heard, we understood, we ducked. But you can't stay under water indefinitely, so we broke surface beneath a couple of fly lines.

"Surprise!" Ellen called tactfully, and we almost had a couple of mermen. Recovering their equilibrium, they went after some big ones they suddenly remembered seeing up stream.

Today, it makes me weary just to think about it, but that day's combination of the 18-mile ride from Tom's Place, and two swims did not exhaust us. We square danced and reeled into the night as guests of the Mammoth Ski Club at Tamarack Lodge. Our hosts, the Reeds, drove us the next day to Twin, Mary and Horseshoe Lakes, the latter still frozen over, and we got to explore the cold "bowels of the earth" in Mammoth's famous earthquake fault.

Friendly tourists were forever stopping, offering us rides or inquiring the mileage between this place and that. Having studied our maps – both highway and topographic – as diligently as we'd studied for final exams, we proudly pointed out mountain peaks, gave altitudes and mileages as glibly as service station attendants who – in those days – were usually lifelong residents of their area and knew its geography. Ellen's postcards to her concerned parents always explained that the people who stopped to talk to us were "friends of Billie's" (the name I was known by during my college years) and therefore no threat to our well-being. It was a harmless fiction. Except for our advisor, Bob Brown, and the kind innkeepers who provided food and lodging – people Ellen and I met at the same time – I had never seen our fellow travelers before in my life.



At the junction of Mammoth Lakes Road and Route 395 we paused to walk gingerly among the steamvents of Casa Diablo, then pedaled northward into the volcanic foam fields at the foot of the Dead Man Grade. Here we lifted pumice boulders twice the size of our heads and balanced them on our shoulders for each others' cameras. Pictures of this spectacular achievement unfortunately are not among those that survived the years.

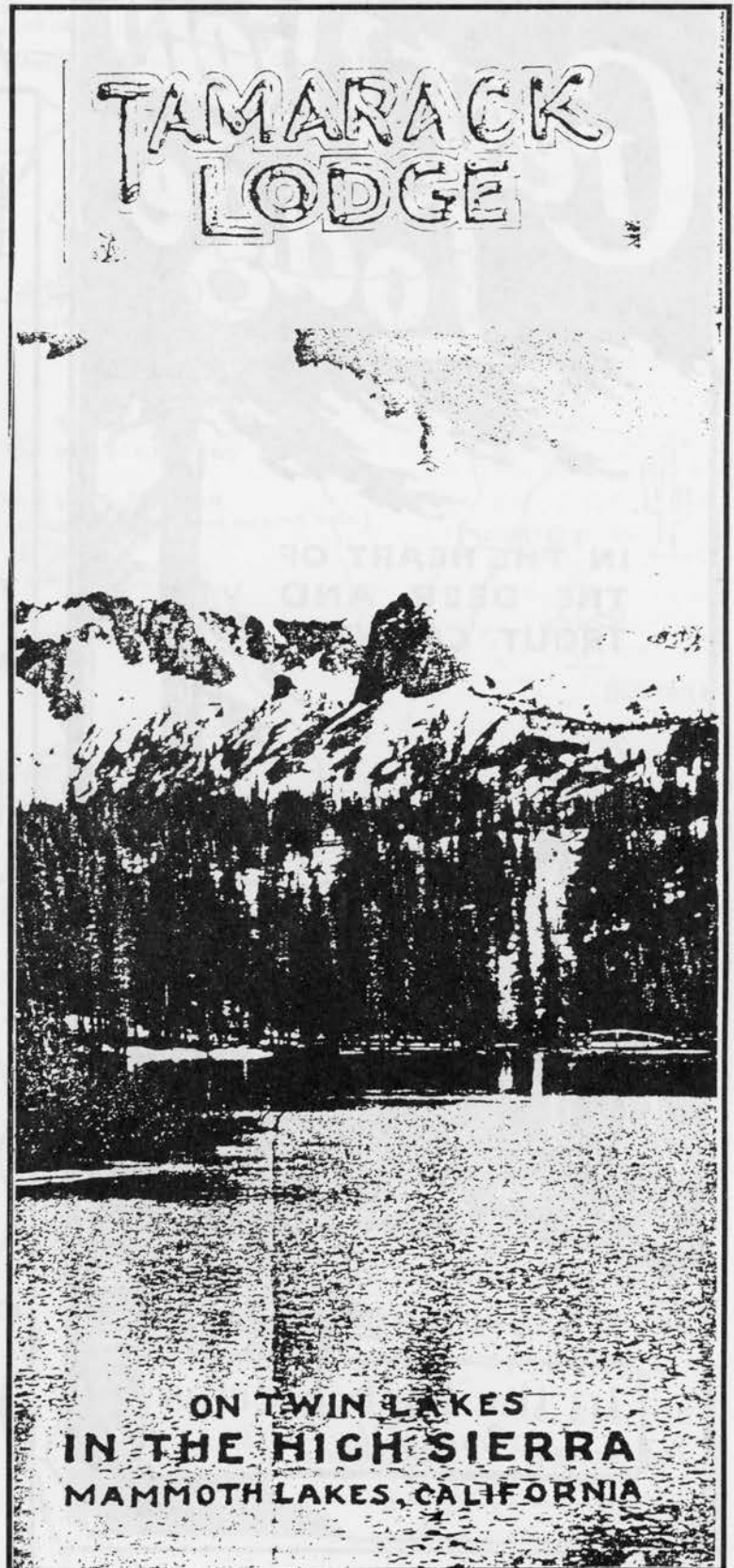
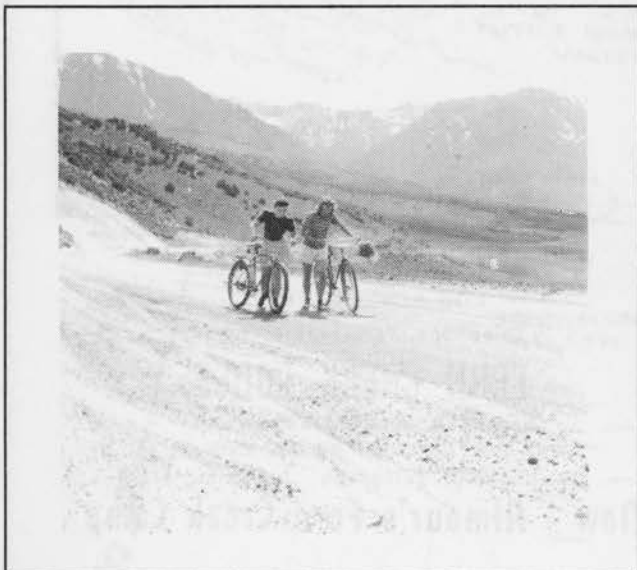


Opposite, left: Pause after the downhill from Glacier Lodge

Top to bottom: Willma beside the "modern" Inyo-Mono Inn; on the way to Paradise Camp; at Paradise Camp; outside their cabin at Tom's Place

Above: They make a new friend (unknown, unrecorded) at Tom's Place

Below: The way they "biked" most days



Crest View Lodge

IN THE HEART OF
THE DEER AND
TROUT COUNTRY

In the High Sierras
Among the Pines

FERN CREEK LODGE

Between June and Silver Lakes

IN THE HIGH SIERRA

Where You'll Find Restful Com-
fort in California's Vacation Land



(Reflection of Carson Peak in Silver Lake)

FOR RESERVATIONS

Telephone, Telegraph or Write

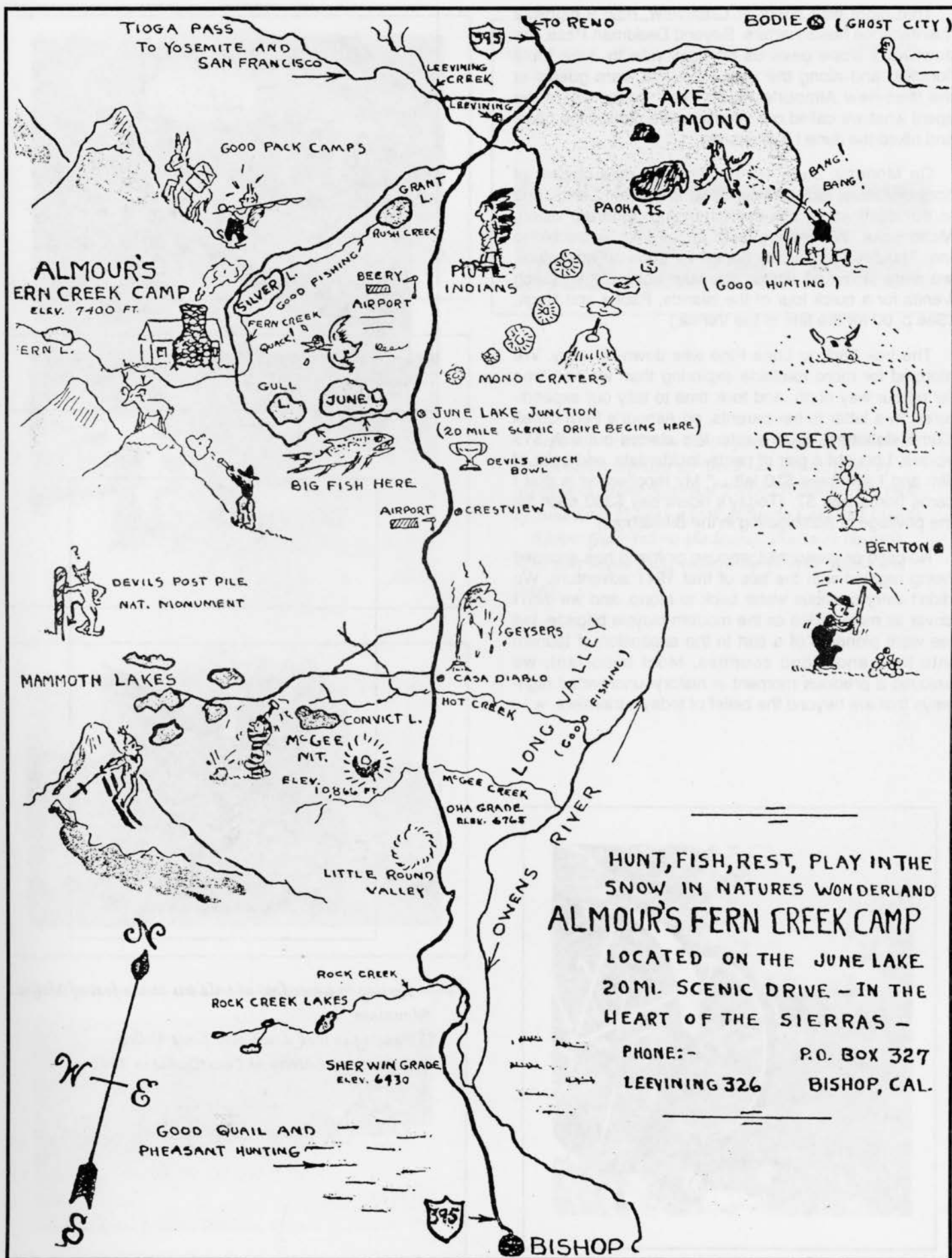
FERN CREEK LODGE

(Formerly the Washburn Property)

P. O. Box 327 - Bishop, California

Telephone or Telegraph - Leevining 326

Now - Almour's Fern Creek Camp

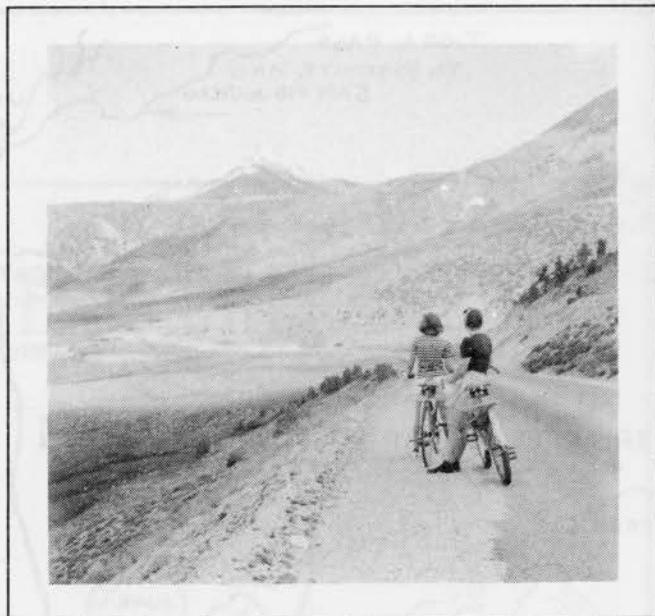


That night was spent at Crestview, now a highway maintenance headquarters. Beyond Deadman Pass, the downward slope gave us an easy ride to June Lake Junction and along the loop road. We were guests at the then-new Almour's Fern Creek Camp where we spent what we called our vacation. We parked the bikes and hiked the June Lake shores.

On Monday, June 16, our final 20-mile stretch of northerly travel took us past Silver and Grant Lakes, and to our destination, the ever-changing, ethereal vision, Mono Lake. We were guests at the lake-shore Mono Inn. Though we scarcely hoped for such an adventure, we were skimmed across the lake aboard the launch *Venita* for a quick tour of the islands, Paoha and Negit. (See p. 00 for the fate of the *Venita*.)

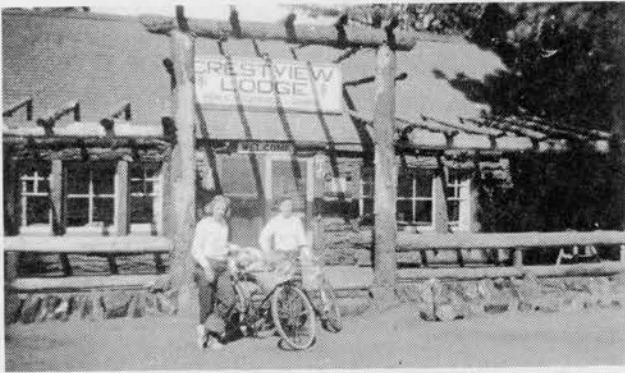
The trek back to Lone Pine was down-hill easy. We stopped for more roadside exploring than we had time for on our way north, and took time to tally our expenditures. In a letter to her parents, on Almour's Fern Creek Camp stationery, Ellen wrote: We started out with \$15 apiece. I bought a pair of pants, incidentals, and gobs of film and I still have \$10 left ..." My recollection is that I came home with \$7. (Today's riders pay \$300 each for the privilege of participating in the Bikeathon.)

No child or grandchild, spouse or friend has escaped being regaled with the tale of that 1941 adventure. We didn't carry precious water back to Mono, and we didn't cover as many miles as the modern bicycle brigade, but we were pioneers of a sort in the expansion of tourism into Inyo and Mono counties. Most important, we enjoyed a precious moment in history—uncrowded highways that are beyond the belief of today's travelers. *

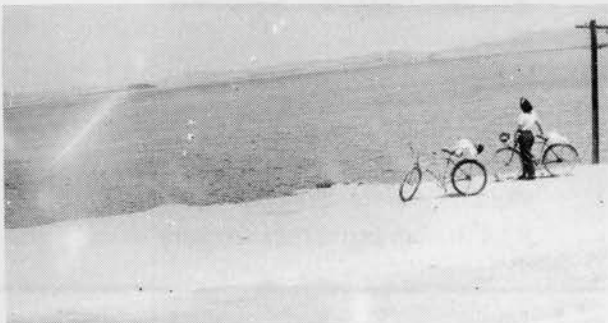


Resting in a meadow of wild iris at the foot of McGee Mountain

*Pausing to look down over Long Valley
Geysers were active at Casa Diablo in 1941*

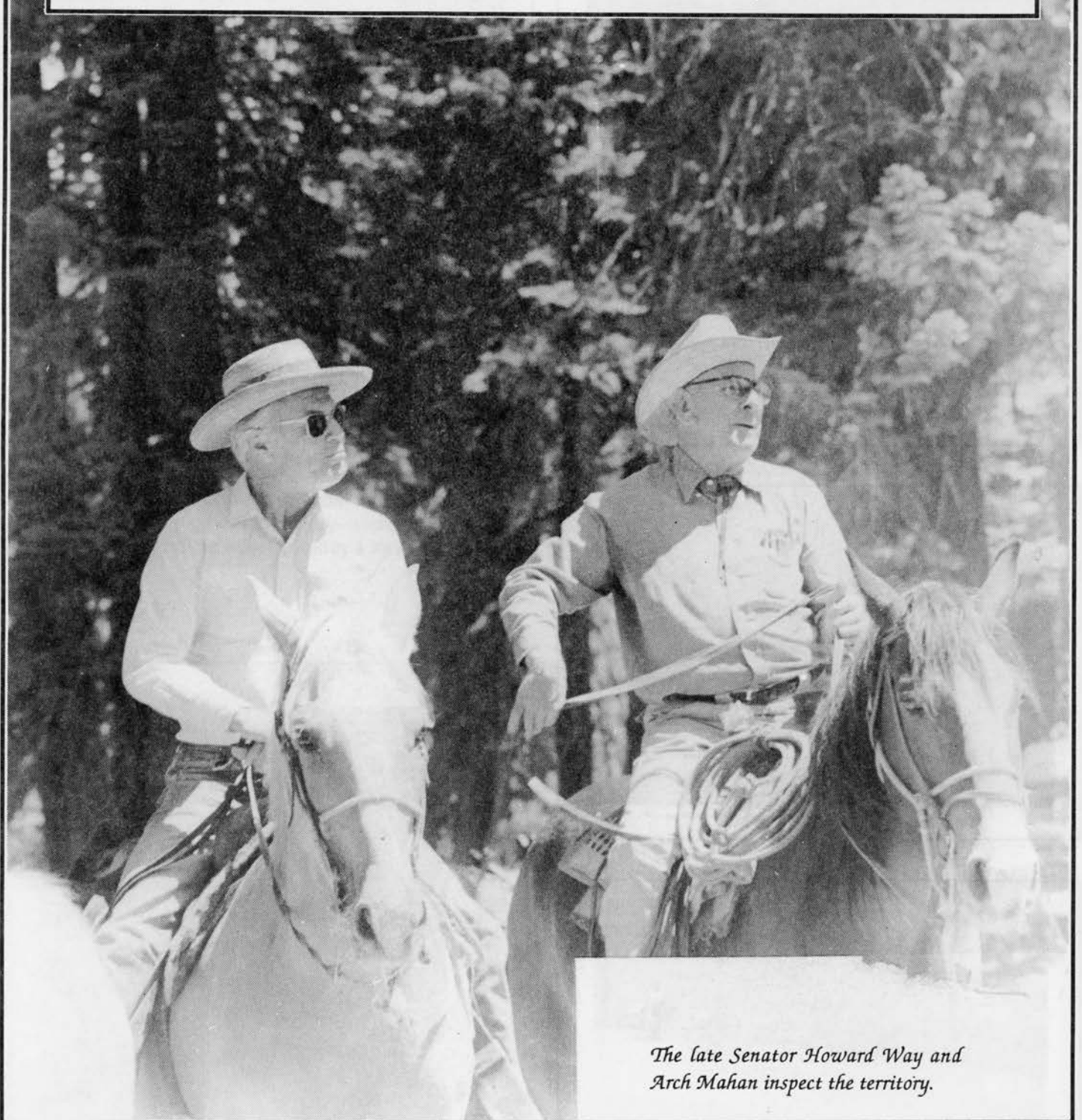


Left, top to bottom: Pause for a photo at Crestview Lodge before starting up Deadman Grade; proof of arriving at Mono National Forest (Willma); first view of June Lake (Ellen); a look at Mono Lake and islands. Above: Gulls follow the launch Venita as the girls skim over Mono Lake toward the islands, Paohia and Negit.



Arch Mahan's Mammoth

by Bob Tanner & Arch Mahan



The late Senator Howard Way and Arch Mahan inspect the territory.

Arch Mahan came to Mammoth Lakes in 1926 to assist in the operation of the Mammoth Consolidated Mine. From 1948 through 1978 he served as a Mono County Supervisor. His handwritten comparison of Mammoth Lakes of the 1920s and the Mammoth of 1980 is presented in its entirety.

The varied career of Arch Mahan is a legend in its own right. Arch played football for Stanford as a sophomore and was the back-up for the famous Ernie Nevers, a team coached by Pop Warner, and he played in the 1925 Rose Bowl game against Notre Dame's Knute Rochne's Four Horsemen. In 1934 he began 27 years of the operation of Red's Meadow Resort and Pack Station with his wife Gladys. In 1958 Governor Pat Brown appointed him to the Mono County Board of Supervisors to fill the term of the late Gene Crosby of Paradise Camp. For 20 years Arch ran unopposed for the office of Supervisor. He became President of the Southern California Association of County Supervisors, President of the California Association of County Supervisors, and Western Regional Vice President of the National Association of County Supervisors representing the counties of the 13 western states.

Arch was repeatedly involved in the problems of striking a balance between commercial development and wilderness preservation. He had a powerful influence on the growth of Mammoth Lakes during the 1960s and 1970s.

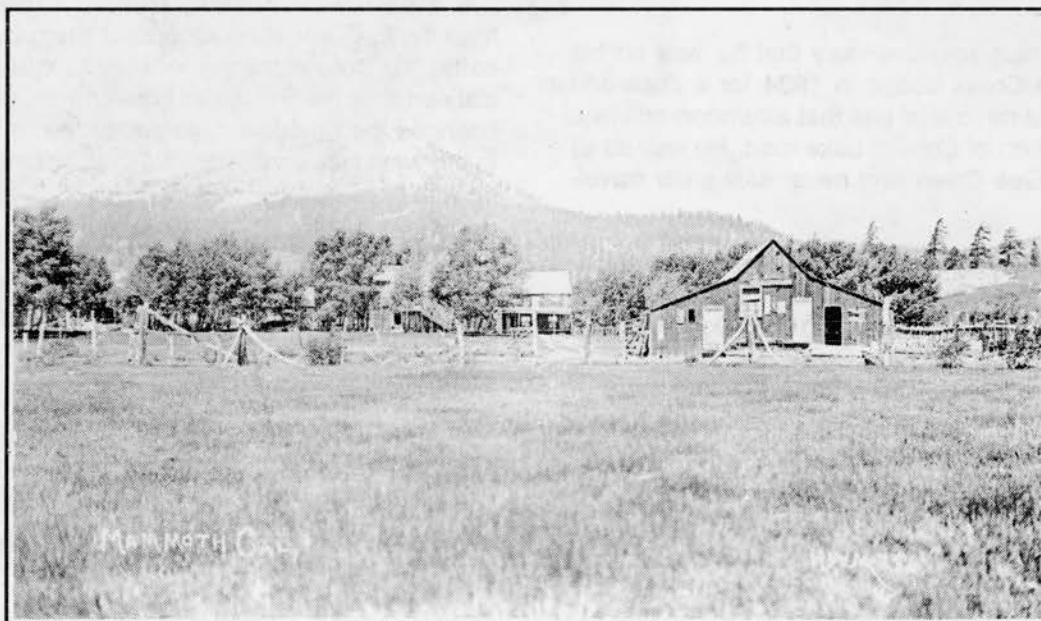
- Bob Tanner

by Arch Mahan, Jr.,

I came to Mammoth in the fall of 1926. At that time, you left a paved road at Mojave, after traveling on a very narrow paved road from Lancaster. The road from Mojave was an ungraded dirt road, worse than our present day four wheel drive roads. There was a stretch of eleven mile paved road – ten feet wide, with turn outs every mile or so, between Independence and Big Pine.

The next spring my father and a group of men purchased seven mining claims above Lake Mary on Cold Water Creek. We also took an option to purchase the Old Mammoth Mine. We had a crew of men work all summer opening the #3 tunnel of the old Mammoth Mine. At the end of the summer of 1927 we had completed timbering through the slide rock to the entrance of the tunnel. We found a large open area where many tons of rock had been taken out: 6 square sets wide, 12 square sets high and 142 square sets long. They evidently lumbered it with green logs as they were all rotten. Less than a week after we inspected the tunnel, we had a severe earthquake during the night which covered all the work that was done during the summer with tons of slide rock. No one has ever been in the tunnel since then. The earthquake we had last week (1981) was the heaviest I have seen since that quake of September 1927. We gave up the option on the old Mammoth and started developing the claims we had purchased. Most everyone in the area was either in the mining or livestock business.

The road into Mammoth followed the creek from the highway. There was a garage at the creek crossing and a store and post office above the old ranger station. The store and post office was operated by the Summerses, who also owned the hotel and had sever-



al cabins. The only road to the lakes was the present dirt road from old Mammoth, past the old Mammoth Mine. People who stayed in the winter were really isolated, as no attempt was made to remove snow. The snow line was on the Sherwin grade. There were two men operating dog teams, each with four or five teams – Tex Cushion and Bill Lewis. Tex Cushion had a contract with the Minaret Mine, which operated all one winter, and hauled supplies to them from snow line. We used both Cushion and Lewis for our hauling.

In 1932 we had a winter that I believe was heavier than the winter of 1969. There was eleven feet of snow in Long Valley. I don't know what the depth was in Mammoth.

I used to make trips to the mine twice a month to make payroll and bring in the mail, tobacco, and light items. My transportation, from where I left my car on Sherwin grade to the mine, was a pair of 9' skis, 5" wide. I also carried a pair of snow shoes. When I used the snow shoes, I would pull the skis. I had places to stop for the night at Tom's Place, the old Eaton Ranch, and at Tex Cushion's in Mammoth.

In 1935 we had a fire at the mine that burned our large engine and compressor plant. My father died in April 1937, and we have not worked the mine since, although we have leased the mine.

I started the Red's Meadow Resort in 1934. It was a real experience to drive that old switchback road into Red's Meadow in those days. I doubt that today's modern cars could have made it. This was during the depression and it wasn't over-crowded with business. There were not too many people who even came to Mammoth then, although Hwy. 395 was paved all the way from Los Angeles, and the road to Mammoth was paved.

Judge Summers tells the story that he was on his way to McGee Creek Lodge in 1934 for a duck and buck dinner. He ran out of gas that afternoon on Hwy. 395 at the junction of Convict Lake road. He walked all the way to McGee Creek and never saw a car traveling either way.

While my early years in the resort and packing business in Red's Meadow was not very profitable, I had some interesting experiences. In 1935, Don McGriffin packed two couples into Fish Creek Hot Springs. One of the men, Mr. Clark, had a very crippling case of arthritis. He suffered a great deal riding the horse. While in there, Mrs. Clark had a baby girl. She claimed she had been treated for a tumor and didn't know she was pregnant, therefore she was not prepared for a baby. It happened that a trail crew was working trails nearby and one of them came to Red's Meadow with

the story. Our youngest son was just two years old at the time, so we were able to take in diapers, blankets, safety pins, and baby clothes. Also my wife had an Indian uba, used by the Indians to carry a papoose. We packed them out a couple of weeks later and mother and baby were feeling fine. Also the hot springs helped Mr. Clark's arthritis. They named the baby Ida Bell. If any of you have been to the Fish Creek Hot Springs you probably noticed the sign: Ida Bell Camp. It is also named on maps. Ida Bell Clark visited us in Red's Meadow in 1957. She was a beautiful 21 year old girl.

An old man named Tom Basore used to pack over from the west side each year. He claimed to have caught fish from the river and originally planted Sotcher Lake. He drank the water from the Red's Meadow Hot Springs and credited that to his longevity. He was over 100 years old when he died in 1944.

In 1937 I packed John Beck into his mine at Beck Lakes for the last time. He was 87. He brought three men with him. When I unloaded the mules at Beck's cabin, he asked that I leave a horse for him as he wanted to stay there only long enough to show the men his mine. When I arrived back at Red's Meadow I just got the stock unsaddled and put in the corral when John Beck came in. He stayed in one of our cabins for three or four days until his party came out. During his stay, he and Tom Basore, Jack Maloney and Johnnie Shaw visited on our porch and related many of their experiences in this area when they were young men.

They all knew Red Sotcher, but they told an entirely different story of Red Sotcher than the Forest Service tells. They agreed that Sotcher did grow vegetables in the Meadows and sell them to the miners in Mammoth, but that he also sold them beef from the cattle he stole from the west side cattlemen. They claimed that he also stole horses from the east side, changed the brands in Red's Meadow, and sold them to the west side cattlemen. He died before they caught up with him.

I have seen the best of the back country from Yosemite to Mount Whitney from 1934 to the time I sold out in 1960. Today you will see more people on the trails in a three or four day trip than we used to see in the whole summer.

Mammoth is a great town and a wonderful place to live, but it is nothing like the town I knew in the 1920s and 1930s. I don't know which town I prefer – 1930 or 1978. It is the same scenery – just more buildings and more people.





*Front seat: Arch Mahan, Sr.; (unknown); John Anson, who built the sled.
 Second row: Arch Mahan, Jr., and (unknown) who assisted Anson
 Third row: Ernie Del Gatto, John's partner; Ed Cox, banker
 Back seat: Ed Burge, who ran the engines at the mine*

Bob Tanner purchased Red's Meadow Pack Station and Resort from Arch Mahan in 1960 and had the opportunity to work for Arch during the summers of 1958 and 1959. He considered Arch a wonderful friend and counselor during the ensuing years Arch Mahan died in

December, 1980. The following article is presented to remind the present day local and visitor of the roots of Mammoth. Arch's public service and devotion to Mammoth Lakes could well stand as a model for the present and future politicians of the area. *

ALNEY LEE MCGEE

PIONEER

INDIAN FIGHTER

CATTLEMAN

by George L. Garrigues

Part II



CATTLEMAN

After the Indian War ended, the Alney Lee McGees settled in Fish Lake Valley for a short time and then returned to the Owens Valley in 1866. They used all of Long Valley, from Hilton Creek north, for summer range for their cattle. Appropriately, McGee Mountain and McGee Creek (Mono County) are named for the family. Alney built a cabin near the present McGee Creek Lodge for summer residence. They drove the cattle over Sherwin Hill to Round Valley for winter range. There were no fences so the cattlemen were governed by the "no fence" law, required to take care of their cattle as soon as the farmers planted their crops. This restricted the feed range until the herds could be moved to Long Valley in the spring.

An important part of the story began one day in September, 1853 near Emigrant Gap, California. A daughter, Elizabeth Nevada Gunter was born to Jacob A. C. Gunter (b. June 18, 1814 in New York) and Jane S. (Sanford) Gunter (b. September 11, 1818 in Indiana.) They were on their way to Sacramento from the east

with their seven children. Elizabeth and four other sons were born after they reached California. She was destined to be the first of six generations of the McGee family that have resided in California.

About 1868 at the age of fifteen or sixteen, Libby (as Elizabeth was known) came to Round Valley where she taught school for a couple of years. Elizabeth and Alney Lee McGee were married on June 26, 1870, either in Round Valley or Bishop. Others of the Gunter family followed and settled in Pleasant Valley (so named for James Pleasant, killed in one of the Indian battles. See *The Album* Vol. III, No. 2, April 1990).

In the evening of September 23, 1871, Alney, Libby, their baby daughter, Ida E., and Hans Gunter were in Long Valley at the McGee cabin. There was a loud knock at the door. Opening it, they discovered the cabin was surrounded by armed men who demanded permission to search the premises for escaped conflicts. This was the first that the McGees had heard of the Carson jail break on September 17th. Three or four of the convicts had headed south and the posse had tracked them into Long Valley. The posse was tired and hungry, so the McGees fried steaks and made biscuits and coffee for the men, who then bedded down on their saddle blankets for the night. At dawn, Alney and Hans joined the posse and they picked up the trail heading toward Mt. Diablo Creek.

They overtook the convicts in the canyon, a mile or so below the lake. The posse's position was disadvanta-

geous and their guns inferior to the convicts'. In the ensuing gun battle, the convicts shot four posse horses, killing two. Shots were exchanged for twenty minutes. Morrison was killed at this time; it was found later that he had been hit in the side and the back of the head. The convicts moved up the canyon about three hundred yards and the posse followed with three horses. Reaching Mono Jim, who was holding two of the posse horses, they fired two shots, killing him, then continued up the canyon. The out-gunned posse retired but Alney returned later and recovered Morrison's body, which was taken to Benton. Morrison had planned to be married soon and was buried in his wedding suit. A large pine tree in the canyon bore bullet marks for many years; another large, dead tree at the shore of the lake, contrary to some stories, is not the scene of any hangings. That came later at Bishop. The mountain behind the lake was renamed "Mt. Morrison" and the creek and lakes changed to "Convict Creek" and "Convict Lake." (see *The Album*, Vol. III, No. 2, April, 1990.)

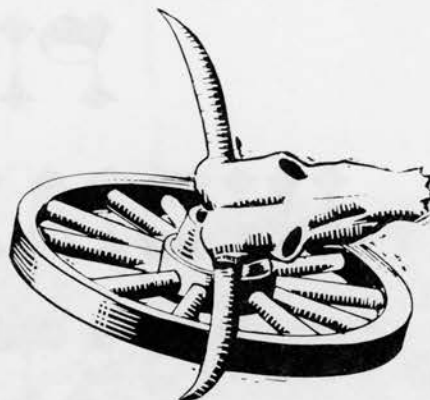
There are newspaper stories of occasional earthquakes of moderate intensity during 1871. Cattlemen in Round Valley had to fence rifts opened in the earth to keep cattle from falling in. It was at 2:30 a.m. on March 26, 1872 that the big one hit. Chalfant compares it to others as a cyclone to a summer breeze. Alney and Libby had attended a dance in Round Valley and were on their way back to their home in Pleasant Valley. Their horses were thrown together and then apart several times. When they reached the top of the last sand hill, they realized what was happening. Pandemonium had broken loose, horses were running and neighing in the fields, cattle were bellowing, dogs barking, and chickens cackling. When they reached their cabin, Alney T., Alney Lee's father, was outside on his knees praying.

B.H. Yaney, his wife Hannah, and their children had attended the same dance. It was their custom to place their girls, Annie and Elma, in a trundle bed next to the fireplace for added warmth, but this evening they were asleep in another bed. Returning from the dance, the Yaney's discovered the earthquake had knocked the fireplace down, with large rocks falling on top of the empty bed. At this time, both the McGee and Yaney residences were located in Pleasant Valley on or near the third McGee Creek in the Inyo-Mono area.

The effect of the earthquake was extensive in the valley, heaviest in the Lone Pine-Independence area. Twenty-nine people were killed, mostly Mexicans living in adobe structures which crumbled; injuries were numerous; many other buildings were so badly damaged that they had to be demolished. Land displacements, both horizontal and vertical, of up to thirty feet can still be seen today. Diaz Lake was created and many new springs began to flow. (see *The Album* Vol. VI, No. 1, February 1993.)

In December, 1873, winter showed its vengeance.

Fort Independence reported two feet, nine inches of snow, Fish Springs had four feet and supplies were scarce; Few people had sufficient firewood on hand. The price had risen to \$16-\$18 per cord, a fifty percent increase. Alney lost seven hundred head of cattle; many other cattlemen reported similar losses.



The first two children born to Alney and Libby died in Round Valley from a mysterious and unexplained ailment: Ida E., age three years, nine months, twenty days on December 15, 1874, and Musetta, age one year, five months, twelve days on December 16. The nearest doctor, Dr. Middleton, lived in Independence. A rider was sent for him, but he could do nothing when he arrived. The little girls were buried in a common grave in the Bishop Pioneer Cemetery. A young daughter of John and Caroline McGee, Clara Belle, also died about the same time and was buried next to her cousins. John's one remaining child, Emma Jane, and a son of I.P. Yaney also died a short time later.

Alney and Libby's next child, Eva Lena, was born August 23, 1875. She was the only child in either of the McGee families for the next seven years. Beatrice (Trix) was born to the Alney McGees on November 17, 1882; Percy, the only boy, on November 6, 1885; and Sybil on June 1, 1891. The John McGees had no other children.

In the early 1880s, Alney and Libby had a ranch in southern Round Valley. Eva tells of riding horseback, sidesaddle, for five or six miles to school.

[*The Inyo Register*, edited by Bill Chalfant, published many important and interesting items and related trivia concerning Alney over the years. Most of the following is garnered from that source.]

At the Pioneers of Inyo gathering, for their first Grand Reunion in October, 1885 at Munzinger and Phillippay's Grove, Alney's old-style frying pan bakery was so popular that he had to suspend "dobe payments" to avert bankruptcy. (sic. Bill Chalfant's humor.) The eligibility date for pioneer membership was set at March 26, 1872 (earthquake day). The committee included Alney

(Round Valley), John S. (Bishop Creek) and Bart (Bishop Station) McGee.

In September, 1886, Alney reported that fishing on the Owens River was very good. Big ones, six pounders, were snapping lines "like fun." He was waiting for a special order of heavy rope and tackle before going back after them.

In December 1887, Alney constructed a new residence in Bishop that was to be the McGee home for many years. It was located in the second block on the north side of Willow Street just east of Dr. George's. He graded part of Willow Street in May of the following year, which Bill Chalfant editorialized: "A good scheme."

Margaret Lee McGee, mother of eight children, died at the home of her son, Alney, on March 8, 1888 at the age of 81. Eva (McGee) Yaney's recollection of her:

My Grandmother McGee lived with us many years, passing away at our home in 1889 (sic) at the age of 89. I remember her as a little old lady, with snapping black eyes, always wearing a little black lace cap. Being from the south, she smoked a corn cob pipe, which I used to light for her with a coal from the fire, and take a few puffs.

Margaret Lee McGee was the first white woman in the Owens Valley; her obituary is a testimonial to a pioneer. In part it started:

The deceased (Mrs. Margaret McGee) was undoubtedly the first white woman in this region, with her family undergoing the terrors of the Piute (sic) war. This was the pioneer family of valley beyond any doubt. The family name since is a honored one. Respected by all who knew her, the deceased saw her children grow up around her to do justice to her straightforward example, and by following it insure to themselves the respect it inspired. A long procession attesting the esteem in which she was held, followed to the last resting place and think, if they do not say, "May her rest be sweet." [Inyo Register, March 8, 1888]

Greener fields beckoned the McGees. Alney reported selling some 1,400 sheep to the Frenchmen (probably Basques), and all of his cattle in November 1888. He and his family headed for Alaska, "still fired by the spirit of adventure." The gold rush was on.

They left Bishop via train on Valentine's Day 1889, destination Monterey and Seattle, W. T.; in April they located in McMinnville, Oregon while trying to get passage from Seattle. Unable to do so, they returned to Sacramento in July, as did John S. McGee, announcing they would soon come back to Bishop to stay, firmly convinced that this country was equal to any other. They returned in September, 1889.

Alney then worked as cattle foreman for C.B. Rawson and later for T.B. Rickey, both large Nevada cattle own-

ers who had obtained extensive land holdings in Inyo and Mono counties. He supervised the herd in the valley during the winter months, sometimes in the Adobe Lake area, sometimes in Round Valley and sometimes at Blackrock near Independence. The cattle were driven up the valley, over the Sand Canyon route into Long Valley in late May or early June each spring, and brought out in September.

Alney usually made an early inspection trip to Long Valley in April to determine snow, water, and feed conditions. Excerpts from *The Inyo Register* illustrate:

- 9-27-88 - *Alney McGee and family are townsfolk again having returned from their Long Valley summer residence.*
- 10-3-95 - *Alney McGee and family moved into town from Long Valley for the winter.*
- 5-20-97 - *Alney McGee and assistants are picking up various bunches of cattle down the valley in preparation to move them to Long Valley.*
- 8-26-97 - *Four cattle were killed by lightning at Alney McGee's place in Long Valley.*
- 11-30-99 - *Alney McGee is located at Blackrock for the winter.*
- 1-4-1900 - *Alney McGee returned to Blackrock after spending the holiday at home with his family.*
- 4-12-00 - *Alney McGee reports, after a trip to Long Valley, that it is very dry there. The road over Sherwin and the Rock Creek grade is much improved thanks to the work done by J.L.C. Sherwin.*
- 9-27-00 - *Alney reports four inches of snow in Long Valley last Tuesday.*
- 4-18--1 - *Alney McGee and his son Percy have just returned from their first trip of the season to Long Valley. Sherwin is in fair condition, some rocks. From "Big Tree" on north, Rock Creek Canyon has lots of snow, one to seven feet. They had to travel at night when the crust was frozen. There is about one foot in southern Long Valley, the north is clear. It will be another month before stock can be taken in - much later than usual.*
- 4-24-02 - *Alney here last week from Fish Springs on an inspection trip to Long Valley. Feed is not first class yet.*
- 11-27-02 - *Alney in from Blackrock. Had four to five inches snow in a recent storm.*
- 9-24-03 - *Summer cattle are being moved out of Long Valley. it is very dry and feed is shorter than usual.*

Late one fall, Alney and John Laird, accompanied by an Indian, went to Long Valley to search for stray cattle that might have been left behind. They ran into a heavy snow storm at Hilton Creek, so blinding that they could hardly see their horses' ears. There were no fences or visible landmarks so they were afraid they would lose their direction. Alney put the Indian in the lead and fol-

lowed him. Laird thought they were going in the wrong direction and insisted they bear right or left. Finally, Alney said, "All right, John, go that way if you want to. I am staying with the Indian." Laird started, but a few minutes later Alney heard something behind him. He looked and Laird was leading horse following the others' tracks in the snow. The Indian took them straight to the cabin.

Alney was a candidate for Inyo Sheriff three times: 1890, 1894, and 1902. He was defeated each time, the second attempt by Givens with the vote of 446 to 421. Alney filed a law suit to invalidate the election, alleging that Givens had promised David Holland the Undersheriff job if he were elected, and asked Holland to influence his friends to vote for him. The influence part was dismissed as a "non-suit" and McGee failed to prove the fact of a "promise of a job."

There were lighter moments in the summer Long Valley life. On July 4, 1892, the Alney and John S. McGee families spent the day celebrating at Lake Mary. In August, 1895, dancing became a part of life for Mammoth and Long Valley residents. A big party was given by the Alney McGees in Long Valley; music was furnished by volunteers for the nineteen women and eleven men attending.

Jane S. (Mrs. J.A.C.) Gunter, a native of Indiana and mother of Libby McGee, died in Monterey on June 27, 1893 from paralysis at 76 years of age. She and her husband had lived in Monterey for the prior twenty years. In December, 1893, J.A.C. Gunter sold his Monterey property and returned to Bishop. On May 13, 1904, J.A.C. Gunter, the father of Libby McGee and eleven other children, died at the McGee residence in Bishop. He had been born in Pennsylvania and had reached the age of nearly 90 years.

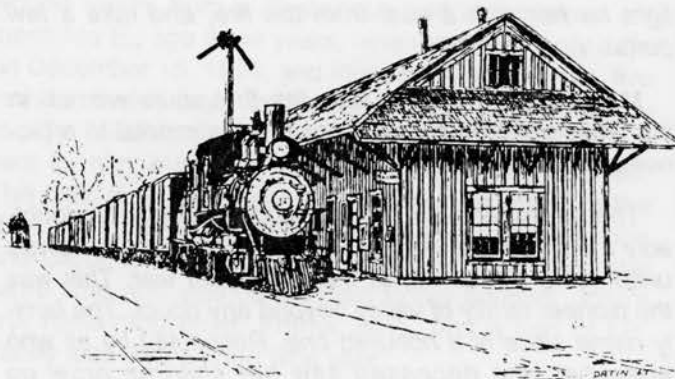
Alney was not exempt from jury duty, serving (with Charles Summers and others) when W. L. Coats sued the Hillside Water Company for \$299 damages when the Hillside dam broke. Coats was awarded \$150 and costs.

The cattle business waned when the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power started acquiring land throughout Inyo and Mono counties in the early 1900s. In February, 1902, Alney and his son-in-law, Clyde May, transformed the old Pioneer Blacksmith Shop, one door south of the Valley View Hotel, into a modern meat market. In May, they announced they would be the depot for Round Valley ice that summer; any quantity could be purchased. In August, they purchased an electric motor to run the shop machinery. In December, 1905, John S. McGee bought Alney's interest in the market. In April, 1906, W.P. Yaney succeeded McGee and May, and then in September sold the market to P.P. Keough, who sold it to Charles Summers in September, 1908.

On January 4, 1906 *The Inyo Register* reported that T.B. Rickie had sold 15,000 acres in Round Valley and

Long Valley to Los Angeles purchasers. This appeared to wind up the Long Valley transfer of land, signaling the end of one era in the Owens Valley cattle business and the beginning of another. Charley Summers became a sort of broker, or agent, for the remaining cattlemen in the valley. He gathered cattle raised by himself and others and shipped them by rail to various markets, many in San Francisco, some in Los Angeles and Tonopah. Alney still worked as a foreman with the various herds. Lloyd and/or Len Summers (and later young Charley) often accompanied the cattle to their destination, and were quite upset when, in 1904, the railroad decided to start charging them full fare for going along to feed and water the cattle.

Alney was appointed Deputy United States Sheep Inspector in the spring of 1909. There is no further mention of the position, its duties or activities in the press.



A large shipment of fish furnished by the Department of Fish and Game in December, 1909 was met at Laws by Alney and W.P. Yaney. Using U.G. Smith's auto, they released several cans each of Rainbow and Eastern Brook trout in Bishop and Pine Creeks; Loch Leven and Black Bass in the Owens River from the Laws bridge south.

In the spring of 1910, several wells were dug along the railroad right-of-way in the Benton area to search for irrigation water. W.P. Yaney tried five miles north of Benton with unannounced results. Alney and Clyde May dug the Hamil area and found a light flow at thirty-three feet. They broke through the clay into gravel at forty-four feet, getting more water than they could handle. Others also had successful wells in the area, but there is no further mention of the subject in the press.

Alney was still active in the cattle business. The February 2, 1991 *Inyo Register* reports that he, Lloyd Summers and three others passed through Independence with 300 head of cattle sold to the Los Angeles market by Summers and Butler. They were driven to Lone Pine and shipped by rail. It was the finest shipment seen in a long time. McGee and Summers went to Los Angeles with the shipment. Later that month, Alney went to Mason Valley to bring back some horses to improve the McQueen and Lucey property northwest of Bishop. During the spring and fall of 1913 "cattleman" Alney McGee made several trips up and

down the valley, often spending the night at the Butler Hotel in Big Pine. At the age of sixty-nine he was still herding cattle.

The April 29, 1915 *Inyo Register* reported that Alney had been very ill for several days, "but friends will be glad to know that he is on the mend."

On October 27, 1915, Mr and Mrs. Alney McGee, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Summers and children, and Clyde May left for Los Angeles by auto. All except Clyde were to remain in that part of the state for several months.



McGee residence, Willow Street, Bishop, 1895.

Left to right: Elizabeth (Libby) McGee; children Sybil, Percy, Beatrice (Trix), and Eva

In the meantime, Alney's brothers and sisters had also been leading active lives.

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth McGee was born in Missouri in 1834. She married C.P. Carey and they had three children: Lucy C., Maggie C. and Amzi B. She preceded C.P. in death 1903. No other information is available about this branch of the family.

MAHULDA

Mahulda married Jesse Summers at Dry Creek in Tuolumne County in 1853. One source reports that Jesse was born in Kentucky (1827) and came to Nevada County, California from Missouri in 1850. Jesse was one of five sons born to Samuel Summers and Elizabeth McWherter. The other sons were Dr. George (born ca. 1820), James (1821), Franklin (1825?), and John ("Jack") (1832). Information on how and when they came to California is being researched further as this is being written.

Mahulda and Jesse were married and living with Alney T. and Margaret at the time of the 1860 census. It appears that they lost a two year old daughter, Dora Ann, in January, 1860. They came to the Owens Valley with the McGees in 1861 driving cattle to Monoville and Aurora and were present at the Charley's Butte incident. They and the McGees owned five meat shops and a large slaughter house in Bodie during its boom days.

In 1864, Jesse and his brother, Dr. George Summers, purchased property in Mono County from Charles and John Russell which included 400 acres on a tributary of the Walker River. With the property they acquired one ox wagon, wooden axletree, mowing machine, horse rake, hand rake and 2,000 posts. This site is now known as Summers Meadows and Summers Creek. By 1868 they had acquired two other 640 acre parcels which they worked, selling cattle to Bodie.

One of the more productive mines in the Bridgeport area was the Kentuck. In six days in 1882 it produced \$2,000 in silver bullion. The ownership was in dispute almost from the beginning. The alleged discoverers were Page, Frost, Fullmore, Blake and Young. Jesse and Dr. George claimed that they had grubstaked the original locator and were entitled to ownership. The court held in their favor, giving them eighty percent ownership. This was formed into the Summers Consolidated Mining Company in 1883. This mining venture failed as did the Mineral Chief Mining Co. formed by the brothers in 1884. They filed for bankruptcy and lost everything. Jesse sold his 10,819-acre Long Valley spread to Kirman and Rickey and he and Mahulda moved to Oregon where they re-established themselves. He died in Linkville (Klamath Falls) in 1890. Mahulda died also at Linkville in 1907. Dr. George moved to Fresno where he continued his fifty-five year medical practice until his death in 1892.

Mahulda and Jesse's children included Dora Ann (?) 1858-1860, Emma 1861-1880, Samuel F. 1867-?, Jessie Bell 1874-1877? and Daisy 1877-? Emma married George C. Kinney bearing one son, Thomas O. in 1878. She died in 1880 and George later married Mary Jane Summers, sister of the other Jesse Summers.

MARGARET

Margaret McGee was born 1840 in either Missouri or Texas. She came to California with the Jordan wagon train. She was living with her parents at Knight's Ferry when she met and married John Benjamin Hockett in 1859. He was born in Alabama in 1827. They had five children: William McGee (born 1859), Benjamin F. (1861), John Henry (1863), Robert Lee (1865), and Edward (1868). They moved to Visalia where John worked as a butcher and opened a general merchandise store. In 1864 they moved to Porterville.

Over the years they made several trips by wagon to the Owens Valley to visit Margaret's parents. Each trip took eight days.

John died in 1898 in Porterville. Margaret continued to live in the same house, which they had built in 1872 until her death in 1927.

BART

Bart McGee spent most of his younger life after the Indian War in Aurora, Bodie and later in Lida and Cerro Gordo. He operated a stage station located at McGee Creek in Long Valley for a short time while the mines at Mammoth were booming. He married Sarah Ann Carrol in 1877. Seven children were born to them: Minnie Etta (born 1879), Laura Myrtle (1881), Charles Barton (1883), George Henry (1885), Margaret Amelia (1888), Allen Taylor (1890), and Elvira Viola (1892).

Bart was described as a man of unusual strength and courage. When at Cerro Gordo, he was captured by Mexican bandit Chavez who, with his men, had been robbing stages and committing other crimes in the Mojave Desert. Bart was riding a fine horse which was taken from him, along with his equipment, gun and hat. They tied his hands and argued for hours whether to kill him or let him go. Finally, the Mexicans put Bart on a mule, tied his feet together under the animal without a saddle or bridle and turned him loose. Bart guided the mule back to Cerro Gordo by slapping the sides of its head. He got another horse, started out and returned a few days later. When asked what happened, he replied, "I got my horse back."

In August 1896 Bart and Mike Hooley shipped ten tons of ore to the Maxim Mill from their mine in Redding Canyon. The encouraging result was \$400.

Bart and his family moved to Laws where he ranched and possibly had a dairy for several years. He and his

family were in a wagon crossing the Owens River at the Poleta ford in June of 1887. High water had washed out one of the banks and the wagon tipped over but Sarah floated to bank with the baby, and Bart and the other three children swam to shore.

Another river dunking occurred in June, 1892, when they were going fishing near Laws. They were on horseback, Bart behind Sarah, who was carrying a small child in her arms. The horse stepped off the bank of Owens River into twelve feet of water. Its hoof caught in Sarah's skirt, but she was able to grab some willow branches and get out of the water. Bart reached for the child which had dropped from Sarah's arms when she fell, just managing to reach it and swim to dry land.

Also in June, 1892, Bart had an altercation with a neighboring rancher, George Reynolds. Some of Bart's cows disappeared and he found them in a pen at the Huckaby Ranch under Reynolds' care. Reynolds pointed a shotgun at Bart and fired it. Bart was unhurt and took after Reynolds with a heavy stick that he had been using to pry open the corral gate. He hit Reynolds over the head, knocking him unconscious. Reynolds later died from the blow, but a jury found in Bart's favor: self defense.

Bart put his Laws property up for sale in April, 1910. By 1914 he was in the dairy business in Tonopah. The *Tonopah Bonanza* reported that McGee and McKenna of the Pioneer Dairy serving Tonopah and Goldfield brought forty milk cows from Reno. They were being transported by train to Tonopah when it was wrecked near Shurz. The cattle survived the accident and were driven to pasture on open range land below the Tonopah Bonanza Mine, but wandered to the mill slime pond and drank some of the cyanide water. Ten cows died instantly; the loss given was \$1,000.

Bart died December 1, 1919 at Washoe, Nevada, and his body was returned to Bishop for burial. Sarah died June 10, 1956 at the age of 101 in Merced and is buried there.

JOHN S.

John S. McGee was born in 1846 in Texas. He came to California with the Jordan wagon train and into the Owens Valley in 1861 with the other McGees.

He married Caroline Gunter, sister of Alney's wife, Libby. They had two children, both girls, born in 1871 and 1873. The older daughter, Clara Belle, died in 1874 from the mysterious unexplained ailment that killed Alney and Libby's two daughters and many other children in the valley. She was buried next to her cousins in the Pioneer Cemetery at Bishop. John and his family moved to Mono Diggings at Dog Town where the baby, Emma Jane, died from the same cause. They had no other children.

He was elected sheriff of Inyo County for one term in

1880s. He settled on the ranch started by Jacob Gunter in Pleasant Valley near the mill pond, raising alfalfa, grain, and corn, and had a large orchard and pasture land.

John's horse fell and threw him, breaking his collar bone in July, 1898. Still accident prone, John and Caroline were riding in a buggy when a bicycle frightened the horse. It turned, broke the line and upset the buggy. Both were considerably bruised and John suffered two broken ribs.

In July 1903, he announced that they were going to build house in San Mateo and that "the latch string will be out for visits for all Inyoites." Apparently, the plans did not work out as John bought Alney's interest in Bishop Market in December, 1905.

John died on January 24, 1909 at the age of 63 at his home on the Langley Ranch in Pleasant Valley. After his death, Caroline married H.P. Hood.



Four McGee Generations. Libby, Eva McGee Yaney, Mildred Yaney Garrigues, Elizabeth Garrigues Crane. October, 1931.

From the Family Albums



The Young Lady



The Matron



*Elizabeth "Libby" McGee.
Circa 1938, age 85.*



Sybil McGee Summers



Lloyd Summers

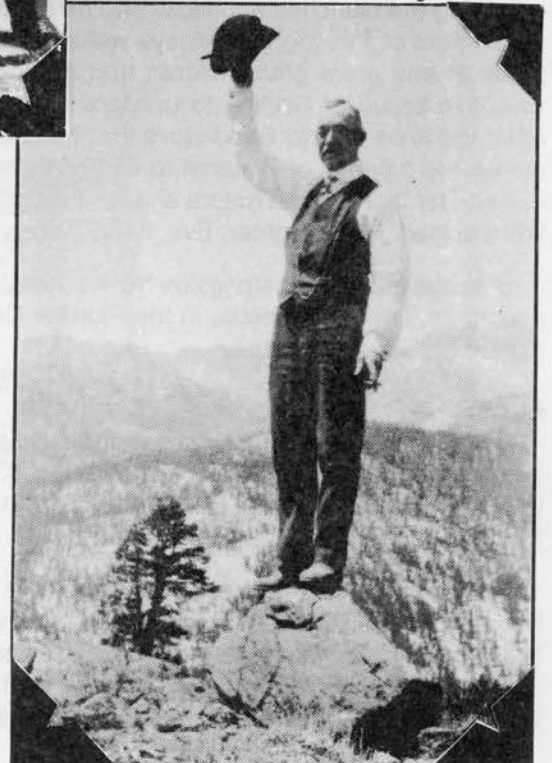


Eva McGee Yaney

William Parker Yaney



Beatrice (Trix) May



THE LAST ROUNDUP

On January 6, 1916, Alney died in Santa Monica. Until then, he had led an active, outdoor life. An injury received from the falling of a horse may have contributed toward his incapacitation, but no serious illness preceded his death. He had consulted with a doctor concerning a pain in his chest, but its cause was not determined. He was sitting with his family outdoors when he rose to go into the house and upstairs. A little later Libby found him lying at the head of the stairs, a paper grasped in one hand and his glasses in the other. The cause of death was officially determined to be valvular trouble of the heart.

The Inyo Register reported:

Mr. McGee was of the highest integrity, esteemed by all. In his makeup the element of personal fear did not enter and like most others with that rare quality of courage, he was retiring and reticent concerning his own achievements and part in events; as quiet of manner and speech as efficient in his undertakings. We have lost a good man, a good citizen, a good friend.

Alney Lee McGee, pioneer, Indian fighter and cattleman, had gone to his last roundup.

Libby resided with her daughter and son-in-law, Eva and W.P. Yaney until her death on February 21, 1942 at the age of 88. I have many fond memories of Gramma Gee, as we called her during my childhood. She was a tiny, white haired lady, often crocheting when I visited. She was always misplacing her glasses and wandering through the house searching for them only to find them stuck in the hair on the top of her head.

She especially enjoyed the preparations for the big family holiday feasts. One of her favorite chores was preparing the blanched almonds. She made quite a production out of this job and always welcomed the assistance of any great grandchildren that dropped in. She was also proud of helping to prepare the turkeys and other foods on the old wood stove that had been carried across the Isthmus of Panama to California many years earlier. Her last request before she died was to have her hair brushed. Her daughter, Eva, happily complied.

She was laid to rest alongside her husband and infant daughters, Ida and Musetta, in the Pioneer Cemetery in Bishop.

EVA

Eva Lena McGee, Libby's daughter born in 1875, married William Parker (W.P.) Yaney in 1898. They had two daughters: Mildred Elizabeth (born 1898) and Frances Eva (1901).

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners were alternated between Sybil and Lloyd Summers. These were always festive occasions with a lengthy table (sawhorses covered with planks hidden by linen table cloths) for the thirty or so family members. Two turkeys plus an unbe-

lievable variety of side dishes, mostly prepared on the old wood stove that had been carried across the Isthmus of Panama. Clyde May carved one bird, W.P. the other, and insisted that the children be served first. Also clear in my mind is seeing W.P. out in his garage, darkened with closed doors, doing flame tests on some minerals. It was before the days of tungsten and he didn't live to learn of its value. Eva and he had a running two-handed pinochle game going, but I could never find out who was ahead.

W.P. led an active life in the valley in mining, real estate and the insurance business. He held the public offices of Undersheriff and Justice of the Peace. From the latter he earned the nickname of "Judge." He was one of the founders of the Bishop Creek Water Association and served many years as its secretary. He was an avid fisherman. I can remember several excursions to Benton Crossing (where Crowley Lake is now), abundant with mosquitoes so thick that you couldn't inhale without getting a mouthful, and his many tales of catching enough fish to fill a gunny sack. In later years, Eva helped in the insurance business which they conducted from their home on Grove Street in Bishop.

W.P., descendant of the Yaney and Parker families (another story), was the son of I.P. and Hanna Yaney. He was born at Quartz Mountain in 1863. His father was active in Tuolumne County affairs and has a street named after him in Sonora. The family came to the Owens Valley about 1865. He died in 1943. Eva continued the insurance business for several years and died in 1952. She wrote the nucleus of this family history.

BEATRICE

Beatrice (Trix) McGee was born in 1872 and married Clyde May in 1902(?). They had three children: Rhys (b. 1904), Beatrice ("Sis") (b. 1906) the Tom (b. 1928?). Clyde's principal activity was meat cutting. Rhys married but had no children. He died in 1989. "Sis" married Cecil Thorington who was Sheriff of Mono County for many years. Tom married and had one son, Tom.

PERCY

Percy was born in 1885. He married Artie Hartwell and they had no children. He served with the U.S. Army in France during World War I and in occupation duty in Germany. He died in 1947.

SYBIL

Sybil McGee was born on June 1, 1891, the last child of Alney and Libby. Census reports indicate that the Alney McGees were living adjacent to the Charley Summers family in Pleasant or Round Valley in 1900. Sybil married Lloyd Summers in 1911.. They had three children: Lee (born 1912), Verne (1914) and Richard (1931).

Sybil was postmistress of Mammoth Lakes for more than twenty-five years. I can remember having many

DESERT WHIMSY

by Tom Budlong



TEAKETTLE JUNCTION

GO SOUTH FROM UBEHEBE CRATER IN WHAT IS NOW DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK. AFTER 20 MILES OF GRAVEL WASHBOARD AND DRY DUST YOU WILL BE AT TEAKETTLE JUNCTION. HERE YOU CAN OPT TO TORTURE YOUR CAR MORE BY GOING TO THE RACETRACK, THE HIGH PLAYA WITH ROCKS THAT SLIDE AROUND BY THEMSELVES, OR PAST THE OLD TOWN OF GOLDBELT TO HUNTER MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING PANAMINT VALLEY.

PASSERSBY HAVE TAKEN TO THE HABIT OF HANGING TEAKETTLES ON THE SIGN AT THE JUNCTION. OTHERS HAVE TAKEN TO SHOOTING HOLES IN THE TEAKETTLES.

THE JUNCTION'S NAME HAD BECOME SO WELL ESTABLISHED WHEN THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAPPING CREW CAME THROUGH THAT THEY NAMED ONE OF THEIR MAPS TEAKETTLE JUNCTION. THEN, HAVING NO OBVIOUS NAME FOR AN ADJACENT MAP IN THIS EMPTY COUNTRY, THEY NAMED IT WEST OF TEAKETTLE JUNCTION.

pleasant visits with her whenever my family made an excursion to Mammoth. Another fond memory is the night she made frying pan bread for a large group of nephews, nieces and grandchildren. The site, in an aspen grove behind her cabin, had a small clearing with aspen log benches surrounding a large firepit. She threw her concoction: flour, water and a pinch of salt into a large cast iron skillet and placed it on the rocks at the edge of the fire. Soon the mouth-watering bread was ready to eat. We marveled at the taste and sat around the fire telling ghost stories far into the night.

Lloyd was born in 1884. His parents were "Young" Charley and Libby Summers (still another story). In his early years, he helped his father in the cattle brokerage

business. He is frequently mentioned in newspaper stories relating to gathering and shipping cattle to metropolitan areas. He and his father also had a cattle ranch at the northern end of Long Valley. They built and operated the Mammoth Hotel until it was destroyed by fire. Later he started the Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit with his son, Lee, which he operated until his death in 1945.

After Lloyd's death, Sybil married Tom Coleman, who also preceded her in death. She was killed in an automobile accident in Mexico in 1963, while on her way to visit her son, Richard.

How do you sum it up eight generations later? Eva (McGee) Yaney expressed it better than I can: ☺

"Though not in name, the spirit of the pioneers lives on."



CRANKSHAFT CROSSING

NOW GO NORTH FROM UBEHEBE CRATER OVER MORE AWFUL WASHBOARD, HEADING TOWARD EUREKA VALLEY WITH ITS MONUMENTAL SAND DUNES. AT THE START OF THE PASS OVER INTO EUREKA IS AN INTERSECTION WITH A ROAD INTO NEVADA, AN EVEN MORE HORRID TRACK THAN YOU HAVE BEEN ON. THIS INTERSECTION IS CALLED CRANKSHAFT CROSSING. IF YOU KNOW ABOUT TEAKETTLE JUNCTION YOU EXPECT A SIGN WITH CRANKSHAFTS HANGING ON IT. INDEED, ONE SMALLISH CRANKSHAFT IS WIRED TO THE SIGN, AND AN ACCUMULATION OF CRANKSHAFTS AND OTHER LARGE ENGINE PARTS LIES AT THE BASE.



POST OFFICE SPRING

A HALF MILE FROM RALLARAT, THE OLD MINING GHOST TOWN IN PANAMINT VALLEY, IS POST OFFICE SPRING. HAVING SEEN TEAKETTLE JUNCTION AND CRANKSHAFT CROSSING, ONE WOULD SURELY EXPECT A POST OFFICE SPRING SIGN FESTOONED WITH POSTCARDS, ENVELOPES, PACKAGES, DELIVERY NOTICES AND OTHER MAIL. NO SUCH LUCK. THE PLACE IS A TANGLE OF THORNY, DISORDERLY MESQUITE THAT HIDES EVEN THE SPRING. NOTHING BUT MAP COORDINATES TO IDENTIFY IT. ANYBODY CARE TO SET UP A SIGN AND CONTRIBUTE A LETTER OR TWO?

The Jordan Tragedy

by Barbara Moore

"AVALANCHES BRING DISASTER, DESTRUCTION AND DEATH! NINE¹ LIVES LOST AND RELIEF PARTIES ARE SEARCHING FOR BODIES OF THE UNFORTUNATE VICTIMS."

That was the headline that screamed out to subscribers in extra bold type in the Saturday, March 11, 1991 edition of the Bridgeport Chronicle-Union.

The winter of 1910-11 was one of record snowfall. It snowed almost continuously from mid-December 1910 to the 16th of January 1911. Temperatures rose during the last few days of the lengthy storms and the snow that fell was wet and heavy. Then temperatures dropped and an ice crust formed on top of the snow all over the Mono Basin and the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. On February 22, 1911, it started to snow again and continued with no let up for three weeks. It didn't stop snowing until March 10th. Huge accumulations of snow fell on top of the ice, perfect conditions for avalanches to roar down steep hill-sides. The snow depth measured 28' at Bodie, 5' at Mono Lake and over 25' at Jordan, the site of the recently finished power plant on Mill Creek at the base of Copper Mountain.

The town of Bodie had a special Christmas present in 1910 when work on the Jordan plant was completed. On Christmas Day the juice was finally turned on after six months of feverish construction, but it wasn't meant to last very long after Mother Nature took command.

The successful operation of the Green Creek plant, built in 1892 to provide electric power to the Standard Mill and selected businesses in Bodie, proved to the world that power could be transmitted over wires for long distances.² The residents of Bodie and other mining companies in Bodie, Aurora and Lucky Boy were anxious to tap into the unlimited hydro power of the Sierra. Plans began in June of 1909 with the purchase of hydro-electric sites along the Eastern Sierra. Jordan was to be the first plant built, and C.E. Poole³ was selected as Chief Engineer of what was described to be the best electric plant in the west.

Financing for the newly formed Hydro-Electric Power Co. was provided by J.S. Cain's Bodie Bank and Hawthorne business men, since these farsighted individuals realized power plants would help to open the treasures that lay in the 50 mile mineral belt.⁴

By April 1910, Jordan was a sea of activity. Contracts had been awarded for generators and hundreds of miles of wire to provide for the planned 2000 horsepower plant. Allis-Chalmers Co. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin⁵ built the electrical machinery consisting of a 1500 KW, 220V, 3 phase, 60 cycle, 400 RPM water wheel type alternator, 65 KW motor generator exciter set, 55 KW direct connected exciter unit and six 200 KW, 55,000, 2200 V oil filled self-cooled transformers. Actual construction work began the last week of May as supplies began to arrive from Minden. Fifty men were employed by grading contractor, John W. DeChambeau, to prepare the sites for the power house and auxiliary buildings. When grading was completed, contractor Paul Ehlers and his men started work building the plant and houses. In the meantime, over 60 men were employed by Charles Stasnopols who had the contract for excavating the pipeline. This involved digging the ditch to accommodate 12,000' of wooden stave pipe 48" in diameter, and 3100' of steel pipe tapering from 48" to 35" diameter that would carry the water from the intake at Lundy Lake around the side of Copper Mountain to a point directly above the power plant, providing a fall of 1700' to the water wheel.

During the month of May all available teams were used to haul construction materials from the railheads at Thorne (near Hawthorne) and Minden. By the end of June a telephone line to Bodie was operational and the foundation was completed for the power house. In mid-summer things were going so well that plans were revised and it was decided to run the power to Hawthorne and the mines of Rawhide and Wonder, all in Nevada, besides Bodie, Aurora and Lucky Boy, so machinery for a duplicate plant was ordered.

In early August the power house was ready for its roof, giving some the optimistic thought that power could be generated by mid-September. However these hopes were dashed by delays in the arrival of the heavy equipment and the need to construct special steel racks to transport it from the railheads to

Jordan. On August 20th, two transformers weighing four tons each, and two dynamos 12' high and 11' wide, weighting 12 tons each arrived in Thorne. Portions of a generator weighing 34,000 pounds followed a few weeks later. The first week of November saw the generator in place and the foundation for the exciters nearly finished. When the power house, built of reinforced concrete, along with the two cottages for employees were nearing completion, R.H. Mason, accompanied by his wife, arrived from Oakland to take up his duties as Chief Electrician. They moved into the number one cottage.

With wires strung and all equipment in place Bodieites had their finest Christmas present when light and power arrived on Christmas Day, 1910. The unrelenting storms however, unleashed the terrible tragedy that followed less than two and one half months later.

In late February and early March heavy snow delayed mail as stages couldn't get through the snow clogged roads. For the first time in many years mail to and from Bodie was carried on sleighs and by men wearing snowshoes. By March 11th no mail had arrived in Bodie for 10 days. Earl Hays' team had been stuck in snow for a week at Murphy Springs and several men from Bodie worked for days to break the road to free the horses. Reports from all directions stated that the roads were impassable as the worst storm of an exceptionally stormy season hit the area with savage ferocity.

A few minutes before midnight on Tuesday, March 7, 1911 Bodie went dark! At the main power company office in Bodie it was thought the storm had brought down the transmission line somewhere between Bodie and Mill Creek and at 12:01 March 8th, two men started out on skis to locate the trouble. With snow blown by 50 miles per hour winds causing blizzard conditions, the men returned to Bodie for help after going only a short distance. Four men who were expert skiers joined them. Carrying lineman repair tools and supplies, plus a portable phone (in their haste they forgot to pack food and water), five of the six reached the Scanavino Ranch, tired, hungry and cold, nine miles from Bodie, six hours later at 6:45 a.m., March 8th. One of the men had broken a ski and suffered a sprained ankle in a fall. With the help of the Scanavino children he was brought to safety at the ranch on a hand pulled sleigh.

The men had carried Fels Maptha soap to apply to the ski bases to prevent the skis from sticking once the wax wore off and this had to be applied often during the nine mile trek. By 11:30 a.m., after resting and being generously fed by the Scanavinos, who also rewaxed their skis, the men continued on. Steven Scanavino⁶, a strong lad of 16, volunteered to join them, replacing the man who had sprained his ankle. Bucking deep snow and gale force winds, but finding no breaks in the transmission lines, they finally arrived at Mill Creek at 5:30 p.m., nine miles from the Scanavino Ranch.

All along the way they had heard and felt rumbles of snow slides so massive that the ground shook like an earthquake. When they got to Jordan, expecting to see the power house and cottages, they were shocked to see there was nothing but snow, and realized a tremendous slide had wiped out the entire settlement. Everything had been buried under 20' of hard packed avalanche debris.

1. Although Jordan was the scene of greatest destruction and at least eight deaths, Samuel M. Smith, owner of the Pittsburgh-Liberty mine was killed at Masonic. 50 years old, he was survived by his wife and two children residing in Santa Rosa, CA.

2. THE ALBUM, Volume 1, Number 3. "Bodie Electrifies the World"

3. The Bridgeport Chronicle-Union in two separate articles printed Poole's initials as C.E. and C.O. It is unknown which was correct. The Poole plant in Lee Vining Canyon was named in his honor.

4. The Jordan plant was built by the company the Cain group founded and called The Hydro-Electric Power Company. It was sold to the Pacific Power Co. in January 1911. Pacific Power Company subsequently sold it and several other electric facilities in the Eastern Sierra to Southern California Edison in the 1960s.

5. In 1910, my father, Samuel J. Gates, was employed by Allis-Chalmers as an apprentice engineer, earning a starting wage of 19¢/hr. His memoirs refer to working in the foundry that made parts for electric motors, the turbine erecting department and later the electrical test floor. It is quite possible that he worked on some of the Jordan machinery. The Allis-Chalmers training was a strong background because he eventually was involved in the design, operation and control of motors and generators. Recognizing his contribution by building industrial power plants in the mid-west and designing portions of the generators for Hoover Dam, he was named in "Who's Who in Engineering" and also was elected president and a director of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. On a visit to the Eastern Sierra when he was in his 80s, upon driving past the Rush Creek power plant in the June Lake Loop, he commented that it was one of the first hydro-electric plants in the world. I don't know if he was aware of Jordan, or that Jordan had suffered massive damage, but I only wish I had discovered the Jordan story while he was still alive. He was aware that hydro-electric power was pioneered in this area.

6. Steven Scanavino wrote an account of his recall of the rescue mission for the "Mineral County and Hawthorne Independent News" issue of June 10, 1960.

Adding to the horrifying scene a high pressure water line had broken. As it shot a stream of water over 200' in the air, the water froze into a grotesque 100' high ice-berg with icicles hanging down from the sides. The men hurriedly dug eight feet down through the snow to reach the 20' tall telephone poles to call Bodie⁷, to alert them to the catastrophe, and also to inquire how many people had been at the plant. As far as the office in Bodie knew, there had been eight men and one woman, Mrs. Mason. The last call from the plant had been made at 11:45 p.m., March 7th when someone reported it was snowing so hard that four men who were concerned about the possibility of snowslides had moved to the plant, thinking that the reinforced concrete structure would be a safe haven, and heat from the three big transformers would provide warmth. The four, who were miners residing in nearby cabins, joined the two men who were operating the machinery. One man sought shelter in the old copper smelter nearby. H.M. Weir, an electrician and lineman, had spent the evening with the Masons. When he left their cottage he said he had to do some work on a transformer. That was the last he was seen alive.

The search party's call to Bodie was completed about 8 p.m. Snow and boulders continued to slide down Copper Mountain and with darkness adding to the dangerous scene, they decided to ski to the Fred Mattly Ranch a mile north to wait for daylight. There they not only found one of the power plant employees, but also noted that the avalanches had spared Mattly's by a mere 50'. With the temperature a bone-chilling 28° below zero, one of the men left the Mattly Ranch at midnight, skiing through heavy snow to reach the John Conway Ranch two miles to the east to alert them to the disaster. Conway immediately notified the Mono Lake people by phone.

At Bodie, the mines had closed down due to the storms so the miners had adjourned to the saloons to drink and gamble away the idle time. When the messengers went from saloon to saloon bringing the sad news there was instant quiet at first, and then a rush as miners dropped cards and left unfinished drinks and winnings on the tables to stampede for the doors. Within one hour 100 men had left Bodie on skis!

The first four miles down Cottonwood Canyon are very steep and only the most expert skiers could negotiate the pitch of the slope, made even more difficult by blizzard conditions and darkness. At one mile intervals along the road the mail and freight carriers had erected shelters which they stocked every autumn with food, water, bedding and wood. The weakest skiers, and

some who had broken their skis and sprained ankles, about 30 out of the 100, were saved by these shelters and most were later helped back to Bodie. The rest of the men arrived at Scanavinos about 6 a.m. on March 9th, with five of them needing help from some Indian boys over the last exhausting part. Scanavinos again provided food. After four hours' rest, on re-waxed skis and with lunches tucked under jackets, 75 were able to continue on, arriving at Mill Creek in early evening. Again, the combined danger of darkness and continuous slides preventing anything being done, they went to Mattly's to wait for daylight.

The morning of March 10th, 100 men from the surrounding area, in response to John Conway's call for help, joined the 75 men from Bodie to dig for survivors, or more likely, to recover bodies. The six men who had sought safety in the power house were found along with some of the machinery that had been swept over 500' by the power of the slide; two of the bodies were encased in ice from the broken water pipe. As the men dug frantically, snow and boulders continued to crash down, causing numerous interruptions as the men ran over the hard packed snow to get out of the way of danger, only to return and find the holes so tediously dug had been covered over and tools buried.



Alluvial fan at the base of Copper Mountain indicating the path of the avalanche.

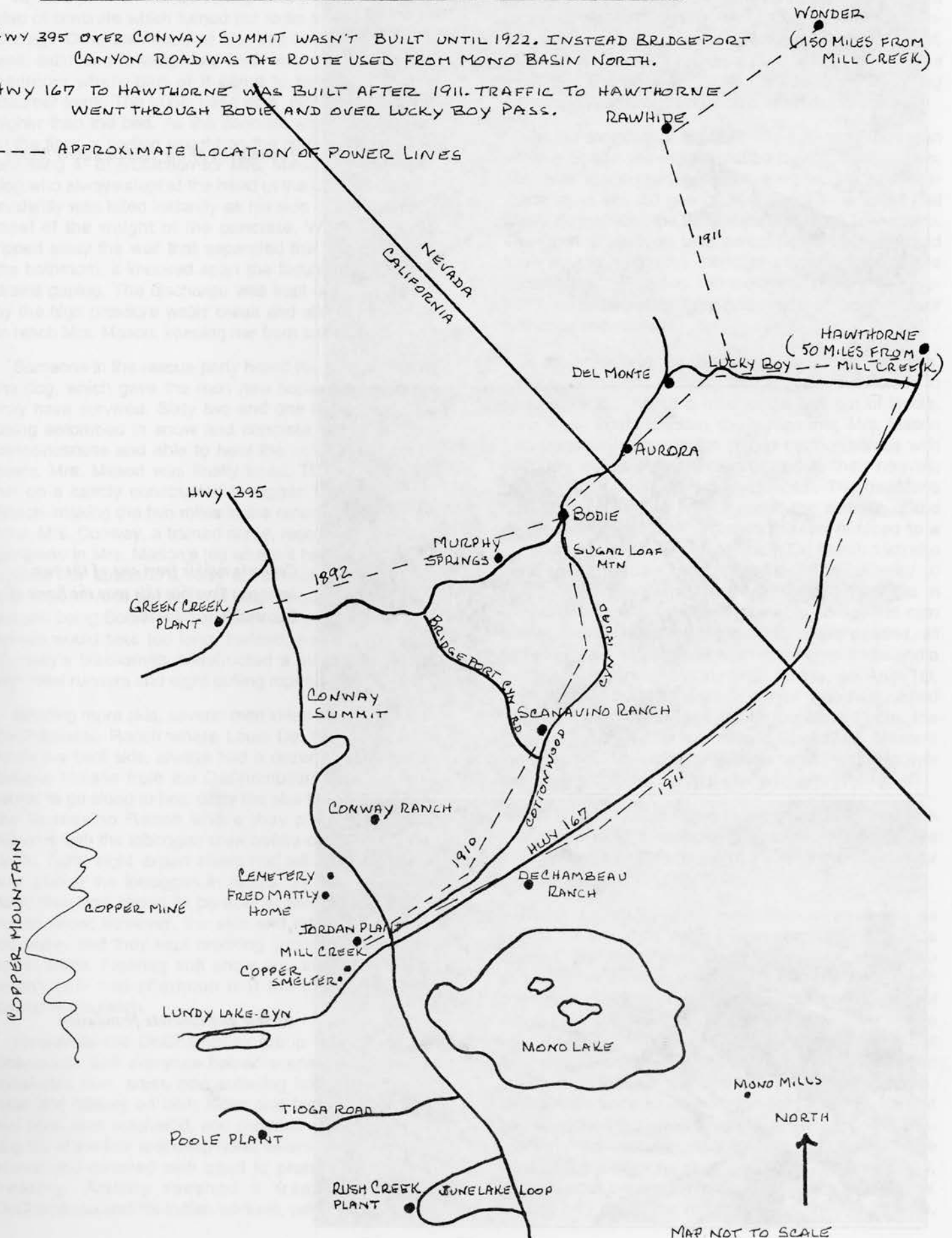
7. The Bridgeport Chronicle-Union, in its edition of March 8, 1911, said communication to the office in Bodie was made from C.W. Vogt's place (location unknown) by way of Mono Mills because other phones were out of order.

HIGHWAYS 395 AND 167 ARE SHOWN FOR ORIENTATION ONLY

HWY 395 OVER CONWAY SUMMIT WASN'T BUILT UNTIL 1922. INSTEAD BRIDGEPORT CANYON ROAD WAS THE ROUTE USED FROM MONO BASIN NORTH.

HWY 167 TO HAWTHORNE WAS BUILT AFTER 1911. TRAFFIC TO HAWTHORNE WENT THROUGH BODIE AND OVER LUCKY BOY PASS.

--- APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF POWER LINES





Foundation of the Jordan Power House



Concrete rubble from one of the two cottages. Possibly this was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mason.



Rubble and concrete foundation

At 2:30 p.m. on March 10th one of the men struck a slab of concrete which turned out to be the west wall of Cottage One, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mason. The wall, estimated to weigh two tons, was pushed into the bedroom where part of it came to rest on a strong steamer trunk. The trunk, used as a night table, was 4" higher than the bed. As the concrete smashed the bed to the floor, a portion caught on the corner of the trunk, providing 4" of protection for Mrs. Mason and their pet dog who always slept at the head of the bed. Mr. Mason evidently was killed instantly as his side of the bed took most of the weight of the concrete. When the slide ripped away the wall that separated the bedroom from the bathroom, it knocked apart the fixtures, leaving the drains gaping. The discharge was kept open and clear by the high pressure water break and allowed fresh air to reach Mrs. Mason, keeping her from suffocating.

Someone in the rescue party heard the whimpering of the dog, which gave the men new hope that someone may have survived. Sixty two and one half hours after being entombed in snow and concrete, never losing consciousness and able to hear the voices of the rescuers, Mrs. Mason was finally freed. The men rushed her on a hastily constructed toboggan to the Conway Ranch, making the two miles in the record time of a half hour. Mrs. Conway, a trained nurse, recognized signs of gangrene in Mrs. Mason's leg where it had been pinned against her husband's body for almost three days. It was imperative to get her to a hospital quickly, the nearest one being Bodie. To open the road with shovels and horses would take too long. Instead, working all night, Conway's blacksmith constructed a sturdy toboggan with steel runners and eight pulling ropes.

Needing more skis, several men skied six miles to the DeChambeau Ranch where Louie DeChambeau, who made the best skis, always had a dozen pair on hand. Several Indians from the DeChambeau Ranch volunteered to go along to help carry the skis the four miles to the Scanavino Ranch where they planned to rendezvous with the toboggan crew before continuing on to Bodie. Forty eight expert skiers had left Conway's at 4 a.m. pulling the toboggan in relays. By leaving before dawn they had hoped to be able to take advantage of frozen snow; however, the skis and toboggan proved too heavy and they kept breaking through the crust to softer snow. Fighting soft snow and strong winds, it wasn't until mid-afternoon that the toboggan crew arrived at the ranch.

Meanwhile the DeChambeau group had arrived at Scanavinos and everyone helped prepare food for 75 exhausted men, some now suffering from snow blindness and blisters on both faces and feet. A steer and two hogs were butchered, and potatoes and vegetables dug out of the four feet deep holes where they had been stored and covered with sand to protect them from freezing. Activity reached a frenzy as Louie DeChambeau and his Indian workers, using a mixture of

resin, beeswax, and pinyon pitch, re-waxed and repaired 100 pair of skis. More than 20 Indians contributed their winter store of pinenuts. Working all night, they shelled several hundred pounds and ground the meat to a fine powder that was added to the dwindling flour supply, so bread could be prepared and baked.

On the morning of March 12th, a second toboggan left the Scanavino Ranch pulled by six men on skis. This was loaded with lunches, a coffee pot, a home-made stove and 30 gallons of water. The weather had finally cleared, but the temperature was still below zero. The Chief of the local tribe anticipated the skiers would have trouble pulling the toboggans uphill so his people accompanied the group and took over in the steep sections, on snowshoes they had made of green willow branches and rawhide.

In the meantime, the Bodie people hadn't been idle. They worked night and day with shovels and horses to open the road. About a mile and a half out of Bodie, near Sugar Loaf Mountain, the groups met. Mrs. Mason was transferred to a sleigh pulled by four horses with specially made snowshoes attached to their hooves, and was rushed to the Bodie Hospital. The gangrene had progressed to a point beyond the abilities of the Bodie facility and staff, which had been reduced to a minimum as Bodie mining declined. On March 19th she was again loaded on a sleigh for the journey to Hawthorne, the first leg of the trip to a hospital in Oakland. Roads were still impassable so several men walked beside the sleigh, shoveling where needed, all the way to Del Monte, over eight miles from Bodie and a few miles beyond the state line. Finally, on April 1st, accompanied by Mrs. Mason's father, who had rushed from Yuma, Arizona, and Chief Engineer Poole, the group boarded a train for Oakland where Mrs. Mason's leg had to be amputated. After she recovered the power company employed her at their main office.

The company also responded to the tragedy with letters of appreciation to those who helped throughout the disaster and reimbursed the many ranching families for their contributions of provisions.

Burial was delayed for more than three weeks as coffins for the eight victims were prepared, the roads opened, and the graves dug through rock and frozen soil. Sombre services were held in the Mattly home with appropriate background music provided by the jingle of sleigh bells on the horses as they waited outside in the cold. The site chosen for the cemetery was a hilly knoll 300' east of the Mattly home, where the view to the south overlooked the scene of the catastrophe. Headstones were made from the light grey marble that had supported the switchboard that held the power control switches and electrical meters at the plant. The force of the avalanche shattered the 2-1/2" thick panel, so the pieces were cut into oblique shapes with victims' names and dates carved into the stone. The holes,

drilled for screws that had attached the marble to the wall of the plant, remained.

After the weather cleared the damage could be assessed. The buildings had been erected in what was considered a safe area, 1,000' from the steepest part of Copper Mountain, but obliteration of 100-year old trees that grew near the power plant and cottages, and the destruction of the old copper smelter built in 1879, gave proof that the storms of 1910-11 were an unusual phenomena. The slides that destroyed everything in their paths measured one mile long and one-half mile wide, releasing an estimated 4,000,000 tons of snow that buried everything 18' to 22' deep. The avalanches swept the buildings over 500' off their foundations. The electric transformers inside the power house, weighing 20 tons and standing 15' high, were skidded 300' but were still in a vertical position when dug out.

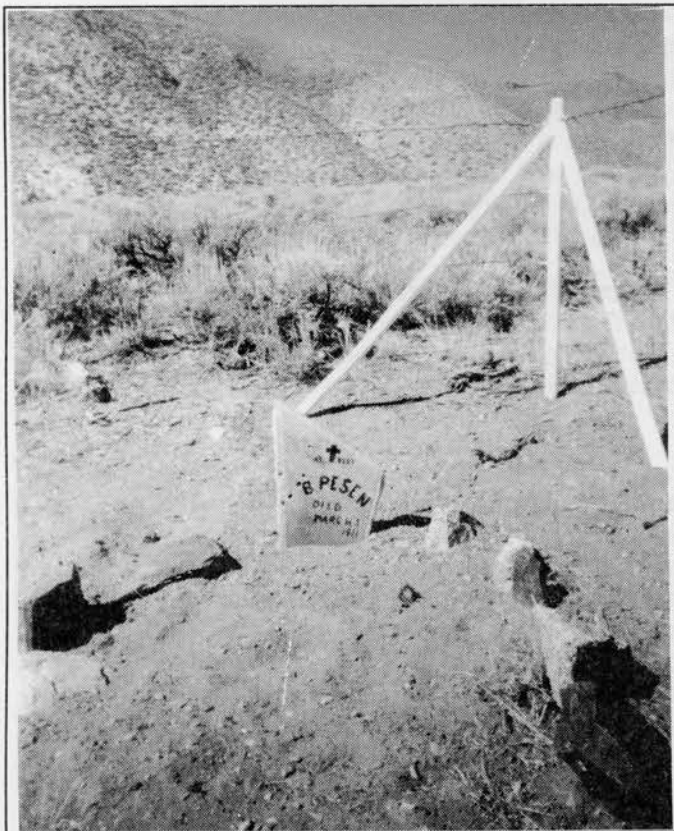
The avalanches brought destruction throughout the county. The slides wrecked the post office at Mono Lake and shoved the building into the lake. Considerable damage was reported in Lundy where Del Orme Knowlton, an electrician for the Crystal Lake Power Co. was killed when an avalanche demolished the power house, along with several other buildings in the canyon.

As efforts continued to open the roads, power company personnel began work on a temporary building while a new plant was planned, to be constructed in an area

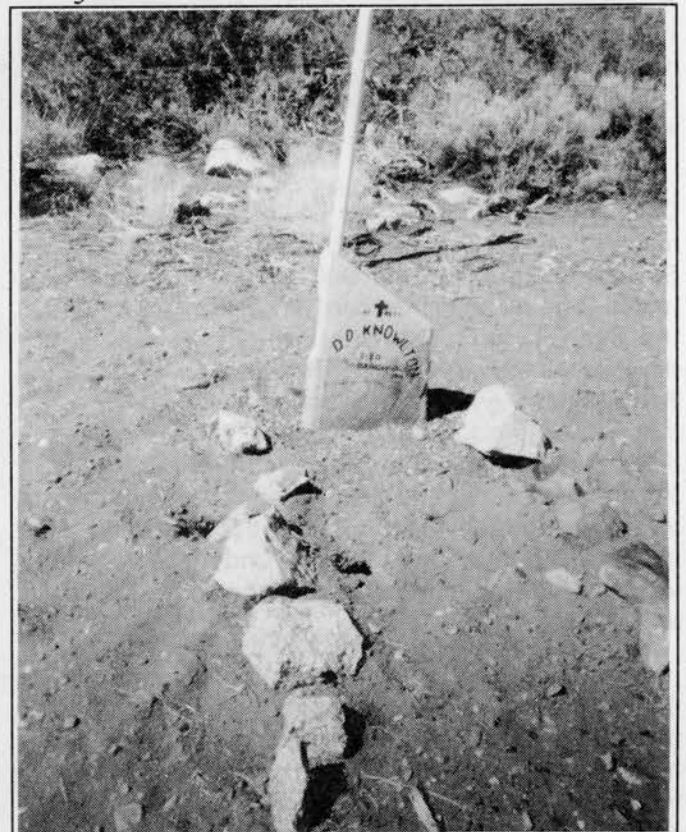


L. Laveaux - not listed in the newspaper account of fatalities.

There are two men listed in the paper as fatalities for whom no graves are in the cemetery: E.M. Peacock, electrician, married and John Sullivan, miner, single, age 42 Lundy.



B. Pessen. Miner, single. Newspaper reported his name as Ben Pessner



D.O. Knowlton. Del Orme Knowlton, Jr. Electrician, 29 years old, single killed in Lundy according to the newspaper.



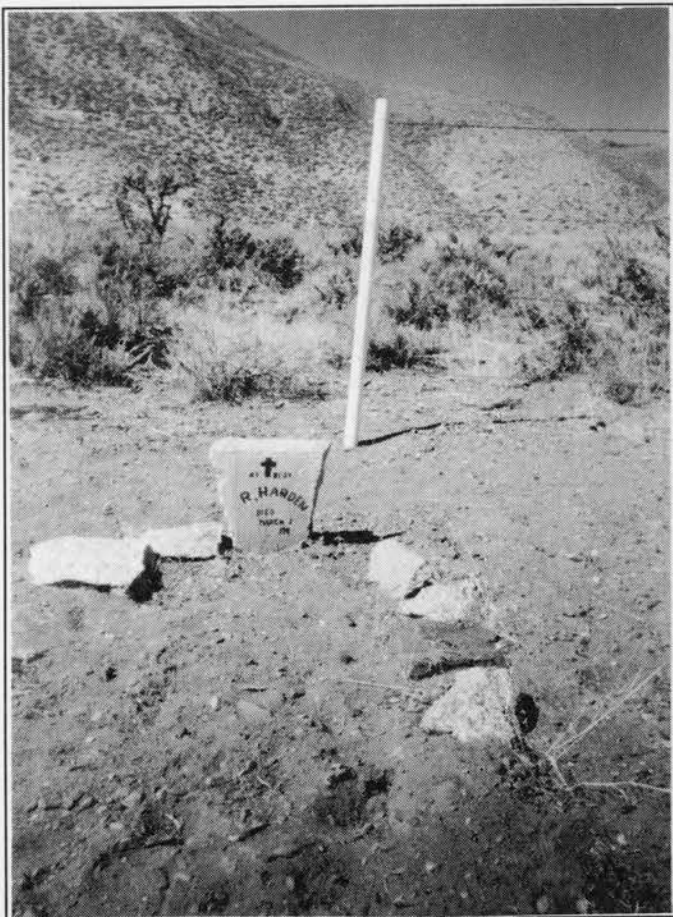
Fenced cemetery near Jordan with 7 marble headstones. Note empty space between 1st and 2nd grave with no marker. Originally there had been 8 graves.



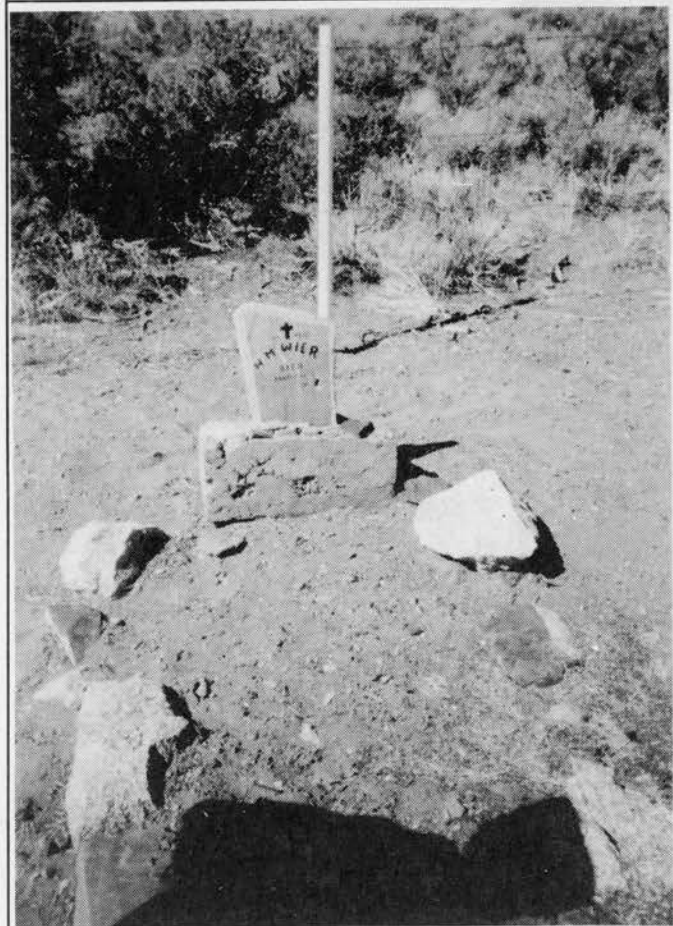
Wrought iron fence surrounding grave of P. Stromblad/Patrick Stormblad



P. Stromblad. Miner. Original marker states "died March 7, 1911" as is the date on all the other markers. White marker spells the name as Patrick Stormblad and the date as March 8, 1911 age 42 years on the new marker. Note screw hole on original marble headstone.



Above: R.H. Mason. Electrician. Only grave with "killed in snowslide" engraved on marker.



Upper left: R. Harden. Miner, single. Newspaper reported a Harold Hardy. Presume a misspelling.

Lower left: Grave of H.M. Weir. Electrician and lineman. Single. Note the screw hole in the headstone.

considered to be out of danger. Fortunately, a generator and the water wheel had remained on their foundations and were undamaged. Duplicate machinery, ordered the previous fall but held in Hawthorne due to the storms, was shipped as soon as the roads could accommodate heavy freight wagons. By May first power was generated from the temporary facility, and after the new plant was finished all the machinery was moved. This machinery, including the surviving generator and water wheel, is still humming away, producing power from what is now called the Mill Creek Plant, presently owned by Southern California Edison Co.

The site of Jordan is around the bend from the Mill Creek Plant. Sections of rusty pipe and concrete foundations are scattered about, almost obscured by more than 80 years' growth of sage and willow. A mile north is the fenced cemetery, meticulously maintained by personnel from Southern California Edison. Nearby are a few relics, all that is left of the Fred Mattly home that played such a prominent role in the rescue efforts.

The Bridgeport Chronicle-Union, in its March 11th edition, printed "like a thief in the night, the mountain-side came to the valley, took the lives of those in its path, leaving broken hearts and desolate homes in its wake." MAY THEY REST IN PEACE"

8. The Bridgeport Chronicle-Union, March 11, 1911, printed "nine lives lost." There may have been more. Eight deaths evidently occurred at the power plant (although some were not power plant employees), one at Masonic and at least one at Lundy. However, there is a headstone for L. Laveaux who is not listed in the paper and no graves for E.M. Peacock, an electrician, or John Sullivan, a miner at Lundy, who were listed in the paper as fatalities. Also there is the mystery of the grave with no headstone. Because of the change of ownership through the years and the lapse of time, few people in the Edison Company are aware that there ever was a Jordan. The company's archives in Los Angeles don't go back to 1911 so they have no way to clear up discrepancies in spelling between the newspaper obituaries and the headstones, nor do they know anything about the grave with no marker or the grave with two headstones. *

REFERENCES:

Victoria Scanavino Young: copy of her Uncle Steven's article
Arlene Reveal and staff at the Bridgeport library: assistance with microfilm
Bridgeport Chronicle-Union: 30 articles from June 5, 1909 through May 15, 1911



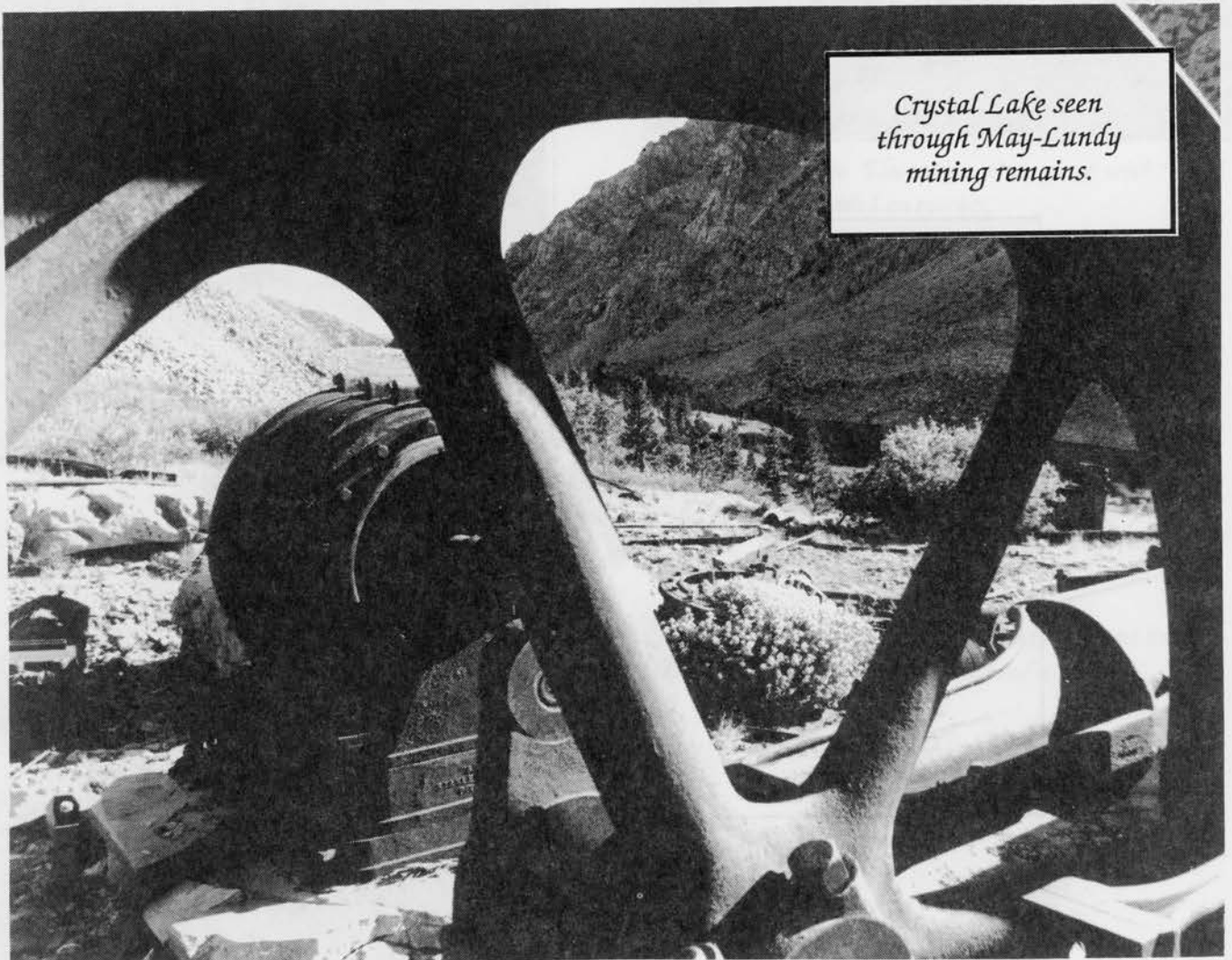
Stone wall at the back of Fred Mattly's home

DISASTER

and *RICHES*

by Chris J. Wright

Exploring an earlier avalanche . . .



*Crystal Lake seen
through May-Lundy
mining remains.*

"Like a thunderclap of doom the terrifying noise caused me to sit bolt upright in my bed, my eyes flashing in vain around the darkened room. The giant rumble began almost as soon as the loud report ended. Sounding like a thousand head of buffalo, the noise grew to almost deafening proportions. Then it hit, shearing the cabin from its foundation. Caught in the icy grip of the avalanche, the lodge tumbled end over end rupturing the thick wooden walls and scattering bits of lumber and planking through the snow. Then like a nightmare it was over. The falling snow began to cover all that was left of our cabin. I alone survived the night half dazed, half crazed, as I shook off the snow. Wearing only my long handles, staggering blind through the whirling storm, I knew my only hope was to reach the Regan cabin some 300 feet away."

After sinking up to his nose and over his head in the soft white snow, his feet almost frozen, Steve Trumble went back to the avalanche site to retrieve several of the blankets he had been sleeping in. He spread each blanket in turn over the soft snow like giant snowshoes and crawled on all fours, making it far enough to alert Pat Regan's dog. Pat took Steve in and rubbed his feet with snow until all the danger of frostbite was gone. Later that night Pat visited the scene of the disaster on snowshoes, with a lantern. Nothing could be seen except a great mound of snow and bits and pieces of the Trumble House. The storm was still raging. The next day the one remaining survivor, Christian Hablitzel, was discovered when a low moan was heard beneath a thick layer of snow. He was still wrapped in his blankets but was nearly done in from the experience. Robert Trumble,

Alex McKeon, D.B. Grant and Henry Schumaker, sleeping inside the cabin, were either killed outright or asphyxiated under tons of snow.

The winters were long, cold, and hard in Lundy. The steep canyons and cliff walls kept the snow and ice late into spring and boded severe avalanche danger during the winter months. In March of 1882 snow had been falling heavily for most of the month, leaving six feet at the lower elevations. On the night of the 15th a huge body of snow dropped 700 feet from the cliffs above, crushing the Trumble House and several others, scattering the wreckage over 200 feet across the canyon.

Lundy Lake, now just a tiny resort at the bottom of the hill, started like so many places in California, with the discovery of gold. Although the area was prospected during the Comstock silver rush around the 1860s, gold was not discovered by William D. Wasson until 1877. By 1879 this tiny part of Mono County California was organized into the Homer Mining District. The principal source of gold for the area was from the May Lundy Mine high above the little town of Lundy in a long valley containing four beautiful lakes. The mine was named for the pretty daughter of W.J. Lundy, a sawmill operator in the area during the 1870s. The May Lundy was operated on a large scale until 1911 and dredger tailings were crushed and treated until the late 1930s. The mine produced over three million dollars during its heyday.

Lundy was unique for more than just its snow avalanches and the gold that was extracted from the ground. Riches were also found in the enjoyable stories told by the editor of the newly formed Homer Mining



Index newspaper. "Lying Jim Townsend," gave the little town a sense of humor with his cheeky, often irreverent newspaper. What didn't happen in the town Jim extrapolated, exaggerated, and entertained with yarns like these:

Jeff McClellan is going to South Africa as a mine foreman, not superintendent. This makes it safer for the company.

A man slept with his head to the north for thirty years. After his death, an autopsy revealed that the iron in his blood had gradually been drawn toward the north and deposited a film on his brain.

We have to pay our taxes March fourth, and would like to have our delinquent subscribers march forth and settle up.

The Bodie papers are changing to tri-weekly. The Bridgeport paper still continues weakly as before.

The public school is doing well, and has an enrollment of six children.

Some of Jim's style was undoubtedly copied by Brett Hart's "Truthful James." Some even say that Mark Twain himself may have swiped an item or two for his own particular embellishments.

Many tales exist about the miners and how they survived the elevation and the extreme hazards of hard

rock mining. Some humorous, and some with deadly consequences. No collection of stories about Lundy is complete without this apocryphal tale, related to Mr. W.A. Chalfant by a pioneer friend.

It seems the May-Lundy Mine, often called by the crusty miners "a half mile nearer heaven than the bottom of the gorge," had a boarding house cook. This Chinese cook went under the name of Ah Fooie. The little oriental man was subject to cataleptic seizures, passing out completely at times. It was said the only reason he hadn't been buried by the miners long before was that his body never grew completely cold.

One particular seizure lasted so long the company superintendent became concerned that the little Chinaman had thrown his last fit, and the corpse should at last be sent down to his friends in camp.

Most of the ore that was sent down the hill was packed by mule train. José Salazar and his son Manuel were the principal mule skinnners for this endeavor. The superintendent told José that one of his mules would have to pack the corpse down the steep, zigzag trail to Lundy.

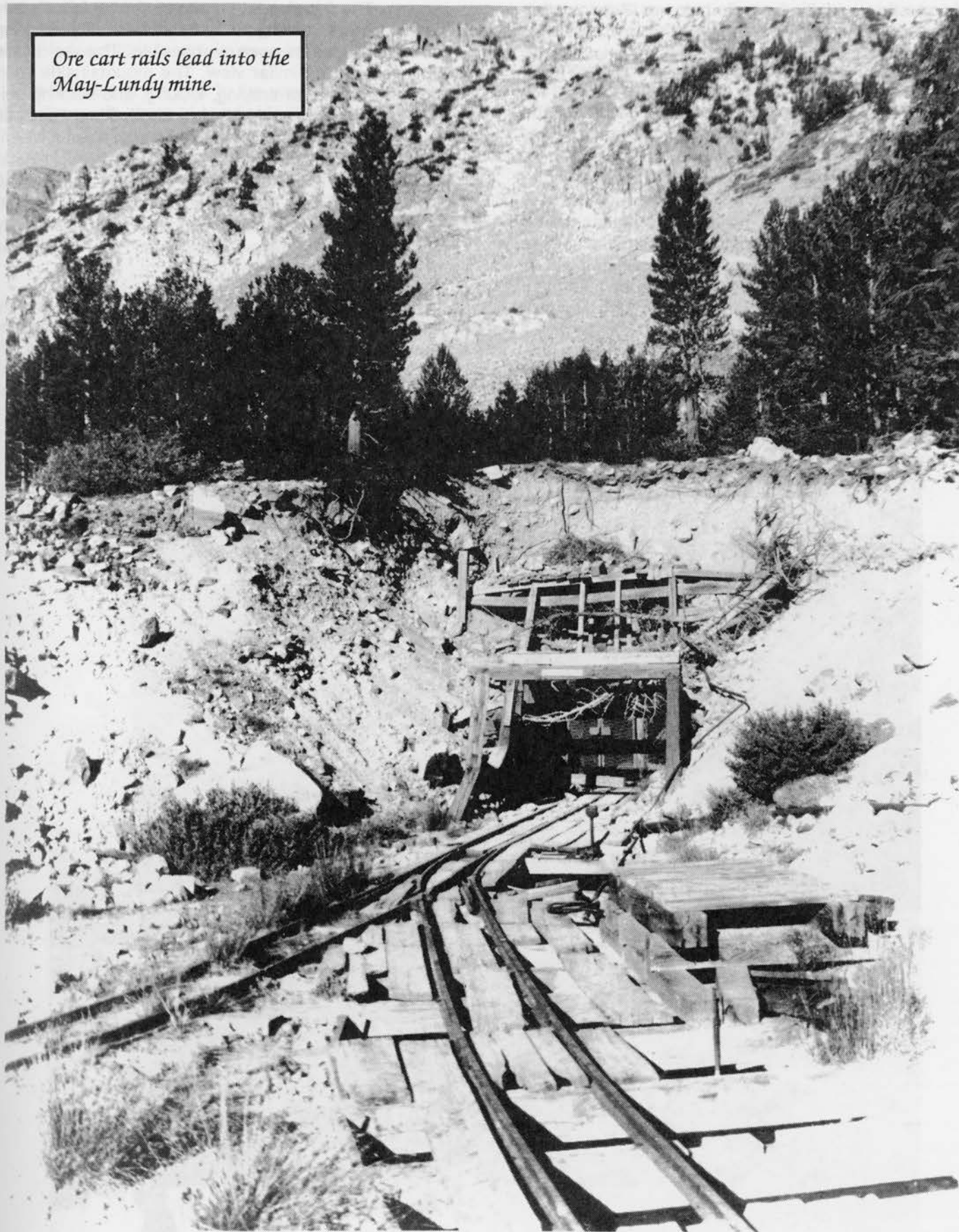
José complained bitterly, "No señor, I would always have the bad luck if I carry a dead man down with the ore."

The superintendent replied, "You'll have bad luck

Inside the May-Lundy mine looking out. Note metal ventilator air shaft running length of tunnel. "Beware of gas."



*Ore cart rails lead into the
May-Lundy mine.*



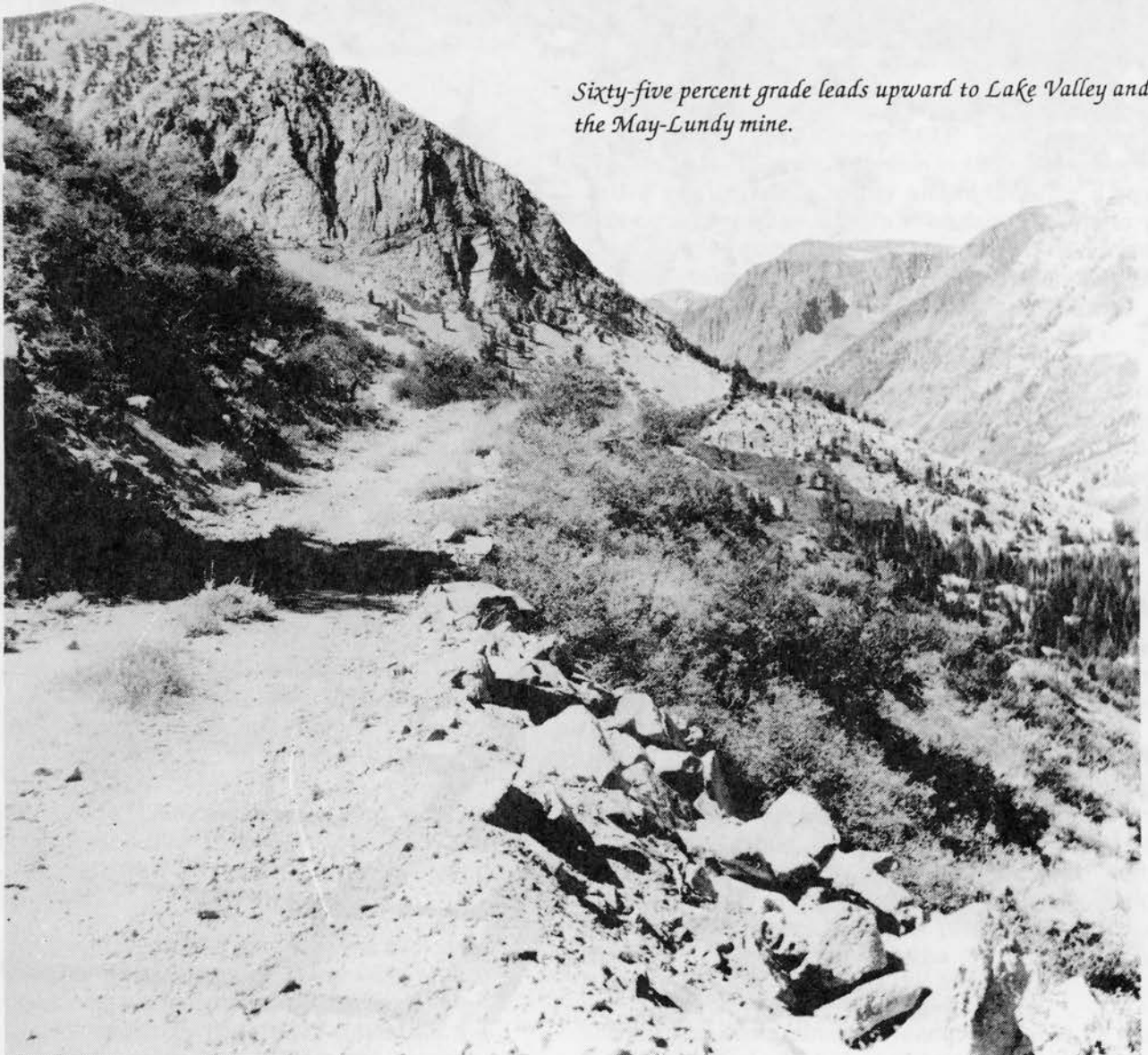
right now if you don't take it. So help me I'll get another packer that will and he'll pack out all the ore after this!"

Rather than lose his job, José accepted. A rough pine coffin was made, into which they laid the body of Ah Fooie, lashing it to one of the mules. The rest of the mules were packed up with the regular ore loads. It was down near the bottom of the steep grade when it happened; whether it was the pitching of the mule or the steep descent to Lundy is not known. Manuel, near the head of the long string of mules, heard moans then a yell from the coffin. He called to his father, who said he heard nothing and the boy must have imagined it. The noise was soon repeated, this time heard by both men. "Santisma," shouted José, plus another long string of less than devout remarks.

The bouncing of the load and the bouncing of the mule soon loosened the lid of the strange freight it was

carrying. The flapping lid increased the mule's already frightened state, adding much to his best effort at going somewhere else as soon as possible. The rest of the string took on a similar view. The mountainside soon became a tangle of braying, kicking, and bucking animals heading downhill faster and faster. When the outfit finally reached the bottom, the Chinaman was thoroughly awake and hurling Chinese and American epithets at those who had imprisoned him in the coffin (and anyone else within earshot). The snarled outfit was finally sorted out and rounded up, and José's passenger was quickly handed over to his fellow countrymen. Ah Fooie never did go back up to the camp.

The main attraction for Lundy and the upper lakes by the mine has always been fabulous trout fishing, breathtaking vistas, and a distinct absence of people. Of course no one can resist a little poking around in the old May-Lundy mine ruins. If you're lucky and know what



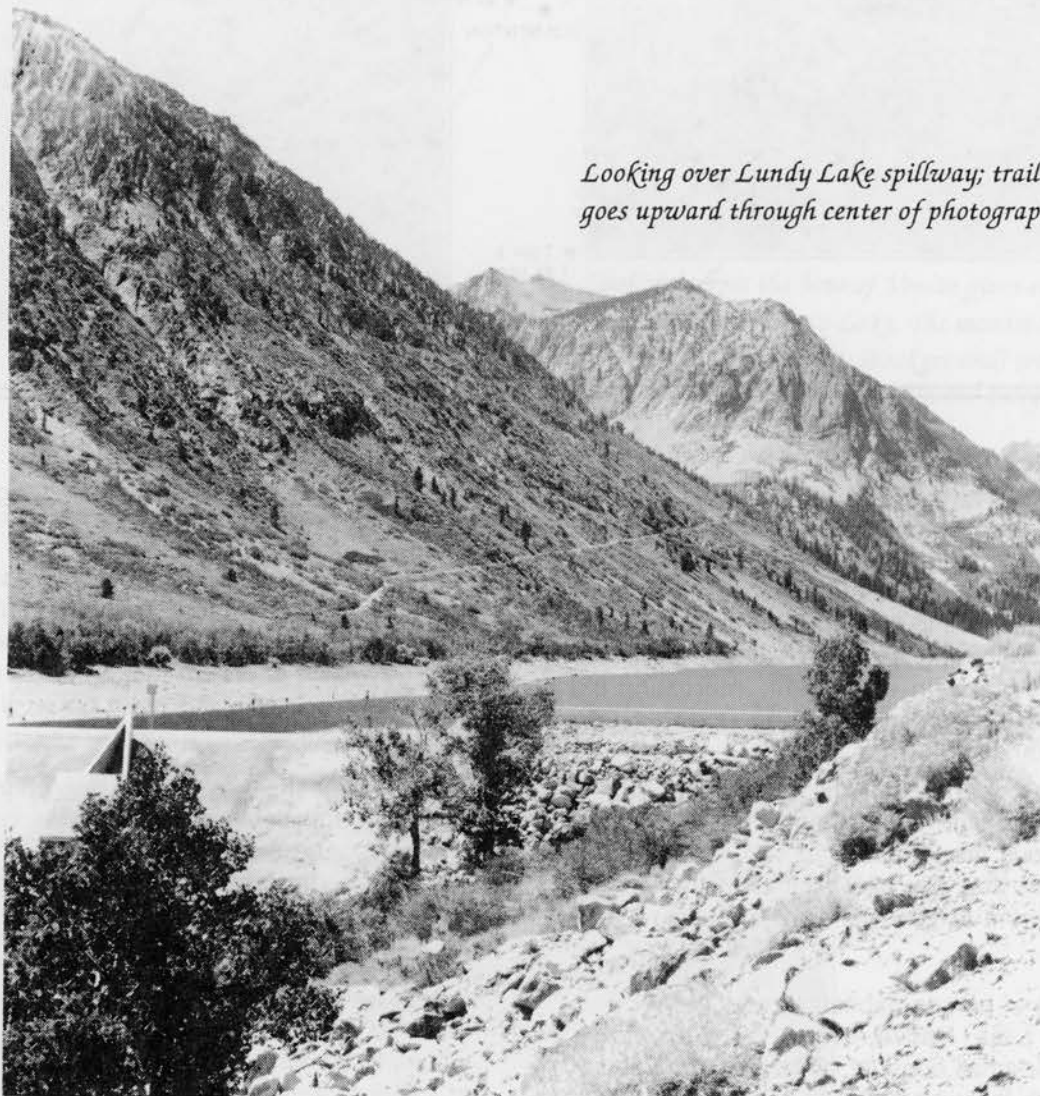
Sixty-five percent grade leads upward to Lake Valley and the May-Lundy mine.

you're looking for, you can still find pieces of quartz dotted with pyrites, and sometimes a few gold flecks in the huge dredger tailings left from the mine.

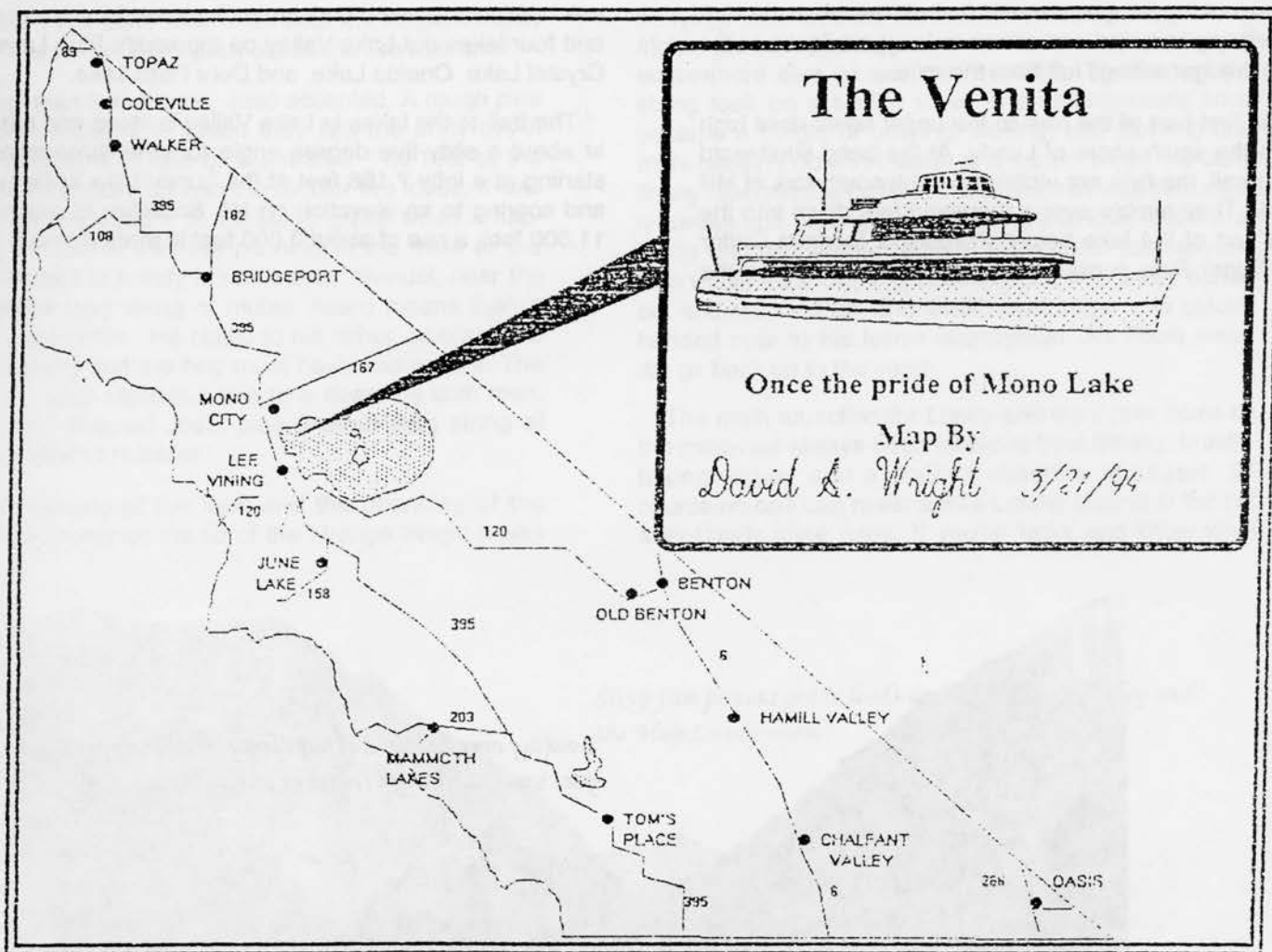
The first part of the hike to the upper lakes rises high along the south shore of Lundy. At the bend southward in the trail, the falls are visible from the south fork of Mill Creek. They tumble over a thousand feet down into the west end of the lake below. Forests of Incense Cedar and Sugar Pine surround the trail intermittently as the

trek continues upward until the rock strewn hillsides part and four lakes dot Lake Valley on the south: Blue Lake, Crystal Lake, Oneida Lake, and Dore Pass Lake.

The trail to the lakes in Lake Valley is steep and runs at about a sixty-five degree angle for over three miles starting at a lofty 7,166 feet at the Lundy Lake spillway, and soaring to an elevation on Mt. Snowden of around 11,500 feet, a rise of about 3,000 feet in three miles. *



Looking over Lundy Lake spillway; trail to upper lakes goes upward through center of photograph.



Northbound, 395. North of Lee Vining, Mono Lake fills your windshield. You undoubtedly are having trouble keeping your eyes on the highway, for the scene all around is a grand one. The view encompasses a vista of Grand Old Mono itself in all its radiant beauty. Colors change with each passing hour, each passing season, the shore line teems with vegetation, interesting old buildings, and that ever-present view.

Viewing the extent of the lake, you may wonder if anyone has ever thought of launching a boat and navigating its generous proportion. You can just picture it yourself; the craft that you pilot skimming the waves, salty spray and wind in your hair, eyes drinking in the grandeur.

Over the years of human habitation, man has indeed navigated Mono Lake. Native men paddled along the lake shore in their small dugouts in search of the abundant wildlife. With the white men, it started with Mark Twain's "piece of pumice."¹ Mono navigation then progressed through such vessels as shallow dugouts steered and powered by the likes of Twain² and geologist Israel Russell³; the Rocket⁴; the Paoha⁵; speedboat

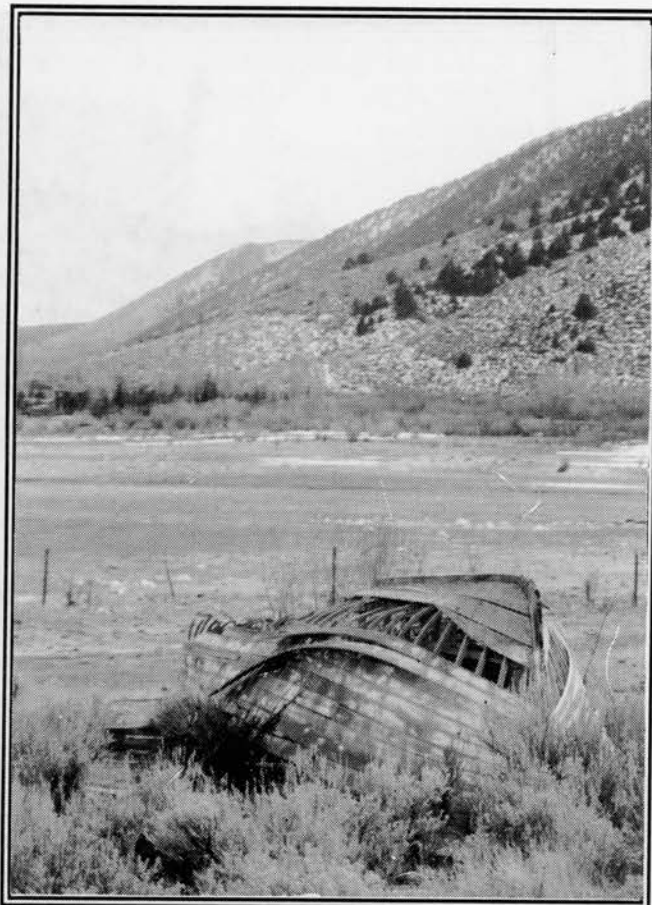
racings⁶; to the modern boats of Jungle Labs shrimp catchers and a few private citizens.

Northbound, 395. Mono Inn is coming into view. Something for an instant catches your eye, off to the right, flashing teasingly through the willows near the road. Maybe it is one of those horses grazing near the shore. There ... no ... it's not a horse, it appears to be a giant skeleton!

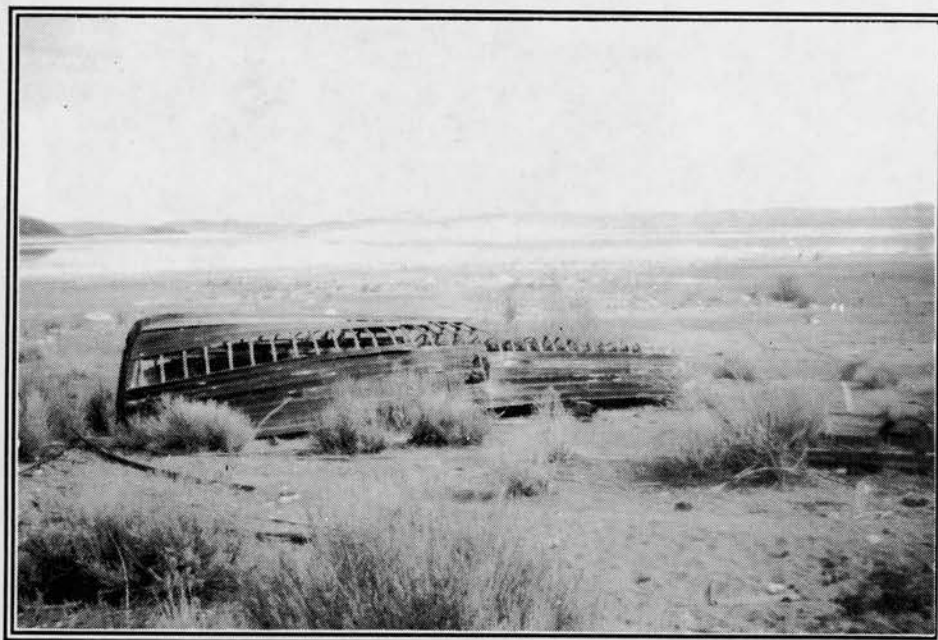
If curiosity implores you to stop your car, you will indeed find a skeleton of sorts. Those curious enough to crawl through barbed wire, willow thickets and mud will see the wooden bones of what was once a boat, a fairly large one.

This boat had a name and a history here at Mono Lake. Her name was Venita⁷, christened with that name after the mother of her owner. Venita used to skim the waters of Mono Lake merrily under the expert guidance of Wallis McPherson. Wally grew up on Mono Lake, literally. He lived much of his young life out there on Paoha Island. He grew to know the lake well, and its nautical wonders and hijinks. He had to, as boats were the only way to the mainland and civilization.⁸

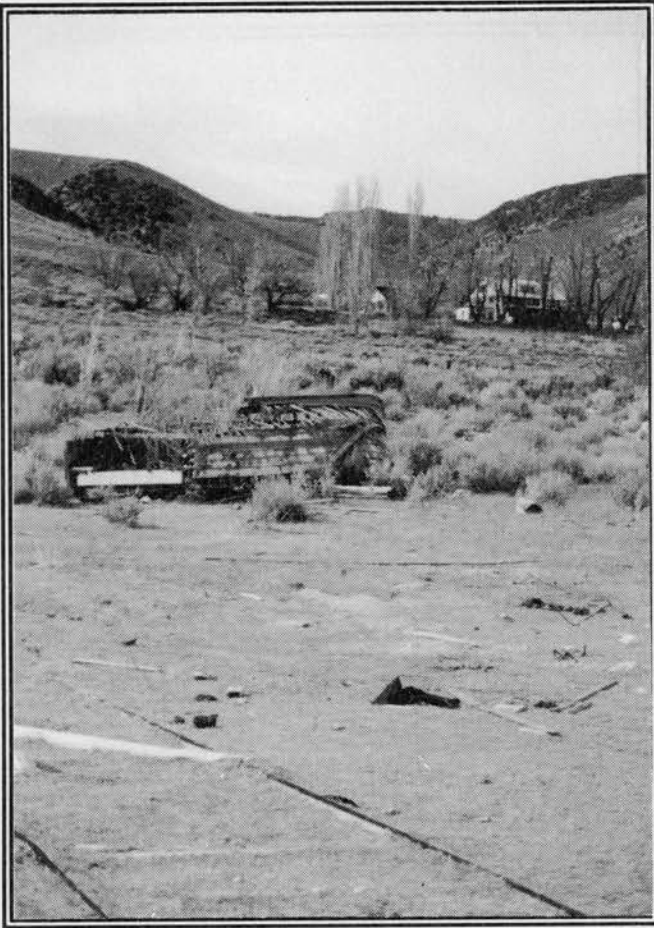
Venita from Highway 395. May 1990.



Looking across the bow of Venita gives evidence of the loss of water at Mono Lake. The meadows between Venita and Tioga Lodge (background) were once full of water to about the brush line in the foreground.



Wreckage found at the site of the boat house, docks and mooring site of the Venita. February 1991.



Above: Rails once under water, now are found almost a half mile from any of that salty liquid. These were used to haul the Venita in and out of the water for repairs and winter storage. Venita and the Mono Inn in the background. February 1991.

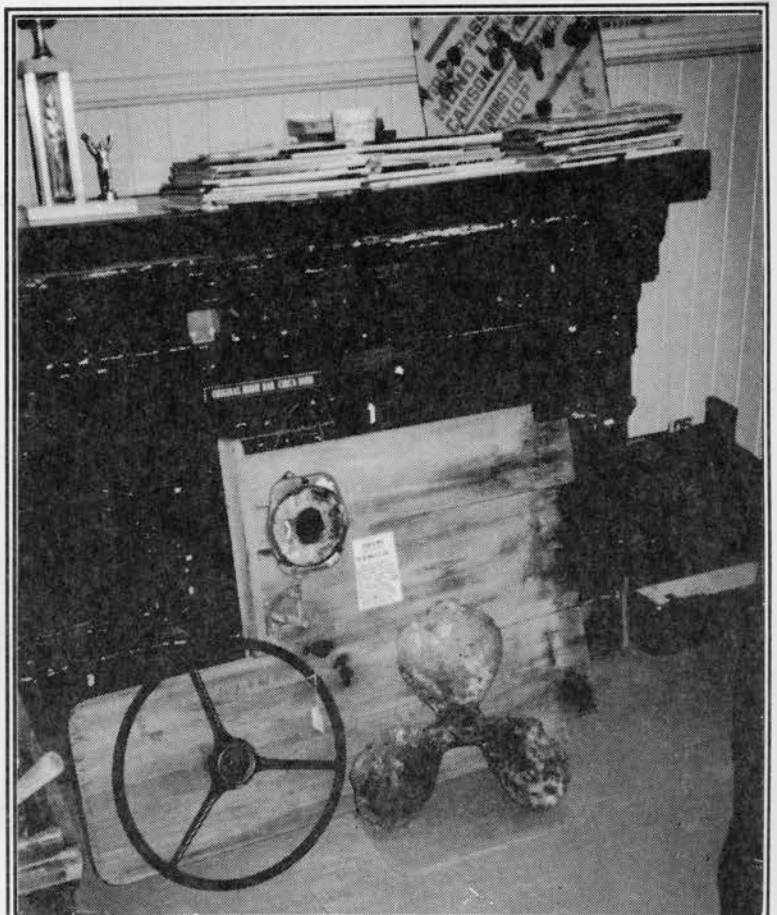
Right: Venita's helm, steering wheel and prop, found in the Mono Basin Historical Society's Schoolhouse Museum, Lee Vining. July 1991.

The Venita was thirty-four feet long, and ten feet wide. Her skeleton was made of 1 1/2" oak; to protect her from the alkaline waters of Mono, she was skinned with 3/4" spruce planking. Her stamina and speed was due to her Ford V-8 heart.⁹ She was not very big as ocean going vessels go, but she was hefty compared to her inland counterparts found on Eastern Sierra lakes then and now.

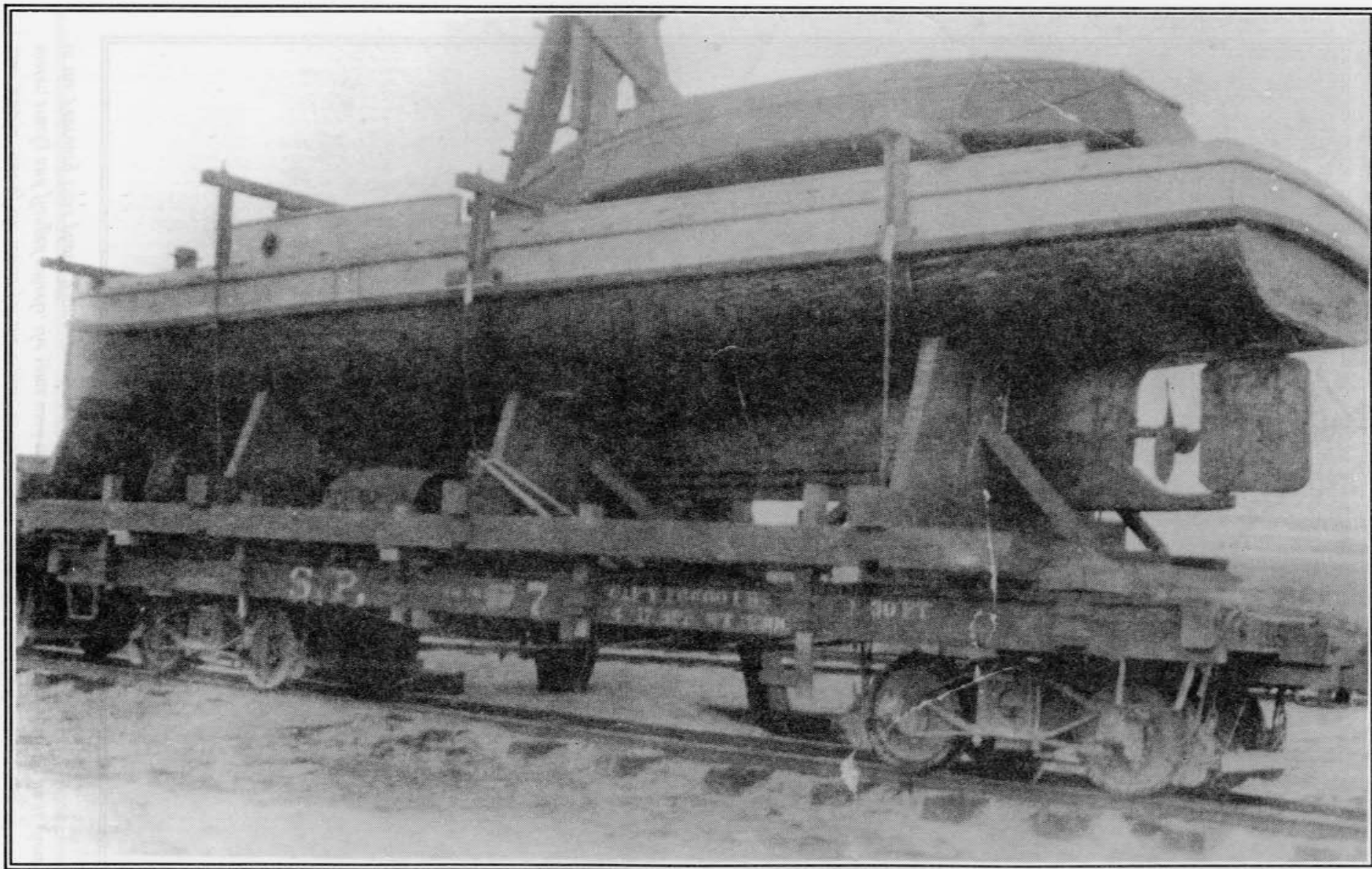
The Venita began life at Mono as an empty hull. Wally dressed her out to his specifications. He set her course on the lake as a pleasure craft, to take folks on a cruise of the lake and to its islands. She could safely haul 36 persons. Those 36 fortunate people were able to view a different Mono Lake from today, for diversions of its feeder streams had only begun, and it was not yet the emaciated lake we know today.

But ferrying "safely" those 36 passengers is relative on Mono Lake, for Mono has many tricks weatherwise. Those familiar with life on Mono Lake know that almost in an instant, wind driven fury will agitate the waters, wild, foamy, deadly. Often it can be playful, and many have had a friendly splash or a dousing. But the Venita contended many times with Mono at its worst,¹⁰ called upon to search for or rescue those who became victims or statistics of the wrath of a raging lake.

During the Venita's brief lifetime, the lake seemed to try to maim or kill her. Once it crippled her; later it did kill

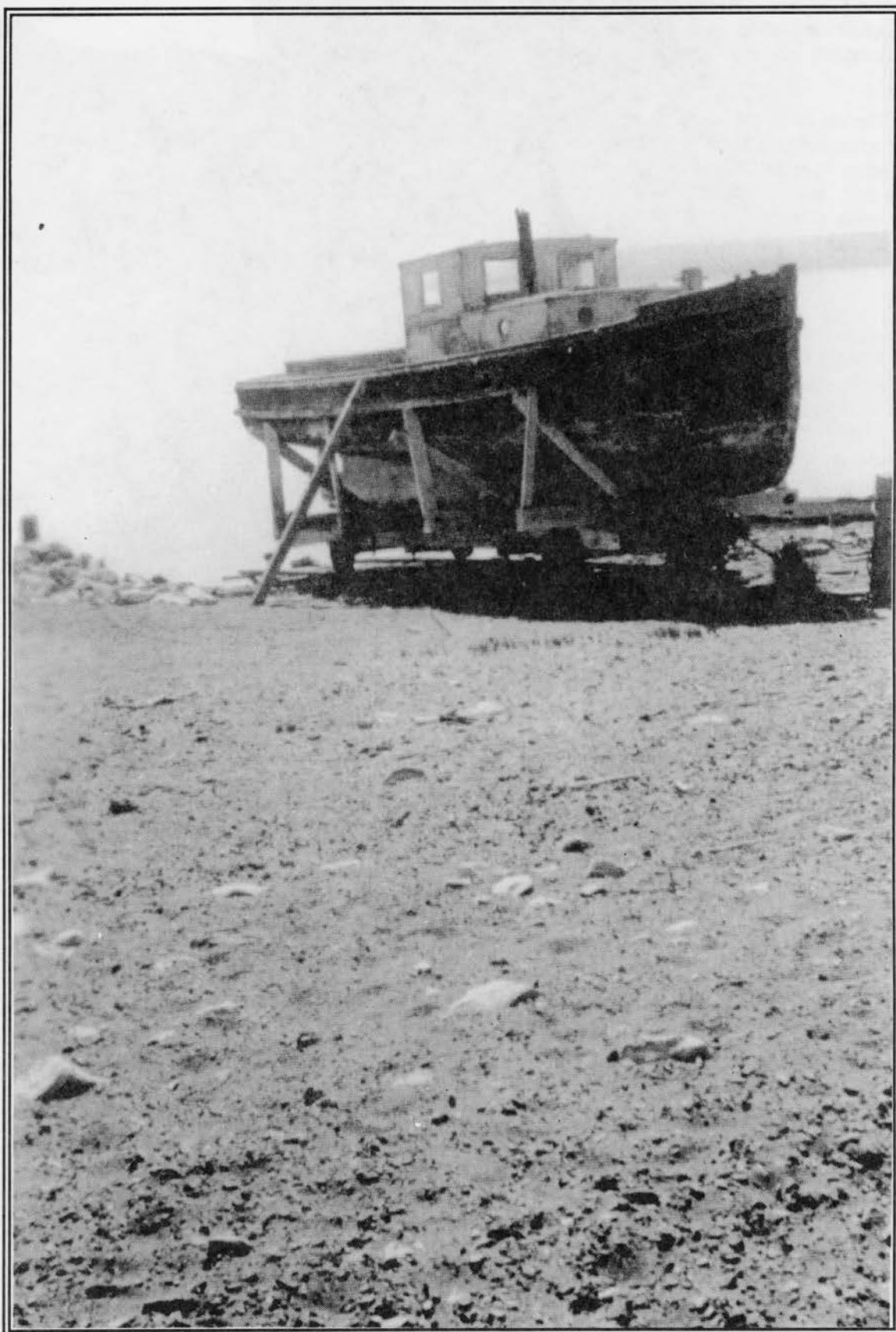


Young Wallis McPherson pulling in his first boat at Paoha Island, Maui, early 1919, with the Venita, also the origin of the name of the boat that was later named after him. Photo courtesy of Wallis McPherson.



Predecessor to the Venita, the "Paoha" in 1919, on flatcar at Benton Station, on Southern Pacific Railroad's narrow gauge. Photo courtesy of Wallis McPherson.

The "Paoha" out of the water for the winter in 1934. Note the method used in hauling it out of water, tracks and flanged wheels, the same used with the Venita. The remains of this system is shown in the February 1991 photo. Photo courtesy of Wallis McPherson.



Young Wallis McPherson paddling in his little boat at Paoha Island, Mono Lake. His mother Venita, also the origin of the name of the boat that came later, watches nearby. Photo courtesy of Wallis McPherson.



MONO INN
Mono Lake, California



CHRONICLE UNION BRIDGEPORT CALIF.

MONO INN

Mono County, Calif.

MONO LAKE eastern base of
TIAGA PASS

MONO INN

UNIQUE
20 MILE
MOTOR LAUNCH
TRIP TO
PAHOA and NEGIT
...
PICNIC
on volcanic island!

SUMMER
RECREATION - RELAXATION - RECUPERATION
WINTER
HOTEL
AND
NEW COTTAGE
APARTMENTS

Founded 1922 by
VENITA RECHE McPHERSON • Owner and Manager
PO MONO LAKE • CALIF. • Phone LEEVING 261

U.S. 395
RENO 135 mi.
TAHOE 120 mi.
SONORA PASS 45 mi.
LOS ANGELES 350 mi.
YOSEMITE
EAST ENTRANCE 20 mi.

1940 brochure for Mono Inn, base of operations for Wallis McPherson and the Venita. Courtesy of Wallis McPherson

MONO INN *A friendly* MOUNTAIN RESORT on an INLAND SEA

Scientists Say—

There is a greater variety of geological formations around Mono Inn than anywhere else in the country.

Artists Say—

There is more variety of scenery surrounding Mono Inn than any other point on a national highway.

Professional Men and Women—

Seek Mono Inn because of its restfulness, due to the simplicity and informality of its life there and the personal hospitality of its staff. Being miles away from commercial enterprises is a welcome change from urban cares.

Sport Lovers—

Find Mono Inn a convenient base for stream and lake fishing, hunting, swimming, hiking, horseback riding, skiing and skating in season.

Trail Enthusiasts—

Find Lundy Lake, marked for its surpassing charm, is but one of the many beauty spots accessible from Mono Inn. Picturesque cataracts, mountain lakes, glaciers which feed them, are reached on foot or horseback. Wildflowers, birds and butterflies abound.

Ski Experts—

Consider the long slopes of Mt. Dunderberg (el. 12,374 ft.) at Conway Ski Lift some of the world's finest. Skiing, ski lifts and ski schools flourish in the county. Mono Ski Club has large active membership.

Tourists—

Find more trips of historic, scenic and scientific interest radiating from Mono Inn than can be covered in several seasons.

U. S. 395, The Three Flags Highway, Always Open



Famous
Sphinx,
Mt. Dunderberg
Lundy Lake
Tioga

MARK TWAIN DAY

It is held on Mono Inn grounds each year on the first Sunday in August. It originated in 1928 to commemorate the memory of Mark Twain, who lived on the shores of Mono Lake while gathering material for "Roughing It." Thousands of visitors are drawn from long distances to witness speed boat races, bathing beauty parade and other events.



VISIT
HERE
EVERY
SEASON

Surely it must have been an inspiration that named this wonderful land. Legend says it sprang from the Anvil of God. He smiled and His smile crystallized on mountain, stream, valley and lake, until the whole scenic landscape so touched the wild, untutored savage, as he gazed upon the wonderful scene, he named the land "Mono—The Beautiful."

History adds interest to the natural wonders. Nearby are the old Mono Diggins, the mining towns of Bodie and Lindley. On the grounds of Mono Inn may be found the grave and monument of Adeline Carson Stilts, daughter of the famous Kit Carson. Jedediah Walker was the first white man to camp on the shores of Mono Lake.

LOCATION

Mono Lake is an 18-mile wide salt sea, (el. 6,440 ft.) 350 miles north from Los Angeles, 135 miles south of Reno, 110 miles from Lake Tahoe. It is on the famous Three Flags Highway, U. S. 395, from Canada to Mexico.

It is the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park over Tioga Pass, second highest pass in the United States. It is reached from San Francisco all year round via U. S. 40 and U. S. 395, in summer via Tioga, Sonora and other grand scenic passes of the High Sierras.

Within a few minutes drive of Mono Inn are noted fishing streams and lakes—Mill, Rush, Leeving and Parker Creeks; Virginia, Green, Lundy, Tioga, Saddlebag, Eltery, Grant, Silver, Gull and June lakes. A pleasant day's excursion can be made to Reno, Carson City, Virginia City, Lake Tahoe and over Tioga Pass to Yosemite. Short trips—Bridgeport, the quaint old county seat, the ghost town of Bodie, travertine deposits, Devil's Post Pile, Mammoth Lakes. Then home to hospitable Mono Inn, where the same owner has presided since 1922.

RATES

Guests may choose modern hotel rooms in Inn or cottage, \$1.50 and up, single; \$2.50 and up, double. Or completely furnished and modern apartments, Single, \$2.50 and up; double, \$3.00 and up. For winter rates, family and party combinations, please write. Deposit requested with reservations.

MEALS a la carte STORE-GAS

TRAILER and CAMP space.

Address: VENITA R. McPHERSON,

MONO INN, MONO LAKE, CALIF.

Phone or wire LEEVING 261

Mt. Vir-
ginia, a
Lake not
far from
the Inn

MOTOR LAUNCH TRIPS

A 42-passenger cabin cruiser, the "Venita," during the season makes a daily trip of three hours length to Paoha, the white island, with Inmeroles, crater lakes, hidden harbors; and to Noddy, the black island, nesting place of some 100,000 pair of California gulls. The boat is available for special trips and moonlight rides.

PAOHA BAY IS POPULAR FOR BEACH PICNICS AND SWIMMING



The cruiser "VENITA" returning to MONO INN from her daily excursion to Paoha and Noddy

Autumn and Early Spring—

Are as comfortable as Summer and Winter. From the first flowers of April 'til the first snows of December are eight full months of glorious days for sightseeing. October fishing has a thrill unlike May or August, aspens a-bloom and frost overcoming the languor of Fall. And then WINTER SPORTS.



MONO SALTS

The density of Mono Lake water is slightly greater than the ocean (more than 5% solid). It is very buoyant and imparts velvety smoothness to the skin, blending all the minerals that make hot springs famous. The medicinal value of Mono Lake water is well known. Evaporated salts can be obtained at Mono Inn.

ANALYSIS OF MONO LAKE WATERS

Constituents	Grams Liter	Tons in Lake	% of T.W.
Silica (SiO ₂)	0.28	1,323,200	0.028
Calcium Carbonate (CaCO ₃)	0.68	3,213,400	0.068
Magnesium Carbonate (MgCO ₃)	0.36	1,701,200	0.036
Potassium Chloride (KCl)	2.23	10,538,000	0.223
Sodium Chloride (NaCl)	18.22	86,099,600	1.822
Sodium Sulphate (Na ₂ SO ₄)	10.07	47,586,400	1.007
Sodium Borate (Na ₂ B ₄ O ₇)	0.20	945,100	0.020
Sodium Bicarbonate (NaHCO ₃)	19.49	92,101,000	1.949
Unaccounted for	0.32	1,512,200	0.032
Total	51.85	245,020,200	5.185



The Venita and Mono Lake in their glory days, summer 1940. Diversions of Mono's feeder streams had just begun through the recently completed Mono Craters Tunnel, and the effects had not been yet noticed.

her. Once a whirlwind came ashore and turned the boat from a watercraft into an aircraft, sending her 150 feet from her moorings, wrecking her cabin and forcing her to go topless the rest of her days.¹¹ Finally, Venita's demise came in 1950. Destruction by storm seemed her lot, as Mono's storm sent her again flying, wrecking her beyond repair.¹²

Venita can be seen, by sharp eyes, from the highway. For those willing to spend a few minutes crawling through the fence, willows, and mud, a close up inspection will show her to be fast deteriorating, looking like an oversized, overturned rowboat, having lost most of her spruce skin.

Scattered junk and the remains of her now high and dry launching facilities make up the rest of her final resting place.¹³ Sight along the launch track nearby; this track was once under water. Now water laps at the decimated shore, an expansive gap between that of Venita's lifetime and today. As for Wally McPherson, now living in Bridgeport, he tells me that he has a difficult time even looking at the dwindling lake as he drives by.

Inside the Schoolhouse Museum at Lee Vining, one will find the wheel that once felt the hands of Wallis McPherson as he guided her, and the prop that once thrashed the waters of Mono Lake to the 8-cylinder tune of one of Henry Ford's fine flatheads. Thoughts of raising what is left of Venita from her grave and placing her on display at the Schoolhouse Museum are being entertained.¹⁴

So if you have wondered at the feasibility of navigating Mono's waters, remember that it all started long before Mark Twain's floating pumice, and continues to this day. The remains of Venita will give you a glimpse of the last of the great boats of Mono Lake. *

1 Quote from Wallis McPherson, during interview with the author, February 11, 1991. For further details, see Twain's book *Roughing It*, pages 201-209.

2 *Roughing It*, Pages 201-209

3 Israel Russel was a prominent state geologist of the nineteenth century, extensively explored Mono Basin during the 1880s. See the *Mono Lake Guidebook*, 1st edition, page 93 (photo).

4 A steamer used on Mono Lake during the construction of the Bodie & Benton Railway. Her dimensions were 32 feet long, 8 feet wide. Her engine puffed out 12 horsepower. She was famous during the attempted assault on Chinese construction workers, when it was used to take them to the safety of Paoha Island.

5 The Paoha was one of the McPherson family's first excursion boats. Purchased in 1919, brought by railroad to Benton Station (see McPherson photos). She was nearly 35 feet long, powered by a two cylinder Sterling Marine engine. It later caught fire and was replaced by the Venita.

6 *Mono Lake Guidebook*, page 104 (photo).

7 A photo of her sans cabin appears in the book *Man From Mono*, by Lily Mathieu, page 18.

8 Author's Interview with Wally McPherson, February 11, 1991. Also see *The Album* Magazine, January 1990, article entitled "Mono Inn: A Grand Old Lady," by Barbara Moore, pages 36-39. Also see *The Album*, July 1991, article entitled "Paoha: Island of Shattered Dreams," by Barbara Moore, pages 40-49.

9 Specifications of the Venita given to author during interview with Wallis McPherson, February 11, 1991.

10 *The Album*, July 1991

11 McPherson interview, February 11, 1991.

12 *The Album*, January, 1990.

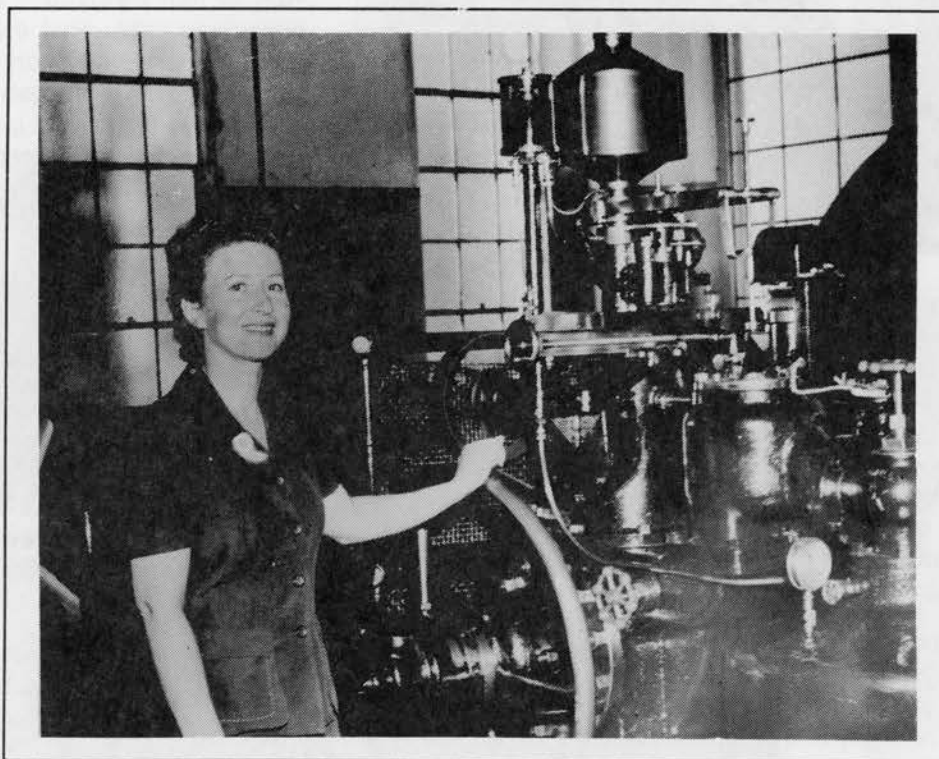
13 Author explored the boat and its launch site February 1991.

14 Proposal was mentioned to author during a telephone conversation with Lily Mathieu on June 16, 1993. She mentioned that it was discussed with other Mono Basin Historical Society Members, friends and neighbors in Mono Basin, but so far it has been met with little interest.

Lee Vining's

First Lady Hydro Operator

by Eunice Yongue



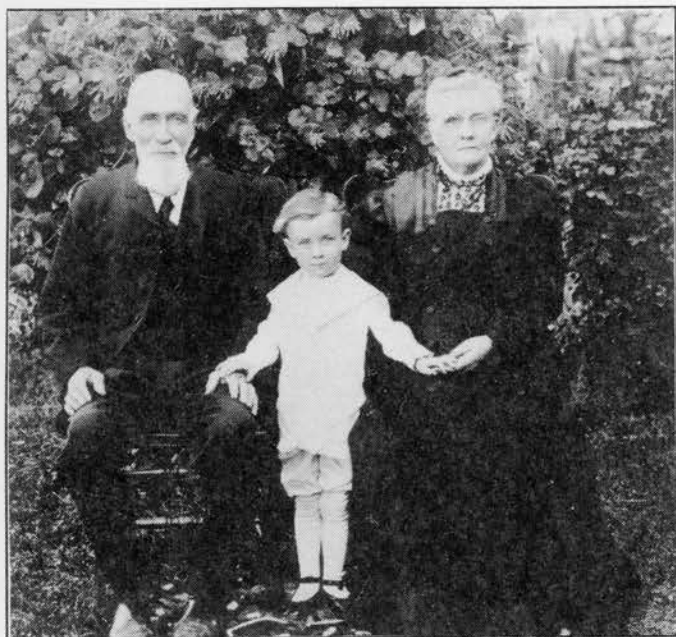
I was born in Midvale, Idaho. My grandparents, who came by wagon train from Missouri in 1877, were early settlers in this beautiful farming valley. They were successful ranchers and farmers, building large family homes in the 1890s. Midvale offered good schools, churches and stores. The first store in town, built in 1899, the same years as the railroad, was owned by my father, William Towell and his partner Mr. Deaton. The railroad was important, running through the middle of town, bringing in mail, passengers and supplies. Saturday was our day for shopping; we would travel the two miles to town in our team-pulled wagon or walk, as I did, to school every day, from the time I was five, with my older brothers.

My father died when I was five months old, leaving Mother with five children, myself and four brothers, the oldest of whom was in his early teens. Later, when Mother remarried, we moved to Oregon where the paper mills, sawmills, and timber companies offered a

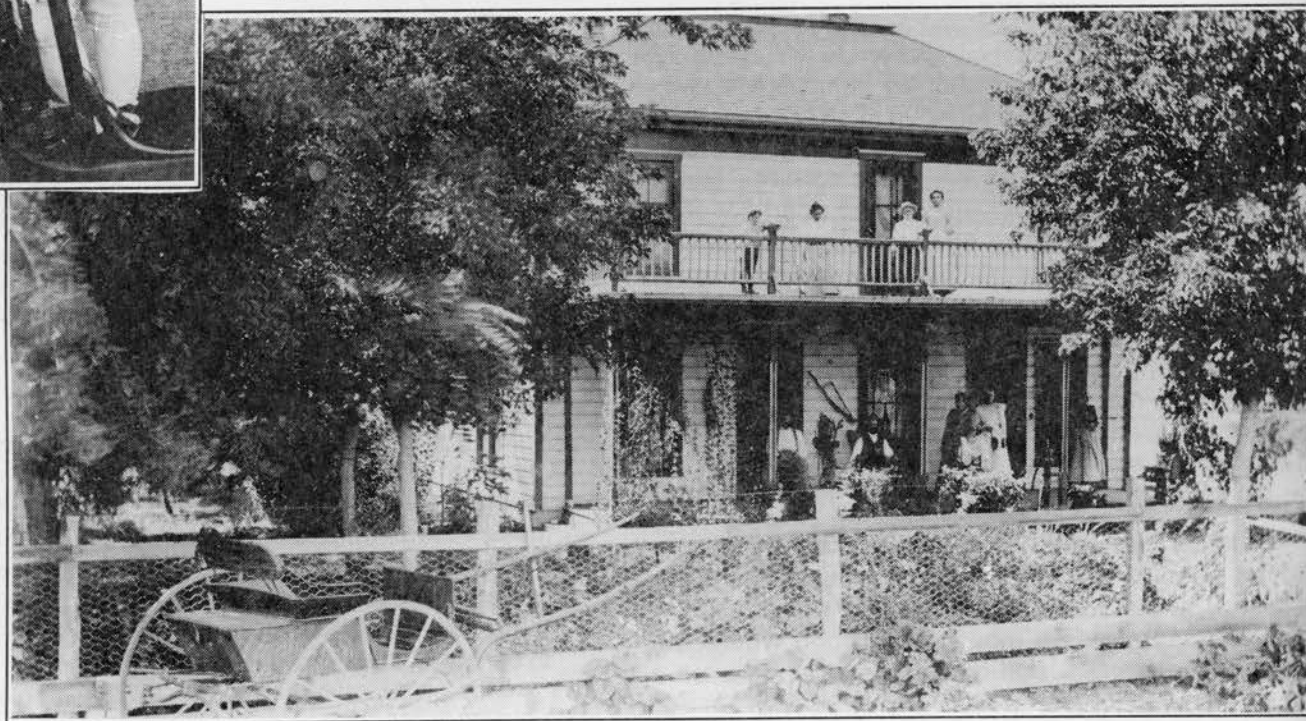
new life. Arrangements were made in advance for living quarters. Everything was shipped by train. I was only six years old and can recall little of the all-night train ride. I remember Mother preparing and serving food to our family in our coach. At last, we reached Oregon City, Oregon, where we settled in our new home. We all loved lush, green, western Oregon. All went smoothly for ten years and then came the depression. Businesses and mills closed and families were stranded.

June 1928

My grandfather in Idaho became very ill. He wanted my mother to come home and care for him, so we returned to Idaho, happy to be back in Grandfather's lovely ten-room home. The echo of our voices brought him happiness, and reminded him of the happy voices of his own children, now grown, laughing and playing in the same home. When Grandfather died, we stayed on to care for an elderly aunt.



Clockwise: Eunice Yongue's paternal grandparents; Eunice with her mother and brothers; her grandfather's home in Idaho; Eunice at age two and a half.



Upon returning to Idaho I met my future husband Gerald Yongue. He too was born in Midvale of a farming family. Our parents had gone to school together and we had known of each other but had never met. We met in the summer at a cousin's home, were attracted to one another and dated, but our interests differed. I was still in school, hoping to go on to beauty college and he was farming and working at other available employment.

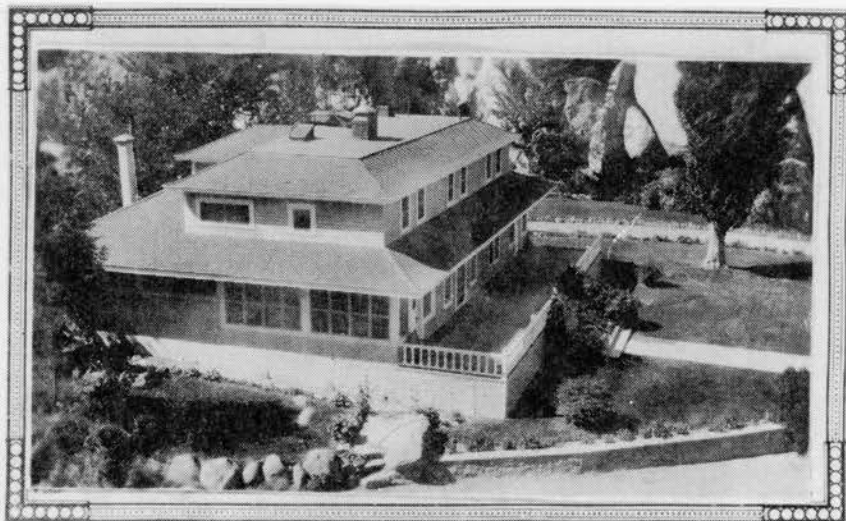
March, 1930

Gerald's parents pressured him to purchase a forty-five acre farm. After graduating from high school his hope had been to go on to college to get a degree in forestry. After three years of trying to work the farm, he wished to move on; there was nothing to keep him busy through the winter months, so he spent the winter with an aunt and uncle in Riverside, California, where he found work at once. The pleasant climate and easier way of life determined a change in his future. A cousin employed in the Riverside office of the Southern Sierra Power Company introduced him to the hiring department. They told him of the 12 power plants in the northeastern Sierra, and from a six inch stack of applications he was chosen for a six-month training apprenticeship. He was ecstatic. He made a fast trip to Idaho to rent out his farm, leaving him free to advance to a new career. However, he wasn't about to leave Idaho without making sure, with a diamond on my finger, that I would be around at the end of six months.

Gerald's dream of forestry did eventually come true in his working for the forest service at the Mono Lake Ranger Station many years later.

I was having mixed feelings about my future. I had planned to attend a beauty college in Boise, Idaho. Now I was engaged to be married in late fall. Maybe after marriage we might live close to a college. I had a job for the summer a mile from home. The first week I walked; then the people came for me each day at 5:30 a.m. and returned me when evening work was finished. I took care of a family of four and prepared a noon meal for 12 hay men. Sometimes the fields were several miles away so I drove to the fields to serve the noon meal. I received one dollar a day for my work, which lasted about five months. I considered myself lucky.

Gerald left Riverside for plant #4, a few miles west of Bishop, headquarters for all Northern Power Plants and a 350 mile drive from Southern California. In those years Highway 395 was a narrow, two-lane road, half pavement and half gravel, with many rutted, sandy spots. It was not a pleasure to drive, with a windrow of dust following. He arrived at Plant #4 and was assigned to his quarters at the "Club House," the living quarters for all single men, company officials, and guests visiting the northern section. The building was white, two-story,



Plant 4 Clubhouse

colonial style, furnished with all the comforts. Downstairs were the guest rooms, dining room, kitchen, and sitting room. Upstairs were individual rooms for the single men. Mr and Mrs. Godlove, the custodians, were wonderful. Later, when they needed a vacation in the winter months, I took over the care of the club house - cooking, cleaning and taking care of eight to ten men. Three meals a day were served family style. The tables were always covered with a white damask cloth.

Gerald began his training period. When he looked at the switchboard spread across half the building, he wondered if he could master it entirely. He hoped he could be there forever, but this position was temporary. His training made him eligible for any of the other stations. If someone left, he could be permanent. We were jubilant when an operator decided to relocate to Oregon. He would also have to be married. The married part was easy as our date was set for November.

Gerald took two weeks leave for our wedding on November 4th. The wedding band was engraved with date and initials. I was in Oregon, visiting my two brothers as the date drew near. Not wanting a postponement they sent me home, on the train, to arrive two days before Gerald.

We had made our wedding plans by correspondence, wanting it to be very simple so we could leave at once for our new home. Gerald's sister was also planning her marriage within two weeks: it would be a special double wedding. It was agreed and we had two days to prepare.

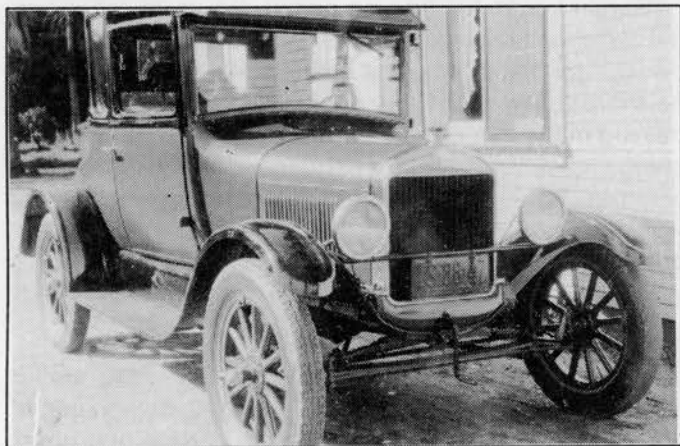
The wedding was at Gerald's family home, our immediate families in attendance. At 4:00 p.m. the beautiful ceremony was performed by Reverend Burchard, who had guided us through our formative years. Pictures



Bride and groom, Eunice and Gerald Yongue



Gerald's sister, Berniece, and Edgar Wilson, also bride and groom



were taken and the three mothers served a buffet luncheon and wedding cake. At 8:00 p.m., to our surprise, the chivaree crowd arrived. Chivarees were customary in small communities, to honor the wedding couple. After the noise makers and congratulations we left for the night.

I packed my worldly belongings in a steamer trunk. It was tied on a 1927 model T coupe, taking up my side, the door and all of the fender. Thereafter I used the driver's side for my exit. Two large bags filled the space in our tiny car.

We drove down the Columbia River Highway to Portland, Oregon, then along the coast, to San Francisco. Gerald had planned this lovely trip with great surprises for me, including Yosemite National Park. On the map it looked like a short cut across the Sierra, then to Bishop. We knew nothing about Sierra weather in winter months. We left San Francisco in early morning and found the road to Yosemite very good. In the park, the road became narrow and steep, through rough terrain. A dark cloud appeared and snow pelted us as we drove for hours, reaching Tuolumne Meadows at last, with two feet of snow. We had followed fresh car tracks, hopeful that someone was near. The ranger at Tuolumne informed us the road was closed over Tioga Pass; we would have to return to San Francisco, with only 29 miles left to our destination. The snow had stopped, the storm was over, and our car was taking the snow well; we also had chains. "Let us go on" we pleaded. Finally, after some phone calls, he let us go, and we sailed along hoping to reach Highway 395 before dark. It was a lonely drive, no cars or people.

We reached Tioga Pass and came around the first extremely sharp curve – a downhill pitch curving sharply back toward the mountain. The road was one lane with turnouts. If you met another car you had to pull to the side or back up. I can never forget the sensation

that we were flying out into space. We followed the narrow winding route, close to the mountain for the next eleven miles. I cautioned all the way "Don't drive so fast! Don't look! Not so close to the edge!!" Gerald wanted to see the beautiful canyon. We had a fleeting glimpse of the Poole Plant, not knowing at the time its future importance to me. It looked so pretty in miniature from the high pass. How could anyone live there? I knew nothing of the Mono Basin power plants. The last part of the pass was lots of sharp curving switch backs, overlooking sparkling Lee Vining Creek meandering slowly through the lush green of the meadows.

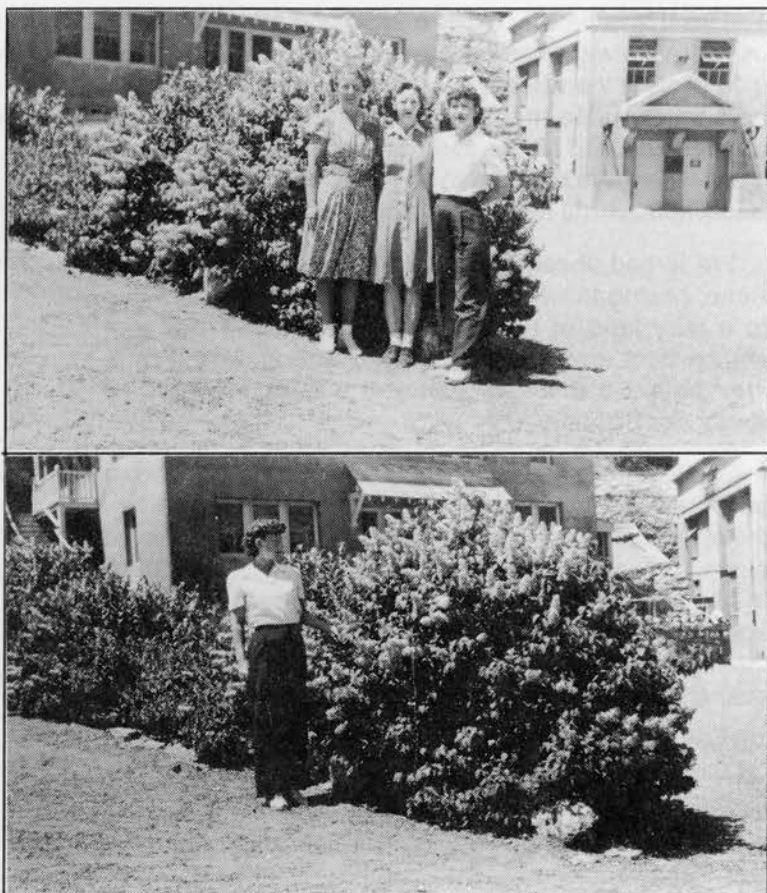
At last we were down and nearing Highway 395. Gerald enjoyed traveling old roads. His friend Art at Plant #4 had told him about a short cut to Bishop. Easy to find, turn right at the Plant #3 intake, about three-quarters of a mile before Highway 395. Gerald was all fired up and just had to see this road. We were off the good paved highway onto a bumpy, narrow, winding, rocky road with sage and rabbit brush swishing us all the way. The brush was so high it looked like a forest. We bumped along for thirty minutes on what we learned later to be the old Matlick Dairy Ranch road to Highway 395. If we had stayed on Highway 120 it would have been three minutes to Highway 395 and on to Bishop.

We forged on to Plant #4, a two-hour drive. It was such a pretty entrance, the power plant all shining with lights and reflections on the intake and the dozen cottages with streetlights aglow, then over the threshold into our cozy four-room cottage. The houses were furnished with essentials: dining and bedroom furniture, kitchen ranges, and comfortable rockers. With the many company transfers this kept moving problems to a minimum. A beautiful surprise to me, was my first electric washing machine, a Thor, with a spin basket, the latest design. I used it for eighteen years. The many wedding gifts took care of the rest.

We had a few days of vacation left and wanted to see the California I only knew in fantasy: palm trees, orange groves, the blue Pacific with sandy beaches, and a delightful climate all year. We were off to Riverside; mountains, desert, Yucca trees, palm trees and the fragrance of the orange groves. I had left the blur of winter to come into this, hopeful that someday we might live here.

Time came to return and start the adventure of being newlyweds. Two weeks passed. One evening while playing with a kitten our Auntie had given us, we heard a tremendous noise that caused the kitten to run for cover. Everyone was banging on pots and pans, calling to us to join them at the club house where a party was being held in our honor.

A few weeks later the Methodist minister and his wife invited us to dinner. After dinner was cleared away and



Lilac time: three operators' wives, Eunice on right and below

we were sitting around for an evening of conversation, the door bell rang. When the door was opened, in came about fifteen young people Gerald had known through the summer attendance at church. It was a shower for the newlyweds, pulled off so well we were overcome with surprise.

Softball was a game I enjoyed and I learned other power company ladies were interested. The exercise was invigorating and the warm spring days of February made us eager to be in the sun. Ladies of all ages got together for tryouts. I preferred second base but we all filled in where needed. The company superintendent was the umpire. We always drew a good crowd.

April 1931

The nice weather was evidence of spring. We planned a trip to Reno, "The Biggest Little City," to see the area. We would take in Bodie and Aurora, old mining towns, and stay over in Reno for the night.

As we neared Lee Vining a dark cloud overcast the sky and the wind pounded our car, throwing sand like needles. When we found the turnoff to Bodie the road was covered with sand. Thinking it firm enough to drive on we hit it at a fast clip and buried the car to the hubs.

The wind was fiercely blowing sand and filling in around us. Gerald always carried a large tarp and a shovel. He tried to clear the wheels of sand but it filled in as fast as he shoveled. He managed to get the tarp under the wheels. I backed off the sand while he replaced the tarp many times. We returned to Highway 395. The wind had slackened but the foreboding clouds were still ahead.

We forged ahead and found a motel for the night in Reno, hoping to see the city in the morning. We awoke to a fairy land of fifteen inches of snow. Trees and shrubs bent low, and cars stalled with snow covering their tops. So this was Reno? It was noon when we started for Bishop.

Snow removal in the '30s was almost nil. Roads were scooped out, paved trenches. The first snows drifted them full and made them impassible. Cars were stalled along the way, hopeful someone with chains would pull them out of drifts. Our car was set high and could manage most of the tough spots. A few times we drove on the shoulders to get around deep drifts. The storm was over about 9:00 p.m.

On reaching Lee Vining we could see seven lights glistening in the snowy gloss of night. We thought it best to stay over at the power company vacation cabins, five miles up Lee Vining Canyon. The little rough textured cabin was a welcome sight. After a hot bath and a good night's rest we were ready for the final stretch home. The highway was snowy over Crestview and then from Sherwin Grade into the Owens Valley everything was beautiful, green, and peaceful.

May, 1931

Our six months at Plant #4 was ending. Advancement was by seniority, from the least desirable plant to the better plants, through transfers. There was an opening at Owens River Gorge for a relief operator. We were ready.

The Owens River flowed along the bottom of a deep gorge, providing water for two power plants where nine operators and their families were stationed. This was one of the places the power company employees strove to avoid because of the steep, narrow, sandy grade into the canyon. Entering the gorge required low gear at five miles per hour, up and down. Our car had a "ruxal gear" for extra power but not enough to manage this freaky road that followed along the gorge wall to the bottom.

The day we moved to the gorge, our car was firmly chained to the company truck and slowly lowered into the gorge. We ordered a "Muncy" gear which gave us plenty of power. Maneuvering the shifts was more than I cared to learn, so I gave up driving. The company supplied a truck and driver that would fetch the mail and any needed supplies three times a week. All I had to do was leave a note for him with instructions and he would handle the errands, eliminating my need to drive.

The living quarters were very attractive, surrounded

by green lawns, flower beds, space for a small vegetable garden, and chickens. Soon the garden was producing vegetables and the chickens fresh fryers and eggs.

On the earthquake fault we generally had two or three tremors a year, usually during March, but I never got used to them. Once, during the night, a huge rock fell through the kitchen of the intake keeper's house, demolishing that end of the building, but it was soon repaired and life went on as usual.

I still had hopes of attending beauty college, so I kept in practice on Gerald and anyone else who was willing. Gerald bought me a special present, hand-operated clippers. My haircuts improved, even though I had given up on becoming a beautician. I continued to enjoy styling a few friends' hair and they enjoyed the smooth finish of the electric clippers.

The little Model T was about on its last putt, so we purchased a 1929 Chevy Coupe. We said our good-byes, with me driving again, as we left the gorge on our way to the Poole Plant in Mono Basin.

October 1933

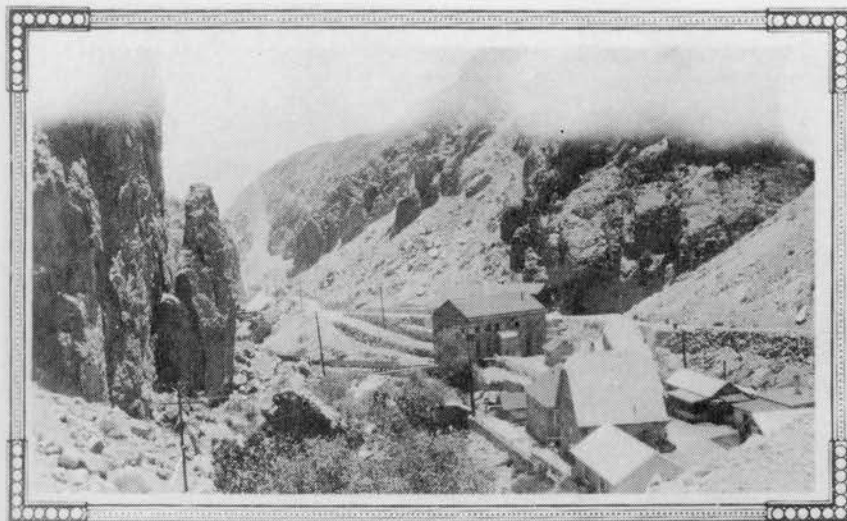
No one was willing to transfer to the Mono Basin due to the long, severe winters, huge power orders, and long distances to supplies. Many times Highway 395 was closed for six months due to weather. No longer dreaming of Southern California and Riverside, we were young, would face the future as it came and decided this could be a great adventure.

We had never been to the Poole Plant. Just that fleeting view from Tioga Pass, where it looked like a doll house nestled at the end of Lee Vining Canyon. The pride of the company and the newest of all their power plants, it was built in 1924 and named for the engineer who had helped build it. His portrait still hangs in the office of the plant. Operators did not stay on duty in the power house. Telephones were placed in their homes. There were two operators on twelve hour shifts. Each shift relieved the other for two full days of each week.

It was late afternoon as I drove the narrow three miles of winding, ungraded road. The sun had disappeared and the canyon was in deep shadow, with tall Jeffery Pines and shimmering aspen, full of bright, tall colors, and air filled with sweet mountain scents.

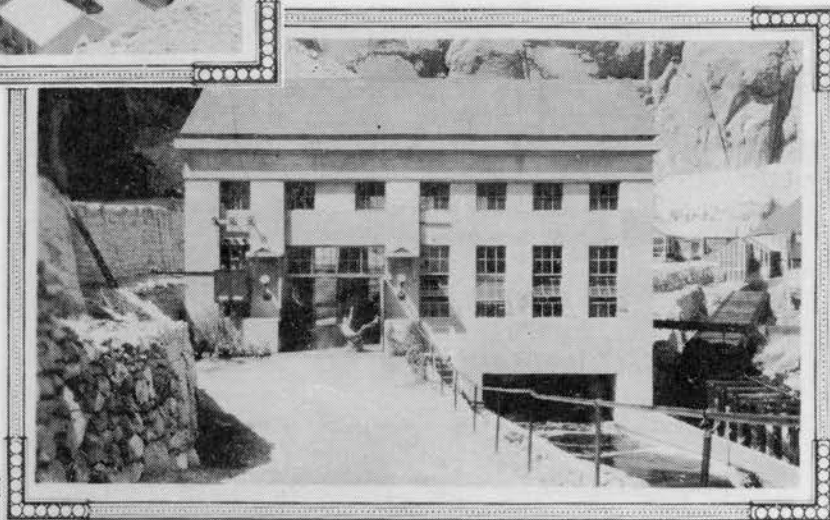
Our home was the nicest of all the company houses. It had three apartments with shining hardwood floors. Once a year the houses were painted and always kept in good repair. Hunting, fishing, many beautiful areas for hiking and exploring were all available to us. We had found our utopia. Friends came to visit our good fortune. We were never lonely.

The power company furnished snowshoes to us as a new means of transportation. On our first fitting we wondered how anyone could manage such big feet. Eager

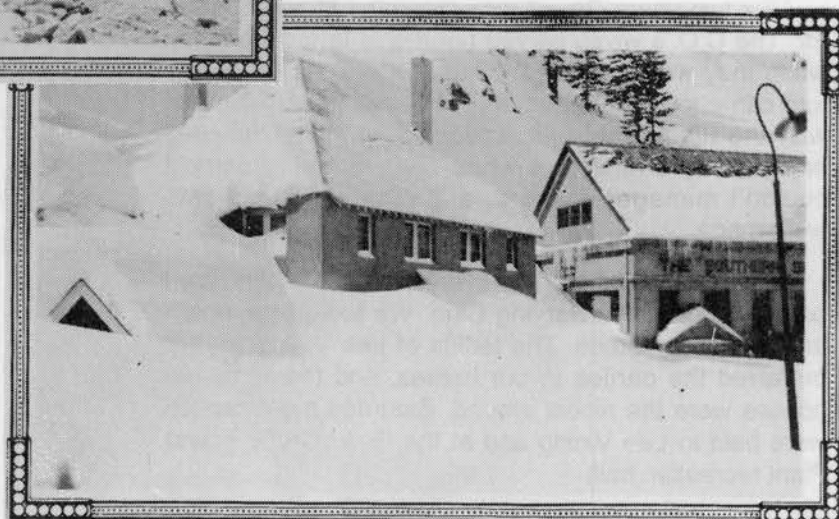


Gorge plant and house

Gorge plant

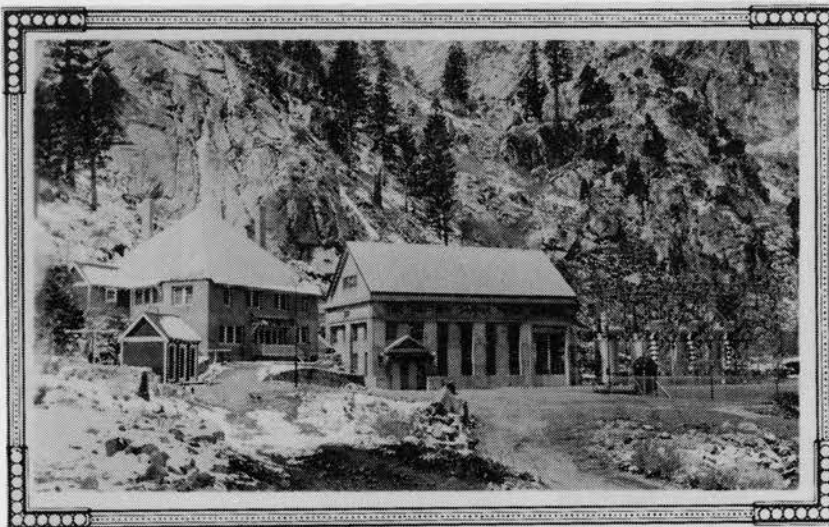


... and in the snow





It was a lot different in the summer



Eunice, ready for one of the Saturday night dances in the spring

to learn, we soon became adept, although at first bruised ankles showed our inexperience. We advanced to skis later.

After two years Gerald was promoted to chief operator. The C.O.'s wives served hot meals to the workmen when they were making repairs at the plant. When my turn came my kitchen turned into a miniature restaurant with the dining table expanded to its limit. The men enjoyed my efforts, but when food rationing came I couldn't manage anymore, and other arrangements were made.

Social life was shared by everyone with dinners, card parties, and Ladies Serving Club. We took turns entertaining in our homes. The ladies of Lee Vining always preferred the parties at our homes, and the company houses were the nicest around. Saturday night dances were held in Lee Vining and at the Rush Creek Power Plant recreation hall.





Playing in the snow; Eunice and Nancy Ann Hill at the Poole Plant; winning the 1991 Double Slalom at June Lake; Eunice Yonque and Augie Hess



Mail order catalogs were very important in this area and everyone used them. Sometimes you would meet your neighbor on the street wearing the same dress you had on and joke about each other's good taste. When the mail couldn't get through for a few days or weeks, there was an excited rush to see what packages came.

November 1934

Upon turning 22, I registered to vote for the first time. The November evening prior to voting, I was called to serve on the election board. Elections were held at Lee Vining Elementary School. It was in bad repair, dreary and old. A single light bulb hung over the work table and we located two desk lamps to get us through the day. I was instructed and had to learn fast. Twelve hours of checking voters, and when the polls closed the real work of counting ballots began. If all went well we could finish in three of four more hours. A long day for twenty dollars, but somehow I was hooked and served for thirteen more years.

My interest in skiing started in the mid '30s. The first pair of skis were very plain, mail ordered from Sears and Roebuck. We were so proud of them. Heavily waxed, they would glide with perfection. After a winter of use the edges were worn to a perfect roundness.

Ski equipment started to have many changes: metal edges, lamination, new waxes, better boots to protect the ankles, and harnesses to hold the boots. When someone purchased the latest model we formed a circle to admire and gain knowledge.

Rope tows sprang up on gentle slopes: Conway Summit, Lee Vining, Mono Ski Club, June Lake, and McGee Mountain. It was thrilling to practice the snow plow, stem turn, and christie at each of these places. The little Lee Vining slope was too tame and soon abandoned. We set up our own tow at the Poole Plant. It was a steep course and only the strong armed could manage. This kept us entertained through the long snowy days of winter.

Spring 1946.

Forming ski clubs encouraged competition. I raced for several years under Mono Ski Club and have a cluster of gold and silver medals to show for my efforts. A double slalom race was held at June Lake. Two courses were set side by side. Men and women partners started at the same time and ran twice. Many people participated. Augie Hess and I were partners, and came away with first prize, a gold cup for each of us engraved with our names and dates.

I entered one more race at McGee Mountain in the spring of 1941, hoping for the big perpetual trophy. Roma McCoy and I competed eagerly. She had no fear of the downhill, I was better in the slalom, and in the combined time I lost only by seconds. A year after retiring from racing I was invited by Mono Ski Club to fore-run their last ski race. I felt honored and surprised at the

improvement of each young contestant.

Walter Dombroski was one of Mono County's supervisors, with Lee Vining in his district. He served at least four terms and was eager to promote skiing in this section of the Sierra. His efforts paid off; soon people were enjoying this beautiful ski area and it became known far and wide. He never missed a ski race, and always was near to cheer each contestant.

December 1941

Radio was hard to receive in the canyon at Poole Plant. The only signal we could receive came through our antenna which ran east and west from the top of a tall jeffery pine to the top of the house, where it was fed into the apartments. The news of Pearl Harbor came to us by radio at 7:00 a.m. The shock!! Young men in the prime of life called to serve their country, leaving wives and young children. It was heartbreaking to see them go.

There was also a serious problem for the power company. Warned of sabotage, guards were stationed at the plants, lights were kept lowered, and safety glass placed in all the windows of the plants. The safety procedures continued for a long time.

All of America was feeling the pinch with rationing and shortages: food, gasoline, tires, sugar and a shortage of everything else. The baggy rayon hose were mended with a touch of nail polish or needle and thread when they ran.

1943

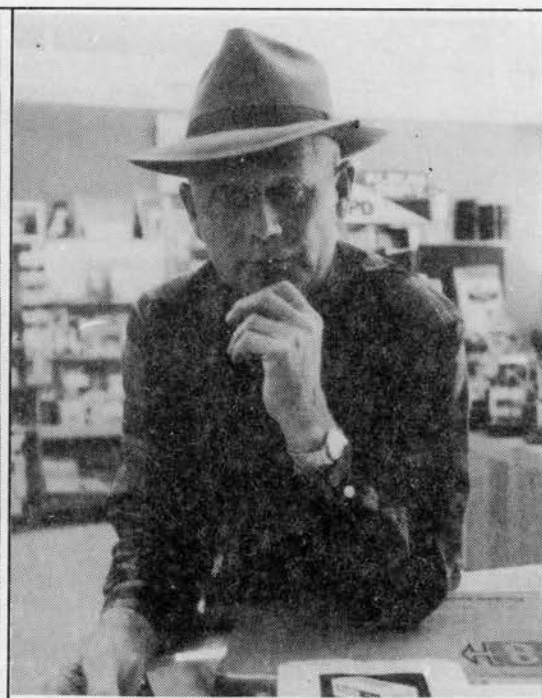
A call was made for older men thirty and forty years of age. Gerald was in this age group and Uncle Sam had him by the shirttail. We feared he would be called, but power was important to national security so the company kept having him deferred. The power company did not approve of working wives so I had never worked outside the home. We must think of my future if Gerald were drafted. Where could I go to find work? Many went to cities to work in factories. Women were filling many vacancies. The power company was in dire need of help; living so close I was familiar with all operations. We contacted the Bishop superintendent, he thought it was a fine idea and wonderful that I wanted to do this. He gave his okay and said I would be hired to fill the first opening.

I spent four months during the winter of 1943 learning everything thoroughly, completing my apprenticeship with Gerald as my instructor. Soon there was an opening at Poole Plant. All operators reported to duty at the beginning of each shift to the control station on Bishop Creek. Orders were dispatched for each of the power plants. I checked in, giving my name, explaining that I was the new operator at Poole, giving the details. With congratulations and good luck I was accepted.

My first day on duty was to be a test of my knowl-



First day on duty!



Gerald Yongue

edge. One of Mono's famous electrical storms appeared suddenly. The echo of thunder in Lee Vining can be likened to cannon fire. I caught the works. Gerald had just left for town when the first volley hit. He returned, fearful I might need help. When he came in I was writing up my log report, calm and ready for the next outburst. After this we knew I could handle whatever was thrown my way.

With just two of us and twelve hour shifts, there was quite a change in our lives. We gave each other two days off each week and did whatever errands or shopping were needed. It was confining; we could not go any place together but that didn't matter as there was no gas for traveling. The summer moved along, friends came and spent their vacations with us, calling our retreat a bit of heaven on earth.

In August Gerald's father in Idaho died of a heart attack. It was a traumatic time. Gerald felt he should be with his family. There was not a relief person to take his place, so after much deliberation between the two superintendents of Bishop and Mono Basin, it was decided I could take over for a week by myself, but I could not stay at the plant alone. Strangely, we had had guests all through the summer but none this week. A close lady friend volunteered to stay with me; the plans were settled, and Gerald left for Idaho. Extra gasoline was always allotted for such emergencies.

All went well, but it was the longest week of my life. It was a happy day when seven days later I saw our car coming around the last turn for home.

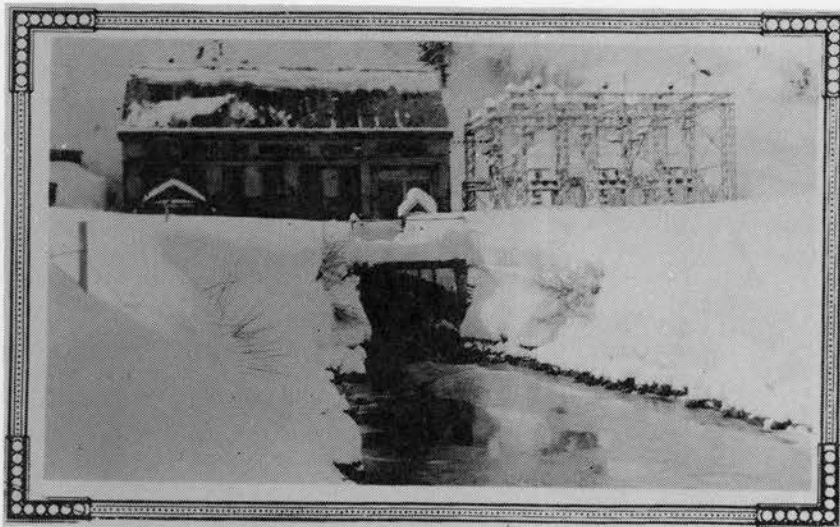
In late fall another operator arrived, and my life returned to normal. For the next two years I was vacation relief for the two operators. This ended my career as a hydro electric operator. Women have held many highly rated positions in power stations, but I was the first in a hydro electric plant. One other woman operated at Poole later in the '60s, for about a year.

Late 1940

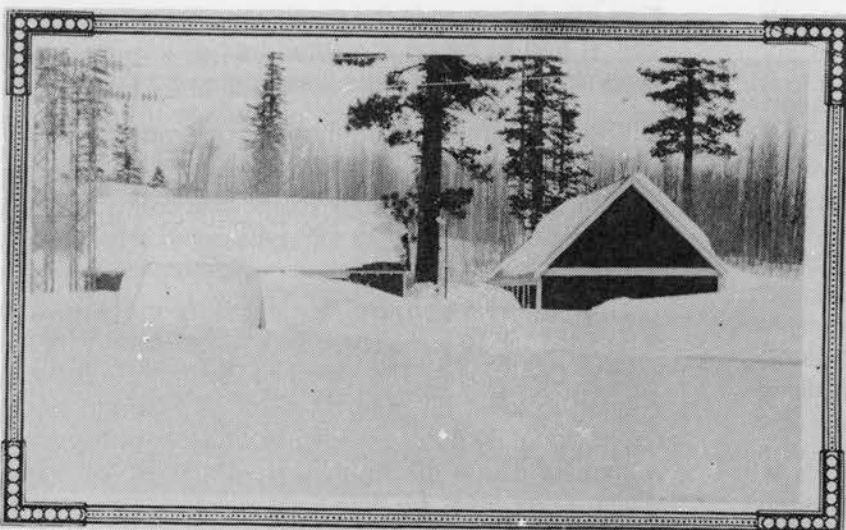
Snow sleds were very popular. We all wished for one but the cost was prohibitive. The power company owned one and then advanced to a snow cat, so the men at Poole were offered a chance to purchase it for a dollar if they became responsible for all repairs. It carried three people and each wore bulky aviator trousers for warmth. That silly thing was in the repair shop more than on the trail. It had to be on a packed trail or it buried itself. Many times we spent more time digging out than riding.

The company held safety meetings monthly at Lee Vining substation. All men off duty were expected to attend; overtime was credited as incentive. Now that Poole had a snow sled, the men were expected to attend.

One sunny February day a safety meeting was scheduled for 10 a.m. There was a packed trail for the sled to Lee Vining. The other couple from Poole was staying in town on their days off and Gerald would return alone. By noon a severe storm blew in, becoming a blizzard within the hour; Gerald started for home. Within three miles he could not find the trail. He was becoming exhausted from fighting to keep the snow sled



*When it snowed, it snowed, but who cared?
Except the bear who later paid for picnicking
on chicken in the snow tunnel.*



from burying itself in the fresh snow. This day, of all days, he forgot the snowshoes he usually carried in case of trouble and he was two miles from our emergency cabin at headquarters camp. At 2 p.m. when I had not heard from him I knew he must be in trouble. The storm was a true blizzard, blowing the snow so hard one could only see a few feet. I quickly got into my winter gear. With a pack sack and snow shoes, I was off to find my lost one.

The wind was so loud, that as Jewel called to me from the house, I could only hear one word, "careful." It was tough skiing. I made it to headquarters and found no sign of Gerald. I forged on for a mile where I found him, exhausted from forging through the snow drifts. He was mighty glad to see me. He put on the snow shoes and then it was an easy trek back to the cabin. After a good rest by a warm fire and cups of hot soup, he revived and we set out for Poole, three miles away. The storm was still raging and darkness had set upon us, but we fought our way along and within an hour we were safely there. What a day.

Union Changes

The war was over and unions began regulating operations of the power plants, causing many changes in working conditions. No more nine to twelve hour shifts and an additional operator at Poole. No more restrictions on the company wives. Although I didn't continue with the power company I did find work at once and enjoyed working for the pumice plant, Lee Vining Market, Nicely's Restaurant, and retirement after 30 years.

We had a good life and enjoyed 22 years at Poole Plant with congenial people and very good working conditions. With months of vacation each year there was time to pursue our hobbies of rock collecting, cutting and polishing. I also made and sold some of our work in jewelry. We had a new car when needed and a chance to see all of the western states.

1954

We transferred to Lee Vining Substation. This was like coming out of the dark into bright sunlight. Life was so relaxed and easy; no more winter orders or snow closed roads. Friends could visit any time, and we could pursue a happier social life. We enjoyed 25 years of belonging to the Masons and Eastern Star, going through the chairs many times, until our lodge in Bridgeport closed.

Television was introduced to Lee Vining, a fragile procedure; signals were hard to find and receive. There was much care to the system and no money to pay for outside help. Gerald volunteered to take care of it for free. He wanted everyone to have a television. This con-

tinued for over ten years until a company servicing all of Mono County took over.

We decided that Lee Vining would be our retirement home. Our roots had set deep; no other place held as much appeal to us. We purchased Forest Service property, then learned any improvements must be made under Forest Service rules. Colors had to be white with green trim, and rental leases were changing. It was impossible for Lee Vining to grow, with no new business and existing buildings in poor repair.

We heard of land trades, although several people had tried with no success. Gerald was determined; he organized people and the first steps were taken to make land available to purchase, but the Forest Service kept wanting more and more money. This continued for five and a half years; people were ready to give up. The turning point came when the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power donated the balance of land needed so that thirteen lots became private property; ours was one of these. Lee Vining began to grow: new schools, paved roads, sidewalks, street lights, sewer systems, and the best water on earth. Old buildings were taken down and replaced with beautiful hotels, landscaped with lawns, flowers and trees. Fine restaurants opened, businesses built flower boxes to adorn entrances. Without a street sweeper each store owner swept the street in front of his business. Pride was taken in keeping a pretty village to greet visitors at the entrance to Yosemite Park.

October 1965

The 15 years at the substation passed happily and quickly. Our home was built and ready for our retirement move on October 1, 1968, overlooking beautiful Mono Lake and surrounded by the towering Sierra with a canopy of bright blue sky. We now had more time to travel, this time abroad, absorbing the sights and pleasures of Central Europe, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Mexico, South America and the South Pacific. In 1977 we toured Hawaii, including six islands, fell in love again and returned many times. We rented an apartment on Oahu in 1980 and decided this would be the place for us to spend our winters. In 1986 we purchased our second home, a condominium just two blocks from the beach.

Postscript:

In June, 1994, Gerald Yongue died, leaving his wife of 64 years. He co-authored "Mysterious Mono Basin," a book about the geology of the area surrounding Lee Vining, and authored "Roots of Middle Valley," on the early history and pioneers of Midvale, Idaho. After his retirement, he worked for the Forest Service for 17 years and was honored with a public drinking fountain dedicated in his name. *

THE LAST of the LITTER

by Babe Rossi Harwood



Babe, with grandparents Bob and May Jane Blake

Anthony Rossi bought ten acres of land from Mr. J.W. Tracy in 1808. It was covered with rocks and rabbit brush and had a nice stream with 16 shares of water from Big Pine Creek. He was a healthy, good looking young man and was lucky enough to win the hand of my beautiful mother, Nancy Blake. Together they made a nice little farm. They had their ups and downs, and six children.

Our family was no different from any of the others who pioneered this valley but people must have been different then. Everyone was glad to help the others. They took turns at butchering hogs, putting up hay and so on. Even at childbirth a neighbor lady served as midwife. In the fall a group of men would take food and hay and wagons to the mountains for wood. They stayed out for at least a week and we took turns with the binoculars, watching for their return by the dust coming down Wacoba.

Money was scarce but we lived very well on beans, fish, wild game, fruits, vegetables, and home grown poultry, pork, lamb, and occasionally a beef. Only the female calves were kept for future milk cows.

In the late summer my mother canned for months. What a chore, stuffing wood in the stove during the hottest part of the summer. Dad kept busy too. He made wine and cider (some of it for vinegar) and dug potatoes and root vegetables for the cellar, and apples for the straw bin. The hams and bacon were hung in the smokehouse with a slow applewood fire to do the curing. Mother made sausage patties, cooked them and stored them in crocks covered with rendered lard. The last year's lard was used to make soap.

All of the dairy products were kept outside in a desert

cooler. It was like the frame of a large wooden box, covered with barley sacks. On the top sat an old wash tub with nail holes in its sides, filled with ditch water that dripped, keeping the sacks damp and things cool.

Sometimes they had a chance to earn a little money. Dad played the accordion very well so he furnished the music for dances and Mother served sandwiches and cake for refreshments. When they went to the Warm Spring School for these events, it was really an ordeal. Dad fixed beds in the wagon for all. It was eight miles up there through the sand, and they danced until two so most everyone stayed all night. They repeated this many times; they also went to the Indian Camp for their dances, but that was near home.

The 4th of July was always a big day to celebrate. Big Pine had a parade, band concert, foot races, an Indian War dance and so on. Mother sold cakes and homemade ice cream. They also sold chickens, eggs, fruits, and Mama took in washing and ironing.

I would like to elaborate on Mama's laundromat. First she gathered sagebrush for the fire, which was built under a very large cast iron kettle. Then, dipping water from the ditch, she filled the vat to heat, and had three wash tubs sitting near on benches. The first was for the hot water, with a wash board and a bar of homemade soap. The second was warm rinse water and the third was also rinse water with bluing added. Many clothes were pinned on the line to dry, and later gathered and sprinkled ready for ironing. Almost everything required ironing, even sheets. Regardless of the weather, sad irons were heated on the wood stove, and with sweat and manpower the wrinkles came out. What a job. The starched things dried out quickly and constantly had to be redampened.



Robert H. and Mary Jane Blake with the first of their children; three, including Babe were not yet born. Top row: Florence (1881), Whis (1878), Everett (1877), Nancy, Babe's mother (1880). Seated: Bob Blake (1852), Mary Jane Bogart Blake (1858), Bill (1875). Front row: Phil (1887), Kate (1882), and Bob (1885).



*"Grandpa"
and
"Grandma"
Robert H.
and
Mary Jane
Blake*



The money they earned was saved for winter staples and clothing. Our shoes were watched carefully. The first thing was to outfit them with copper toes and after that they were soled and resoled until the uppers finally collapsed. We girls had fancy undies that Mama made from bleached flour sacks. Our Sunday ones were trimmed with lace!

The old house where we were born and spent most of our childhood wasn't much more than a shelter but it sure was clean and every room except the kitchen was covered with rugs which Mama had braided from old clothing. Several times it caught on fire from the stovepipe, but the bucket brigade was pretty well schooled.

We had one room which was "Mama's Parlor." It housed all of her nicest things and the piano. It was seldom used but cleaned as regularly as the rest of the house. When one of Mama's lady friends came to call, they sat in there and visited and had tea and cake. We kids had our orders in advance. Not a sound out of you while Mrs. So and So is here or you know what will happen when she leaves. It worked too.

We used kerosene lamps for lights, and Mama curled her hair with an iron which she heated in a lamp. None of the homes had indoor plumbing so outdoor privies were visible in all backyards. They had their disadvantages but also some good points. Privacy didn't seem to be as sacred as modern society proclaims it. Every privie had room for two and many of them had a third smaller hole for a child. Sears Roebuck didn't perfume the pages so another luxury was missed.

Mosquitoes have always enjoyed the Owens Valley, but Raid, Off, and the other insecticides were still unborn, so to enjoy the cool evening breeze, a worn out tub was filled with dry cow chips, set on fire to fill the yard with smoke. It worked well and the aroma wasn't unpleasant.

Drummers are another nice memory of my childhood. They walked through the sand, carrying large, heavy suitcases and went from house to house. Some sold yardage. A drummer would unroll those big bolts and show all of his wares. Some were photographers. We still have many of those pictures. And there was the Watkins man. Mama waited for him each year to buy her spices, vanilla and liniment.

An annual event was the traveling show which was a gala event, and everyone attended. They were open all day, selling a little bit of everything and lots of pretty dishes. We still have some of these. At night they entertained at Hall's Hall with a good vaudeville show. We worried from year to year how they could saw a woman in half and still she would appear unharmed.

Hall's Hall was a large two story building on the edge

of Big Pine Creek at the south end of town. It was a wonderful community recreation hall. There were dances, school plays, graduation exercises, basketball games, movies, roller skating, voting polls, you name it. The upstairs was for the local lodges, many of which were active here, and they had everything they needed at Hall's Hall: a kitchen, large dining room, and a lodge room. Mama catered the banquets. At the rear of the building was the town's jail. Not a very sturdy building, but it served its purpose until dark; just a sort of warning from the town constable.

It was seldom that Mama ever left home, but she was always interested and full of questions when we came home from an outing or party. I remember telling her about my introduction to Jello. "It was like your current jelly but cold, not as sweet and served with whipped cream." another was angelfood cake. "It was like your light bread but sweet and had frosting." Now I realize that those were pretty good compliments.

One summer, before my time, a family came to Big Pine and were broke, so they ended up at the Rossi house. They were housed, fed, and enjoyed for some time, and upon leaving insisted that the folks and kids come to Los Angeles and spend some time with them. So in the fall of 1911 the folks decided to go on vacation. Dad covered the old haywagon with canvas and after much preparation they were off, with the milk cow serving as the caboose. (THE ALBUM, Vol. 11, No. 3, pg. 2) The deep sand on the Mojave desert made going very slow but they were in no hurry. At Indian Wells they met Grandfather Blake coming home in his new Model T Ford. He had bought it at the Chicago World's Fair, but it was shipped to Los Angeles by railroad. One thing that sold him was a record that played over and over, "I'll take you there and bring you back."

One time I was given permission to drive our family car to school. It was a Model T Ford sedan with a canvas top and isinglass side curtains. In the summertime we laid the top back for that racy look. All the doors opened except the one on the driver's side; it was stationary.

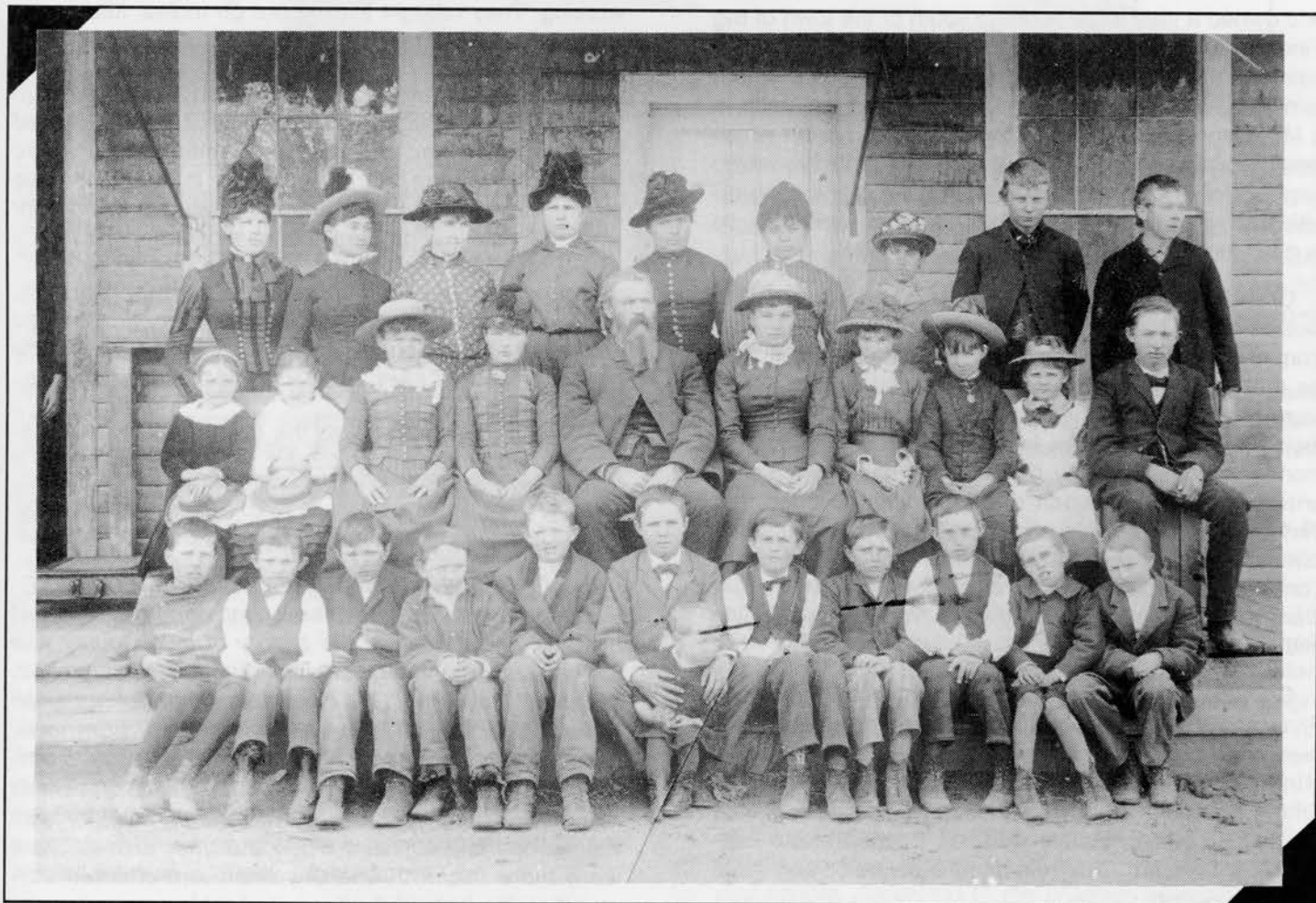
Coming home from school that evening, I was driving slowly. The road was washboard, and so rough I thought I had a flat tire. I slid over to the passenger's side, holding the wheel with my left hand and leaned out to look at the tires. I fell out! A car was right behind but I jumped up and took after Lizzie Maud. She had gone through a ditch and a barbed wire fence and was headed for a tree. She hit it, mashed in the front, and broke the head lights. I knew that I'd soon be sent to the guillotine, but instead got one of my biggest surprises: everyone laughed.

Lizzie Maud and I had another hair raising experience. One evening I went and got my girlfriend and we went for a ride. It was soon decided that we should drive

up Baker Creek Road and see whose cars were parked at "Pete's Hoar House." We looked them over, giggled, went a little further, and I tried to turn around. I reversed into a very deep ditch. There was no way to get out without a tow. What to do! We couldn't walk to town for help; they would have tarred and feathered us for being up there. I talked my friend into going with me to Pete's front door, and knocked. When she came to the door,

here was this big woman, stark naked except for black patent pumps. She said, "Oh! What do you kids want," and grabbed a bath towel to cover her body. We all were in shock, but I babbled about our situation. She dressed, got her car and pulled us out. What a nice lady. I think we learned a lot. Before we said goodbye she said, "If you see me in town sometime, don't speak; your mothers wouldn't like it."

Big Pine School, early 1900s



and the GOLDEN WEDDING

1874

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

1924



MARY JANE BOGART



ROBERT HARVEY BLAKE

The Blakes were one of the first families to settle in the Owens Valley. Uncle Elias and his wife came first, and owned a very large acreage south of the town of Big Pine. When the Methodist Church was built Uncle Elias paid for the beautiful stained glass windows which remain there today. Sometime later he sold his ranch to a Mr. Eaton who started Eaton's Chicken Ranch which was very large and prosperous. Elias wrote to his young brother Bob (my Grandfather) telling him of the opportunities and happiness that he had found in California, so in due time Grandpa came.

Grandpa Bob Blake left West Virginia with just the clothes on his back and his shotgun and worked his way from place to place by doing odd jobs. At Quincy, Illinois, he met and fell in love with Mary Jane Bogart. They were married and moved to Coatsburg, Illinois, where their first child was born in 1875. They saved enough money to come west by prairie schooners. When they arrived at Austin, Nevada the snow was so deep that they were transferred to a sled which came through the Smokey Valley, then stage coach stops, then on to Tonopah, Nevada. From there the stage coach brought them to Big Pine where they were met by Uncle Elias and Aunt Florence in 1876.

Grandpa homesteaded a large farm near the Owens River and the remaining children were born there, fourteen in all, but only nine reached adulthood. Bill married Minnie Frenchie, Ernest didn't marry, Bob married Emma Frenchie, Nancy wed Anthony Rossi, Florence married Bill Hines, Maude wed Joe Brackett, Kate married Abe Ransom, Phil remained a bachelor and Alice wed Gus Belfort.

Grandpa's mother, Grandma Bogart, lived with them. She was an invalid in a wheel chair and smoked a pipe.

Grandpa raised alfalfa, corn, and some cattle. He had two silver mines in the White Mountains that were worth working. They brought the ore out on mules, fording the wide Owens River to reach home.

Much later Grandpa sold the ranch, bought land in town, and built a large two story house; Uncle Elias lived with them. He had red hair and white whiskers and walked with a cane. He played poker in town and gave his winnings to his nieces and nephews. He loved Aunt Alice and gave her property just east of Grandpa's.

Grandma's mother came from Bonner Springs, Kansas to visit about once a year and every trip she had a different name. Bogart, Green, Kelly, and Reams. One I don't remember, as she had married five different men.

The *Big Pine Citizen* was the town's weekly newspaper. The publisher and editor, Mr. A.G. Baremore, was a master with words and I would like to quote two of his articles: "The Blake's Golden Wedding," July 19, 1924, and Grandpa's funeral, Oct. 12, 1927.

WELL DESERVED HONOR PAID POPULAR COUPLE

We believe the greatest family gathering and the most beautiful social affair in the history of Inyo County was the celebration of the golden wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Blake, at their beautiful home on School Street last Tuesday evening and afternoon. Invitations were sent to three hundred guests and practically everyone receiving an invitation was present in addition to thirty members of the family. Dinner was announced for 1:30 and when the hour arrived there were more than 300 men, women and children surrounding the beautifully decorated tables spread under the cool shade trees in the spacious front lawn of the Blake home.



The program started with a regular wedding ceremony, Justice George W. Hall officiating, Mrs. Nettie Webb played the wedding march. The ceremony was performed under the portals of the front veranda.

Old Glory swung majestically across the portal top while beautiful flowers covered the side portals. Without a doubt the most beautiful scene this writer ever gazed upon was when Daddy Blake, supported by his elder son W.H. Blake came marching down the hall to the front veranda, and as the sweet soft notes of the wedding march floated out upon the great gathering, the bride, preceded by flower girl and ring bearer, was escorted up the front steps by her grandson Francis Hines, followed by sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, almost covered with great bouquets of beautiful flowers.

After the ceremony was over Judge Hall started trouble by performing his usual duty – kissing the bride. Then all 300 guests lined up and the bride and groom went right down the front steps and took their places side by side on the lawn. Daddy Blake had a little the best of the argument that followed, as his duties only called for him to kiss all of the ladies, while Mama had to kiss all the men and ladies too.

The wedding over, everyone was seated for the wedding dinner. To give a slight idea of the magnitude of this affair we herewith quote a few of the items prepared

for this dinner: two muttons, one pig, twenty two chickens, six turkeys, four kinds of salads (5 gallons each), potatoes, twenty-five gallons of spanish beans, iced tea, twenty five gallons of punch, ten gallons of ice cream, bread, butter and pickles. That is a part of the menu that went to make the greatest dinner of its kind ever served in the County.

After dinner the guests were entertained with several solos by Mrs. Rollin McMurry, and a male quartet consisting of Harvey Otis, Abe Ransom, Ralph Higgins, and H.D. Smith.

The music was followed by a very interesting talk by J.W. McMurry, who grew from boyhood in the same small town in Illinois with Daddy Blake. John McMurry left Illinois and came to the Owens Valley in 1873. He was followed to the Owens Valley in 1876 by Daddy Blake, who had taken upon himself a bride, one Mary Jane Bogart on July 15, 1874. They have been neighbors and companions and residents of this valley for almost fifty years since that time.

Before the guests departed late in the afternoon it was decided this wedding should be complete in all its details, so they planned to charivari the fifty-year married couple. According to the program some 200 of the guests returned in the evening with the customary instruments used for the purpose. When the cans began to rattle Mama and Daddy Blake thought that the chil-

dren were coming to give them a charivari. Upon going to the door Mother Blake was again greeted by most of the former guests. Mr. and Mrs. Rafael Rossi had accompanied the party with their accordions, and proceeded to furnish music for entertainment for the crowd. After a short time the bride and groom were told to put on their wedding costumes again, and the entire gathering proceeded to the Legion Hall where Bernie Reche and P.W. Duncan alternated on the violin and Mrs. Reche played the piano. Mama and Daddy Blake led the Grand March and then the floor manager called "partners for a square dance." The bride and groom joined in heartily and old fashioned dances were enjoyed until midnight. Before departing for their homes it was unanimously voted the greatest day in Big Pine

for years, by all of those present.

In addition to the Blakes nine grown children they have been blessed with 15 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

Daddy and Mama Blake have always lived an upright and honorable life, and their family is a credit to this or would be to any other community. Upon the celebration of their Golden wedding day they were as young and happy as their children, and it is the prayer of their many friends in this valley that they will live to celebrate the hundredth anniversary.

Top row, standing: Abe and Kate (Blake) Ransom, Maude (Blake) (b. 1892), and Joe Brackett, Ernest "Whis" Blake, Emma and Robert E. Blake

Seated: Mary and Robert H. Blake ("Grandpa" and "Grandma"), and Alice Blake (b. 1898)

Bottom row: Tony Rossi, Nancy (Blake) Rossi (holding Alma), Florence (Blake) and Bill Hines

On the steps: Estelle Rossi, Harvey Rossi, Francis Hines, Ellen Hines



ROBERT HARVEY BLAKE

Oct. 12, 1927

Another of the loveable characters and an old pioneer of fifty years residence in Big Pine crossed the Great Divide Monday evening when Robert Harvey Blake departed this life. He was born October 5, at Wellington, West Virginia in 1852.

This wonderful old pioneer came to the Owens Valley just fifty two years ago: arriving here with just twenty cents in the family exchequer. This magnificent fund of the family ready cash was composed of two ten cent greenbacks: something probably most of the present generation have never seen. The original bank roll the family arrived with, the two ten cent greenbacks, remain in the family home today as one of the heirlooms of a proud father that helped to blaze the trail across the great plains more than half a century ago in the famous old Prairie Schooners: the typical and popular conveyance of the lovable characters who came to make and bless this wonderful Western Empire that we children of today have been endowed with.

It was only the 15th day of July 1924 that this writer helped to celebrate the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Robert Harvey Blake and Mary Jane Bogart. Members

presented an enjoyment of occasion by those fortunate to be an invited guest. This was probably the largest and greatest social gathering ever held in the Owens Valley.

On that particular day Robert Harvey Blake was just about as young as any of his sons and as far as that goes has only been a boy the greatest part of his seventy five years of existence in the world. Robert Harvey Blake and Mary Jane Bogart have probably raised the largest family of "Regular American Boys and Girls" that ever grew up in the history of the Owens Valley. Many of them survive the deceased father including: Bill, Fallon, Nevada; Ernest, Phil, and Bob, Big Pine, California; Florence, Nancy, and Kate of Big Pine, California; Maud of Burbank, California; and Alice of Escondido, California.

Funeral Services were held from the family home on School Street at 2:30 Wednesday afternoon Oct. 12. One of the largest turnouts ever present at a funeral in Owens Valley was on hand to pay homage to this "Grand Old Man." ❖

1 See THE ALBUM, Vol. II, No. 3 for more Rossi and Blake family stories.

*The Blake family
home on South
School Street,
Big Pine*





Working cattle at the Arcularius Owens River Ranch, Leslie Roeser Engelhart roping.

A PLACE IN TIME

Marye Roeser chronicles the pioneers whose lives touched Long Valley

To travelers along U.S. Highway 395 a unique, beautiful valley in Mono County, California presents a peaceful face, belying its sometimes turbulent past. Long Valley, a large, elliptical caldera was produced by an enormous volcanic explosion 700,000 years ago. The Glass Mountains bound the northern ridge of the caldera while the southern boundary is surrounded by the main crest of the Sierra Nevada with peaks over 13,000 feet high. Mammoth Mountain, a large volcano on the western edge, dominates the western skyline. During the late pleistocene epoch, the caldera filled with glacial meltwater to become Long Valley Lake, covering more than 100 square miles. When the lake was full, the resurgent dome, in the northwest section of the caldera, became an island. Overflow from the ancient lake cut into the volcanic tableland to the east, formed an outlet, cut the Owens River Gorge, and eventually drained the lake. The elevation of the present day reservoir,

Crowley Lake, is 6781 feet. The treeless, sagebrush and grass covered valley is surrounded by pine covered slopes.

The Upper Owens River Valley, as Long Valley was once called, was occupied by Paiute Indian bands in 1850. Evidences of occupation by native peoples for at least 11,600 years in the Sierra Nevada have been found. Many Indians lived in Long Valley near Hot Creek and Casa Diablo Hot Springs. In the fall when the pine nut harvest arrived, Indians from elsewhere joined the Paiutes for the bountiful harvests and trading. Shoshones, Washoes from Nevada, and Miwok and Tulare Indians who crossed from the west through the passes, particularly the Mammoth Pass Trail, arrived and camped in campoodies at Casa Diablo, enjoying the hot springs. The first routes in the area were Indian trails, used as they traded between tribes living east and

west of the mountains, and followed the harvests.

Joseph Walker journeyed through the Upper Owens River Valley in late May of 1834 on his return trip from his famed California expedition of 1833. He passed through Long Valley, crossing the Owens River near Benton Crossing, and traveled eastward to intersect Walker Lake. On John Fremont's third expedition, Walker guided half of the party south from the East Walker River along the base of the Sierra to the Upper Owens River Valley, thence south to Walker Pass.

In 1855, Col. Alexey W. Von Schmidt, deputy U.S. government surveyor, contracted to survey the lands between Mono Lake and the southern end of Owens Lake. In his reports, he described the lands that he explored and mapped. Long Valley enclosed miles of natural meadows with a perfect summer climate that impressed Von Schmidt. He wrote, "Splendid land for any purpose. Soil first rate, fine grass, and quality." He also observed the fine pine timber forests, the remarkable hot springs of Casa Diablo and Hot Creek, and that game was very scarce.

Von Schmidt was impressed with the approximately 1,000 Indians that he believed inhabited the general region east of the Sierra. "They are a fine looking race, straight and of good height, and appear to be active."

Because of livestock depredations by Indians on the west slope of the Sierra, a military expedition set out in 1859 from Fort Tejon to recover stolen stock rumored to be in the valleys east of the Sierra. The expedition was led by Lt. Col. Beale who also planned to explore the region. Beale estimated they saw approximately 1,600 Indians, all appearing healthy. On their return, a newspaper reporter who accompanied the expedition published an account in a Los Angeles newspaper. To the surprise of the expedition, they found no horses in the lower Owens Valley and located only a few in the Upper Owens River Valley. The Indians convinced them they had obtained them from the Walker River Indians and assured Lt. Col. Beale's expedition that they no longer stole and ate horse and hadn't for the past five years. Beale further described the wonders of the lands east of the Sierra.

By 1860, the headman of the Upper Owens River Paiutes, Joaquin Jim, was thought to be a renegade from the Fresno area. Prior to the 1850s the local Indian populations had increased as escapees from the missions, and later fugitive Indians from the Tule River Reservation in Tulare County, fled east of the Sierra. When the Indian Wars began, many of the Indians were mounted on horses (termed inferior ponies by the new settlers) and were armed with rifles. During the Indian wars beginning in 1861, Joaquin Jim and his band of warriors never surrendered to the U.S. Army troops.

Prior to 1853, gold had been discovered in the plac-

ers of Dog Town Creek. In 1858, gold was discovered at Monoville and the Mono Diggings. In 1859, winter arrived early at the mines and the 150 miners wintering at Monoville were caught unprepared. Provisions were hauled in from Genoa and the mail arrived weekly from Genoa when travel permitted. Other boom towns followed the discoveries at Monoville and Dogtown, as the miners at Monoville branched out prospecting for minerals. Gold and silver were found at Bodie and Aurora by 1860. In 1861, Aurora had a population of 1,400, and Monoville a population of 700.

The boom was on! With the influx of miners came the need for provisions and supplies. Packers led slow-moving strings of loaded mules and horses to the gold camps. As the camps grew, trails were widened and improved for wagons, and roads were constructed to allow freight wagons pulled by draft teams over the passes and rugged mountain topography.

The Mono and Esmeralda Mining District was formed in 1860 and Mono County was created in 1861 with Aurora as the county seat. In 1863, Aurora was found to be in the new Territory of Nevada so the county records were hastily removed to the new town of Bodie.

Long Valley, or the Upper Owens River Valley as it was first called, was discovered by stockmen in 1858. In July of 1858, a company of men from Tulare County, California, led by Major Erskine, crossed the Sierra to explore Owens lake and river. They continued north along the base of the Sierra to the Carson Valley and then returned home to California. Their main objective was surveying prospects for gold and silver mining, but they also noted possibilities for agriculture in the area. During their stay in Genoa, they told residents of their successful journey through Owens and Walker river valleys. This early expedition to the Owens Valley from the Tulare area informed Carson Valley settlers as well as Tulare County ranchers of the opportunities for grazing livestock in the Owens River valleys.

Overland emigrants heading for California traveled through the fertile and unsettled Carson Valley with many herds of livestock. When the emigrants crossed the plains bound for California, they drove herds of cattle of a broad assortment of breeds. The pioneers brought dairy stock and crossbreeds of every description, that had been gathered up and down the Mississippi Valley while they were looking for bargains to drive West. An early writer in Genoa described the cattle as "motley mongrels." Thousands of cattle perished on the trek down the Humboldt River and those that reached the Carson Valley were "worn out" and often barely surviving. Previous emigrants, who had gone on to California, remembered and returned to the lovely Carson Valley and claimed grazing land. Enterprising Genoa settlers bought or traded these starved cattle from the emigrants and pastured them on

the rich grasses growing along the Carson River and its tributaries. The grass was said to be as high as a man's head or the pommel of his saddle. By 1859, thousands of "quadrupeds" grazed in the Carson Valley.

In these early days, little hay land had been developed as yet and ranchers didn't have hay to winter feed their stock. In the spring, when rivers overflowed their banks, the grasslands along the river were flooded and provided needed irrigation for the hay lands. What hay the ranchers did cut was often of inferior quality, and they sold it to the mining camps, teamsters, and packers for high prices.

By October of 1859, the grass in the Carson Valley was very short from the great numbers of livestock grazing in the valley, and local stockmen worried about what might happen if a heavy winter occurred. Their grim foreboding was realized, as the winter of 1859-1860 was severe in the Sierras and the valleys to the east. That winter saw hundreds of cattle frozen or starved to death. Bitter cold and relentless snow arrived in December, and the snow was two to three feet deep in the Carson Valley in January. Pack mules, bringing in supplies, had to cross on blankets spread out on the snow to keep them from falling through. Snow closed the roads to Placerville and halted the supply pack trains. Many cattle died, and the horses and mules were in very poor condition. Hogs survived because they fed on the dead cattle.

Some of the Carson Valley ranchers, determined to save their herds, drove them out of the Carson Valley to the Walker River Valley and the Owens River valleys to graze. Three Carson Valley cattlemen, searching desperately for feed, had heard about the grass in the Upper Owens River Valley. Henry Van Sickle, Allen Van Fleet, and George Turner drove cattle into the Upper Owens River and the lower Owens Valley. Van Fleet was accompanied on his drive by two men named Coverdale and Ethridge, and a herder named Al Thompson worked with Van Sickle. Van Fleet, Coverdale and Ethridge traveled as far south as Lone Pine before returning to the Owens River near present day Laws where Van Sickle had stopped. Van Fleet constructed a cabin along a bend of the Owens River and remained in the Owens Valley. In summer, Long Valley provided lush grasslands for the cattle. W.S. Bailey drove a herd from the Carson Valley to Long Valley to graze.

Henry Van Sickle was a blacksmith by trade, and had settled in Genoa, in the Carson Valley, in 1852. He was born in New Jersey, had been a hard-bitten '49er as a freighter, and was an Indian fighter. In Genoa, he traded with the overland emigrants and the Indians, establishing the Van Sickle Station. His station was conveniently located near the Georgetown Trail, a horse and mule pack train trail which became the Daggett Pass Route in 1854, and the Carson River Trail. By 1859, his five

barns were filled nightly with pack trains, draft teams and freight wagons. He supplied beef and hay to the emigrants and the new gold towns.

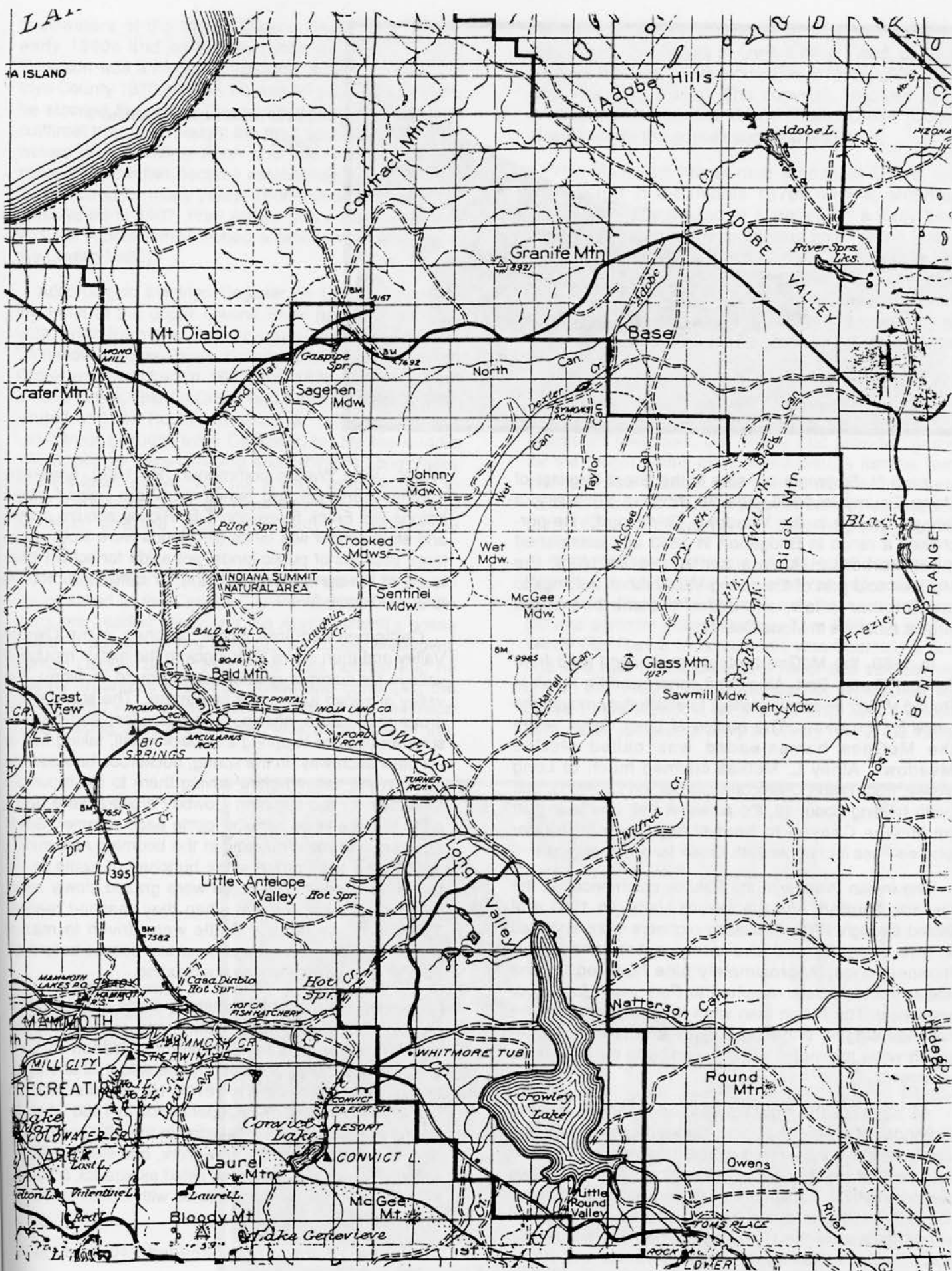
The Great Registers of each county were voter registration books, and provide information on these early pioneer ranchers. Allen Connett (or Ebenezer) Van Fleet was later described in the Great Register of Inyo County in 1880 as a resident of Bishop Creek, and a farmer, age 44, and 5'8" tall. Like Van Sickle, he was a '49er, and was born in New Jersey. In the 1860s he ran cattle near Sherwin Creek and Casa Diablo Hot Springs in Long Valley and was active in fighting the Indian Wars.

By the spring of 1860, companies were readied in Visalia with droves of cattle and hogs to be driven to Monoville and Aurora. From Keyesville on the west side to Monoville, it took at least 13 days along the Owens River Route. A number of livery stables in Monoville supplied the transportation needs of the area.

Alney T. McGee from Tulare, California, along with his wife, three sons, Alney L., Bart, and John McGee, son-in-law Jesse Summers, and nephew Taylor McGee drove a herd of cattle to the Eastern Sierra in 1861 from the Tulare Valley. Alney's daughter, Mahulda was married to Jesse N. Summers, who, with his brothers, had arrived in California, Tuolumne County in 1852. The McGee/Summers company drove their cattle herd from Visalia over Walker Pass, headed for the mining camps of Monoville and Aurora, where they planned to open meat markets. The miners at Monoville included many men from Visalia and Tulare County as well as Tuolumne County.

The McGees liked the looks of the Eastern Sierra country and the availability of good grazing lands. In the fall, they returned to Tulare, gathered another herd of 1,500 cattle, and drove them across Walker Pass to winter along the Owens River. The winter of 1861-62 arrived in early December and was described by Bart and Alney L. McGee as very severe but they persevered.

The McGee family had emigrated first to Texas and then California in 1850. The parents, Alney T. and Margaret Lee McGee were both born in North Carolina. By 1866, Alney Lee and Bart McGee had a ranch at McGee Creek in Long Valley and Bart operated a station there. In the great Register of Mono County, Alney Lee McGee is listed in the 1867 record as 23 years of age, 5'10" tall, born in Texas in 1844, and living in Long Valley, his occupation stockraiser. Barton McGee is listed in the 1882 Inyo County Great Register at 5'10", born in Texas. Alney was 2 years younger than Bart and John Simpson McGee was two years younger than Alney. The third brother, John McGee, 5'10-1/2", was a farmer, born in Texas, living in Round Valley. John and Alney McGee married the Gunter sisters, Elizabeth and Caroline.





An old cabin at John Summer's Ranch

Jesse N. Summers appears in the Great Register of Mono County in 1866, age 38, born in Kentucky, a farmer residing in Big Meadows (Bridgeport). He purchased a ranch in Bridgeport in 1863 and established meat markets in Aurora and Bodie. In 1876, the McGees sold part of their Long Valley ranch holdings to their brother-in-law, and Jesse became one of the largest ranchers in Mono County.

In 1869, the McGee brothers purchased land from Samuel Martin. Bart, Alney and John owned a ranch in Round Valley (Pleasant Valley) to which they moved the cattle for the winter. The portion of Long Valley where the McGees homesteaded was called McGee Meadows. Alney L. McGee claimed much of Long Valley, from Hilton Creek, the old Benton Crossing, and north holding about 18,000 acres. A trail was later built up McGee Canyon to herd sheep and cattle over McGee Pass into upper Fish Creek for summer graze.

The Indian Wars with the Paiutes commenced in the Nevada Territory and the Owens Valley in 1861 and lasted through 1865. The early pioneers were engaged in the fighting and the army established Fort Independence. Approximately nine hundred Owens Valley Paiutes were marched to Fort Tejon for a four year exile. The Indian men were then employed on the ranches digging irrigation ditches and clearing sagebrush while the Indian women worked in the homes as domestics.

As soon as the fighting ceased, ranches quickly expanded. Cattle companies quickly claimed, perhaps some fraudulently, large numbers of acres, and grazed hundreds of head of cattle. When the homestead laws went into effect, cattlemen, their families, and cowboys filed on desirable lands. Springs, creeks and natural grass lands were the first to be claimed and sometimes fought over. In his book, *Western Times and Water*

Wars, John Walton comments, "By 1890, however, dummy entrymen and family members helped cattle barons like Frank Shaw and T.B. Rickey acquire desert and state school lieu lands (lieu lands were plots within large sections of public lands, set aside for school sites to serve the surrounding settlers) for ranches of 15,000 to 20,000 acres."

Cattlemen acquired winter ranches in the Owens Valley and then drove their stock to the higher mountain valleys for summer grazing. Snowbound in winter, the valley provided lush grass in summer. The stockraisers drove their cattle, sheep, horses, mules, and hogs to summer pasture in spring and back in fall, taking five or six days each way. In the spring, buckeroos branded the cattle in the valley before driving them to the mountain meadows for the summer. Cowboy drovers were needed to trail the large herds of cattle each summer. Some ranchers had meat markets in the booming new mining towns, and they drove small bunches of cattle to the towns as needed. The cattle were grazed slowly along the trail so they were fat when they reached market. There were no fences. Cattle were driven to market across the dusty desert and mountain passes before the narrow gauge railroad was constructed.

Richard Hilton, a blacksmith by trade, homesteaded on Hilton Creek in Long Valley, and owned a winter ranch in Round Valley. His summer ranch in Long Valley was a dairy operation and he sold milk and butter to the mining camps in the 1870s. He was first reported in the eastern Sierra in Independence in 1866 when he ran for supervisor. Hilton is listed in the 1870 census as age 43, 5'10" tall, born in New York, and living in Round Valley. His son, Charles, was listed as age 23, 5'10" tall, born in California, and associated with him in his ranching ventures.

Andrew Thomson homesteaded 240 acres at the

headwaters of the Upper Owens River Valley in the early 1860s and called his ranch the River Ranch. Thomson was a native of Scotland, a farmer and in the Inyo County 1870 census, he was 58 years old. In 1874, he stocked the upper Owens River with Walker River cutthroat trout. He brought the trout from near the headwaters of the Walker River and Mill Creek in coal oil cans. After the fish became established, he operated a fishing camp for many years. Thomson sold his ranch to Fred Alpers in 1907. Fred Alpers was a Benton pioneer and the Alpers family owned a ranch north of Laws in the Owens Valley.

According to the Inyo Register, in 1873 the lakes at the head of the upper Owens River had been stocked with trout from the San Joaquin River by Charles Wonacott. McGee Creek, Convict Creek and Mammoth Creek were stocked in 1877 and 1878 with trout from Bishop Creek. Bishop Creek had been stocked by Wm. Harrell and the Russell Brothers in 1873 with Walker Lake trout brought from Carson City. By the middle 1880s, people were camping and fishing in Long Valley and the lakes above. The hot springs were believed to have therapeutic cures for rheumatism as well as other ailments, and the "sick bathe daily" in the mineral waters.

On September 17, 1871, a prison break of 28 prisoners occurred at the Carson City Penitentiary. Six of the prisoners headed south and the Aurora sheriff's posse began a pursuit of the convicts to Adobe Meadows. Benton Deputy Sheriff Hightower was notified and he quickly organized a Benton posse and continued the chase. Fred Alpers, who later purchased the Thomson Ranch along the Owens River, was a member of that

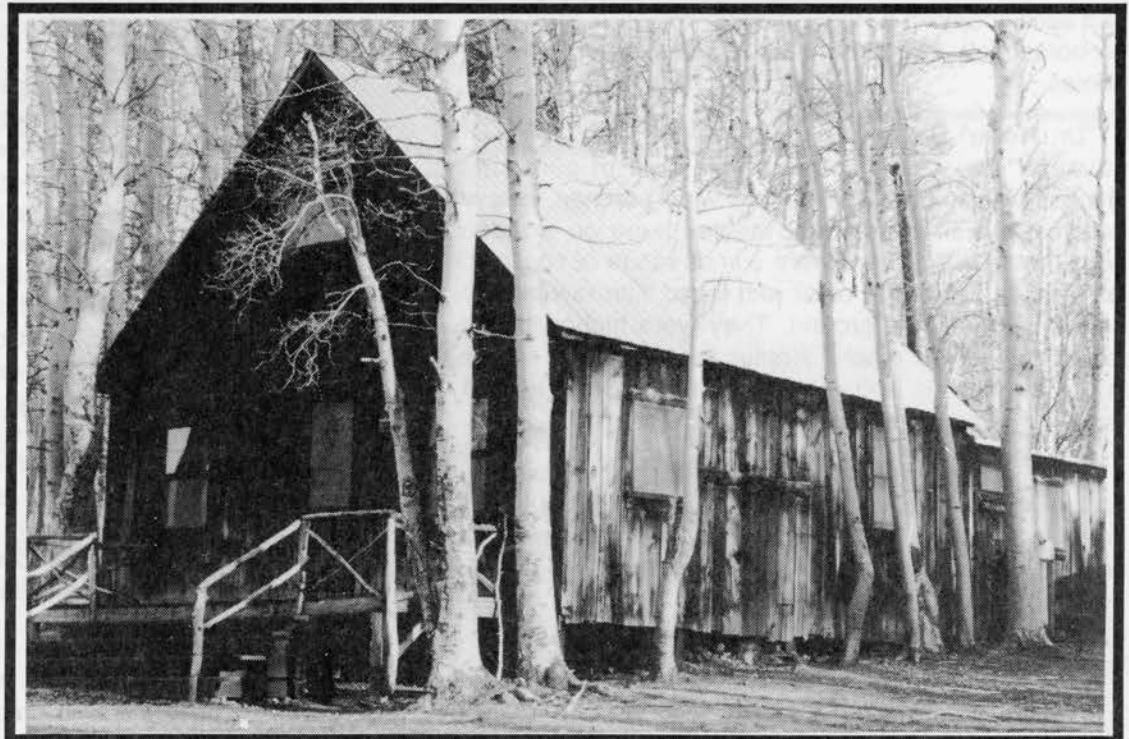
Benton Posse. The outlaws and the posse followed a wagon trail, the Aurora to Owens River Road, up Taylor canyon, over the Glass Mountains at McLaughlin Creek, and into Long Valley. The convicts, followed by the posse, headed toward Monte Diablo Creek (Convict Creek) where the posse caught up with them.

The Mammoth Mines near Mammoth Lakes, were discovered in the middle 1870s on Red Mountain. Freight wagons hauled in supplies on a daily basis. Pack trains crossed the mountains from Fresno Flats by way of the French Trail almost daily. Ranchers in Long Valley grazed cattle and sheep, raised hogs and chickens for the miners' consumption, and dairy herds provided milk and butter to the booming mining town. Hay and grain were needed by the freight teams of oxen, horses, and mules.

The southwestern section of Long Valley comprises meadowland known as Windy Flat or more recently Mammoth Meadows. Big Windy Flat provided grazing for the freight teams of Remi Nadeau, a famous teamster who had a cabin and corrals near Hidden Lake. Nadeau pastured 16 to 20 oxen in Windy Flat meadows during the summers of 1878 to 1880 freighting seasons.

Alney McGee sold some of this ranch land to Tom Williams in 1884. Williams also ran his cattle over Mammoth Pass into Deer Creek later, on a Forest Service summer grazing permit. Tom Williams sold his Windy Flat Ranch to Alvin Bodle who operated a dairy and sold milk to the Summers Hotel and summer visitors in the 1920s. The lower part of Windy Flat was called Bodle Meadow for a time. The Tom Wonacott family also operated a dairy at Windy Flat in the 1930s.

*Charlie Summers'
house at Laurel Creek,
1990*



Carrie Thomson Wonacott was a niece of Andrew Thomson, early homesteader in Long Valley. Thomas Rigg was another land owner in Long Valley in 1895.

Cyrus Baldwin Rawson purchased ranch land in Long Valley from Alney McGee on December 26, 1886, at Casa Diablo Hot Springs, Laurel, and Sherwin creeks. The lower meadows were called Rawson Meadows for many years. Rawson's brand was the Triangle R and his ranch, the Triangle R Ranch. Rawson operated the Rawson Mill sawmill on Laurel Creek which provided the logs for his log home. He also owned a ranch in Bishop, north of Collins Road on Rawson Creek, where he operated a dairy and raised sheep as well as cattle. Cyrus Rawson had previously owned the Juan Avila Rancho, a Spanish Land Grant ranch in the Laguna Hills of Southern California, which he sold in the 1870s. He was not married and his sister, Mrs. H.M. Gifford, a widow, and her daughter Grace, kept house for him. Rawson was listed in the 1892 Great Register of Inyo County as Cyrus Baldwin Rawson, age 65, a farmer, 5'7" tall, and born in New York. His Long Valley ranch was sold to Charlie and John Summers in 1901, after his death at age 74.

Grace Gifford, Rawson's niece, was a childhood friend of author Dr. Helen MacKnight Doyle. In her book, "A Child Went Forth," Doyle beautifully relates spending summers in Long Valley in the late 1880s. Another friend, Frances, was the daughter of Frank Shaw and in 1889, Shaw owned a summer ranch in Long Valley adjoining C.B. Rawson's. The three young girls spent their days between the two ranches. Their summer days were carefree and "filled with excitement: horse breaking, round-ups, branding, riding the trails that led off into the mountains," according to Doyle. She describes attending an Indian "Fandango" on Hot Creek in 1889, and accompanying a Rawson cattle drive to Long Valley on horseback. The girls rode side-saddle on their cow ponies.

"Dr. Nellie" Doyle described the Long Valley ranch houses: "The ranch houses were built of pine logs chinked with adobe. There were wide porches. Heavy saddles and silver mounted bridles hung on wooden pegs on the wall. There were corrals made of saplings, laid one on top of the other and laced with raw-hide to pots driven into the ground. They were higher than a man's hand could reach." Horses were broke to saddle in the big corrals and reportedly the McBride horses were the hardest breed on the range to break.

The Inyo Register reported many people going to Long Valley in the summer of 1887. They had discovered Long Valley as a summer vacation paradise, and an escape from the valley heat. The fishing was reported as good. Valley livery stables supplied horses, mules, and camping gear as well as guides for "tourists."

John McBride owned a ranch near Benton Station,

Adobe Meadows, and McBride Springs where he raised horses. McBride came into the Owens River Valley in 1860 with John Kispert. In 1857, John Kispert had been through the area prospecting. Summers and McGee bought land from Burns and McBride, and T. Choppingen in 1862.

Some of McBride's horses were thoroughbreds bred to local mustang mares, and these horses were valued by the pioneer ranchers. The Pizona Mountain area had wild horses by 1860. The local ranchers often had a good stallion that they crossed on the mustang mares to produce their ranch working horses. When McBride was killed by one of his own horses, many of the horses were turned out or escaped on the open range where they mingled with the mustangs. The Pizona mustang herd, a colorful group with many grays, is thought to be a result of these horses.

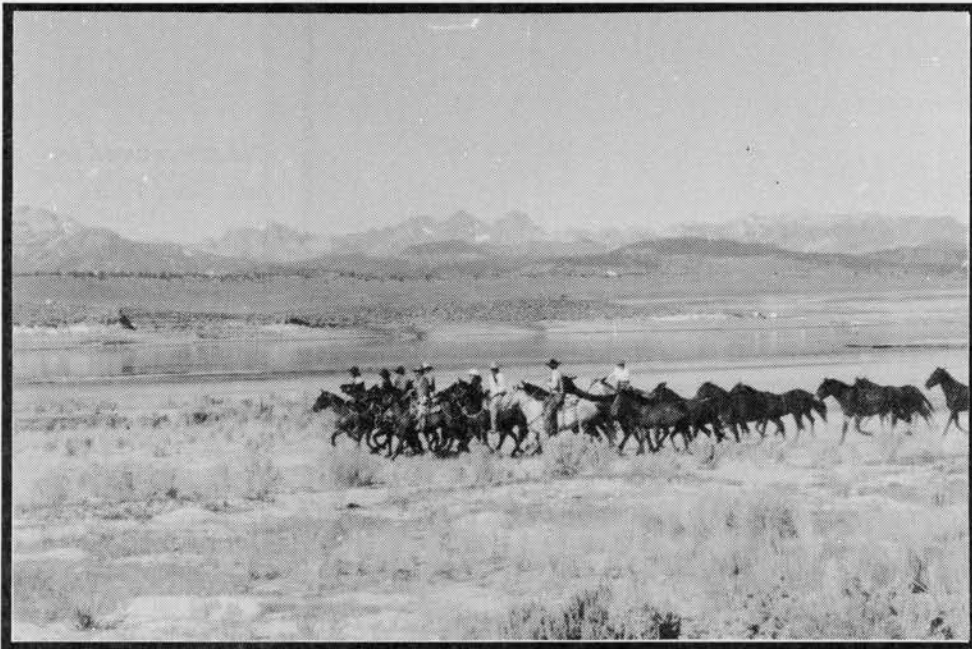
In the late 1870s, Tom Rickey, the cattle king of northern Mono County, and his partner, Richard Kirman, began purchasing ranches in Long Valley. Jesse N. Summers and his brother Dr. G.N. Summers, sold over 10,000 acres in Long Valley to Kirman and Rickey in 1883. The Hiltons sold to Tom Rickey in 1894.

Thomas Brinley Rickey, born in Ohio, crossed the plains to California in 1852, settling with his large family first in Amador County, California. After some success in mining in 1859 he drove a herd of cattle back across the Sierra to homestead in the Antelope Valley along the West Walker River. His wife was from a pioneer family in Genoa. Rickey's large family was associated with him in his huge ranching business.

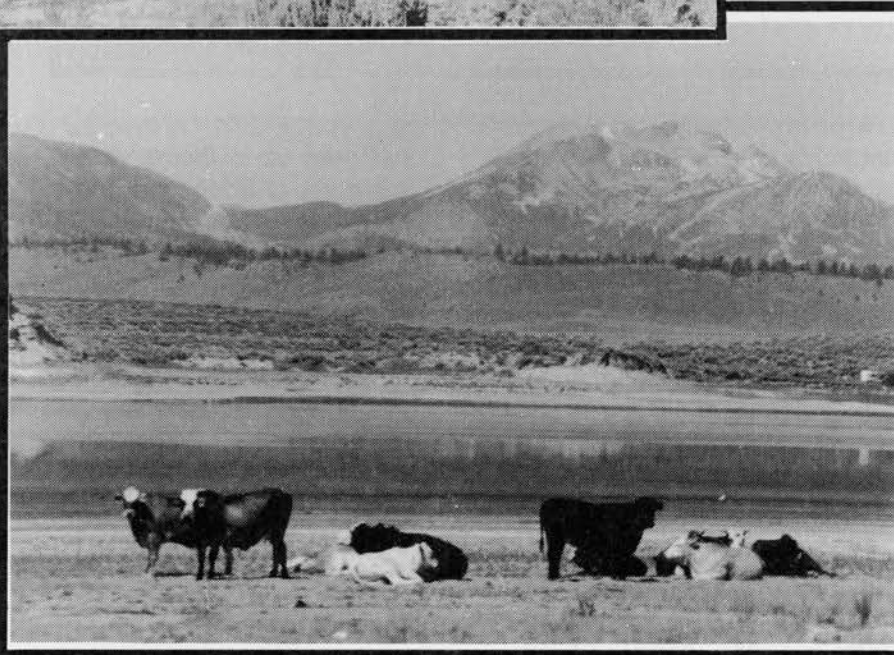
Richard Kirman, Rickey's partner for over 20 years, was a native of England, and like Rickey had also crossed the plains and was a self-made man. He owned ranches in Nevada and lived in Virginia City.

Kirman and Rickey bought out homesteaders who had gone broke or moved on to other enterprises, quickly enlarging their ranching enterprises. In reporting on the Mono County Sheep Ordinance of 1887, the Inyo Register commented, "... a great and overshadowing cattle king who claims the sole right of feeding his countless herds upon the public domain ..." At the zenith of the Kirman and Rickey/Rickey Land and Cattle Co., the corporation owned most of the Long Valley except four small ranches. Rickey ran 3,000 head of cattle in the valley during the summer with his ranch headquarters located near McGee Creek. He leased land to Whitmore and Webb. His Owens Valley ranch lands were located in Black Rock, Aberdeen, Big Pine, and on down toward Owens Lake in the Owens River Valley. Rickey's brands were the Circle J, the Cross J, and a brand he had with Kirman, Bar 76, the year they began their partnership.

H.L. Holgate of the Dept. of Interior's district counsel stated that Rickey "... is practically proprietor of Mono



*Horse drive at Crowley Lake,
and cattle at the lake,
Mammoth Mountain in the
background.*



*The upper Owens River winds
through Long Valley*





Old cottonwood corals, Long Valley

County and there are few of the small population of Alpine County who are not in his employ ... many were forced to sell to Rickey after being coerced and hounded for months and sometimes years by Rickey and his men." Rickey owned 22,380 acres outright in the Owens Valley and possibly an even larger number of acres in titles made out in other names, and was the major landholder in Inyo County. By the time the Rickey empire dissolved, Rickey was the largest landholder in Mono, Inyo, and Alpine counties in California, and Douglas and Lyon counties in Nevada. It was rumored that he began his ranching empire with one bull and a branding iron.

Rickey visited his Long Valley ranch, driving down from the Antelope Valley in a wagon pulled by four fast horses. Author Mary Austin wrote a novel titled "The Ford" in which one of the main characters is Tim Rickett, a thinly disguised Tom Rickey. Her fictional book described the rancher as long-sighted and relentless.

Rickey was a student of irrigation and knew that water could make the desert lands bloom. During the negotiations by the City of Los Angeles to take over control of the Owens River water, Rickey was accused of being a profligate water user. J.S. Clausen of the Reclamation Service claimed that Rickey spread water unsystematically and wastefully over a large territory, "thereby causing the growth of grass which is used as summer range ... in consequence of this so-called irrigation much of Long Valley has been converted into an impassable swamp and evaporation losses can only be estimated."

Charles Frank Summers first appeared in the Mono County Great Register in 1882 when he was 23 years of age, born in Tuolumne County, California. Like Rickey, his family had crossed the plains to California in 1852.

As a young child, he lived for a time in Aurora, Sonora, and grew up in Sierra Valley. His uncle was Jesse N. Summers of Bridgeport and his wife, Elizabeth, was a sister-in-law of rancher Frank Shaw. His occupation was listed as an "agent," and he lived in Benton. In 1886, his occupation was listed as a rancher, he still resided in Benton, but was also listed on the Inyo County Great Register that same year, occupation stockman, and living in Bishop. Charlie's brothers, John Albert Summers, and Thomas E. Summers also lived in Bishop. Charlie and his brothers, Jim, John, and Tom homesteaded land in Long Valley. In 1886, Charlie Summers homesteaded 120 acres of land near Casa Diablo, Elizabeth also filed for homesteads and they sold various parcels to Tom Rickey. During this period Summers purchased ranches and land that he sold to Tom Rickey, the first such sale reported in 1884. Charlie was a cowboy and a cattle foreman for Rickey, may have been a land agent; he also bought and sold cattle.

Many later ranch owners were once cowboys working for Tom Rickey. Charlie Summers was cattle foreman and cattle buyer for Rickey. Alney McGee's daughter, Sybil, married Charlie's son Lloyd. McGee was later foreman for Rickey. Each Spring, McGee would go up to Long Valley to check on the snow conditions to calculate when the cattle could be moved up to the valley. Alney and his son, Percy McGee, went to Long Valley by wagon and team on April 18, 1901, and had to travel by night when the snow was frozen. They determined there was still too much snow, and the stock couldn't be driven up for another month.

In 1901, Charlie and John Summers purchased the Rawson Ranch in Long Valley. John built his house near Casa Diablo Hot Springs and Charlie built his house on Laurel Creek, and both houses still stand. This

*Arcularius corrals
at Windy Flat,
Mammoth
Meadows*



ranch was later sold to Jess Chance, a Round Valley rancher who sold the property to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

John and Charlie Summers formed a cattle company with Frank Butler, stepson of Jim Butler. Summers and Butler Cattle Co. had its headquarters in Big Pine, ran cattle in winter in Darwin, Coso and the Panamints. They summered cattle in Long Valley and Fish Creek. Cattle were shipped to market on the C&C Railroad. In 1906, Charlie Summers became an agent for other ranchers, gathered cattle, raised some of his own, and shipped them by rail to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Tonopah.

John A. Summers is listed in the Inyo County Great Register as age 29, 5'5" tall, born in California, blue eyes, brown hair, light skin, and a laborer. Bart McGee sold his Laws Ranch in 1910 and in 1914 had a dairy in Tonopah.

Bob and Joe Love owned ranches at Five Bridges in Bishop and in Long Valley. R.W. Ford, a brother-in-law of Love, purchased Love's Long valley acres. His son was Wint Ford who ranched with him, and Nettie Ford, his daughter, was another schoolmate of author Helen Doyle. His Bishop ranch was at Warm Springs, south of Bishop, and there are four stone silos north of Warm Springs Rd. that mark the location. The Fords trailed their cattle up the valley to Five Bridges and then up the Dry Trail (also called the Casa Diablo Trail) to Long Valley.

Robert Wintworth Ford was listed in the 1880 census

as 38 years old and a farmer, and in the 1886 Great Register of Inyo County, as age 44, born in Maine, a blacksmith, living in Bishop Creek. He sold some of his holdings to Kirman and Rickey in 1891, and sold his Long Valley holdings to Barker Bros. (Inasa Fishing Club).

George Turner's ranch was next to Ford's and north of Hot Creek; he sold to Kirman and Rickey in 1876. Barney McGill used the Dry Trail from the South Fork of Bishop Creek to summer in Clover Patch and Wilfred Canyon.

Whitmore was located at the Whitmore Hot Springs and was a sheepherder who drove his sheep flock to Long Valley each summer. He bathed in the hot springs with his clothes on in the spring and again in the fall, earning the hot springs the name Whitmore's Tubs. In 1877, he too sold his pasture lands to Kirman and Rickey, then leased them back.

After Richard Kirman died in 1896, Rickey continued the large livestock operation as the Rickey Land and Cattle Co. Tom Rickey was president and later his son, Charles William Rickey, was president. T.B. Rickey was a state senator in Nevada and Charles Rickey was a Mono County supervisor from 1898 to 1914.

Gus Cashbaugh said "Tom Rickey was a strong man. At one time, he was roping horses in the stone corrals at Adobe Meadows and as he lassoed the horse, the gate became open and the horse bolted out the gate and the slack of the rope got fastened around Allie McGee's ankle. As McGee was being dragged, Rickey's

boot hit the gate post and he broke the rope.

"Rickey was a well built man. I remember one time he came to see my father, and he looked like a professional man. I remember watching the Rickey cattle when they were on their way to Long Valley. The cattle would be strung out along the foothills from Rossi Hill to near Bishop Creek."

During late spring and early summer, the Owens River flooded the lowlands and some citizens recognized a need for water storage to contain and equalize the flow. In 1903, the Reclamation Service, under J.S. Clausen and supervised by U.S. Engineer, J.B. Lippincott, began plans for an Owens River irrigation project.

Los Angeles was searching for another source of water for the growing city and had focused on the Owens River as an accessible source of water. Frederick Eaton, a Los Angeles engineer and mayor of Los Angeles, was a summer visitor and as early as 1892, had conceived his water plans for Los Angeles. In the summer of 1903, he was in Long Valley with Lippincott, and shortly after announced the possibility of the Reclamation Department stepping aside in favor of the City of Los Angeles. In the fall of 1904, Eaton began taking options or buying mostly riparian Owens River lands and the land to be flooded by the proposed Long Valley Reservoir. Eaton represented himself as an agent of Lippincott and the Reclamation Service, and also claimed he was acquiring this land for a cattle ranch. He had ownership of 50 miles of river frontage and a deal was made for the City to purchase the lands he had acquired.

Tom Rickey owned most of the water rights that the City needed and the site for the proposed dam and reservoir which later became Crowley Lake. Rickey owned large ranch holdings in the Owens Valley also. He had always secured good water rights with his ranch acquisitions and the City needed to purchase water rights for their ambitious project. Rickey sold 22,670 acres in Long Valley and the Owens Valley for \$450,000 to Frederick Eaton Dec. 16, 1905, and was furious when he learned that Eaton was acting for Los Angeles. He wanted to sell some of his ranch lands to finance other lucrative projects, but he reasoned that Los Angeles could have paid more for the huge holdings.

Eaton then sold part of the land to the City but kept the 4,000 head of cattle and much of the north part of Long Valley for himself. He feuded with Mulholland, the Chief of the Department of Water and Power, over the size of the dam. The City refused to buy a larger area and meet Eaton's price for the land. Eaton negotiated with the City separately for the dam site for many years. Eventually, the local bank failures affected Eaton also and he was forced to sell the reservoir site to Los Angeles at the City's price in 1932.

The City immediately moved forward with its reservoir plans and the dam was completed in 1941, a 118 foot high earthfilled structure storing 183,000 acre feet of water. The reservoir was named Crowley Lake after Father Crowley, the "Desert Padre," who had been killed in an automobile accident earlier.

Fred Eaton had formed the Eaton Land and Cattle Co. and Jim Cline was his foreman. Rickey's Long Valley headquarters became the headquarters for Eaton's operations. Lester Cline, Jim Cline's son, worked for the ranch and Lester's wife, Vada, cooked for the cowboys on the drives. The Rincon Barn and corrals above McGee Creek were the site of many Long Valley round-ups.

W.D. Longyear, a banker in Los Angeles, purchased the Rawson ranch in Bishop from Jim and Frank Butler, a Long Valley Ranch in 1916, from George Turner, and another portion from Frank Butler. The Longyear Ranch was on the Owens River north of Hot Creek and Crowley Lake. Wallace Partridge, an Owens Valley pioneer, ran the ranches. They drove the cattle to the Long Valley Ranch from the Owens Valley each summer along the Rickey Trail, taking five or six days. The ranch was sold to Webb and Sneider Land Company and subsequently to Mark John of Bakersfield.

Partridge worked to develop better meadows and grasslands. The sagebrush had to be cleared, and the land washed with water to leach out the alkali before the grass would grow. Sagebrush leaves, when dry on the ground, form a toxic substance which inhibits other plants from growing and competing, as sagebrush is not very competitive otherwise. There were five main irrigation ditches and numerous spreader ditches dug in Long Valley, many developed by Rickey.

Layton Springs was named after Ivey Layton, a cowboy who worked for the Green Cattle Co., and the Eaton Ranch. He had his cow camp there. The first Benton Crossing bridge over the Owens River was near Layton Springs and is now under the waters of Crowley Lake. The Green Cattle Co. was located in Arizona, and summered cattle on the Eaton Ranch.

Charlie Summers purchased land from Whitmore and in 1917, the Wildasinn holdings, which included 160 acres of meadowland along Mammoth Creek. Charles Wildasinn had acquired the meadows for delinquent taxes in 1891. These lush meadows pastured cattle and later sheep when Summers sold this ranch to Frank Arcularius.

William Symons bought former Rickey ranch land in Long Valley from Fred Eaton. The land Eaton didn't sell to the City of Los Angeles was the north and northwest areas of Long Valley, and he sold 6,000 acres of this land to William Symons.



Out of the gate at Crowley Lake, with Laurel Mountain on the left, and snow-capped Mammoth Mountain, Mts. Banner, Ritter, and The Minarets in the background – 50 miles of 12,000' peaks along the crest of the Sierra Nevada.

Symons later sold 1,600 acres to Frank Arcularius, 1,800 acres to Dehy and Gus Cashbaugh, and in 1920, 2,600 acres to Frank Butler. John Dehy bought the 900 acre Hot Creek Ranch from Symons in 1919. Catherine Dehy, sister of John Dehy, later sold their Long Valley land to the Cashbaughs in 1960.

The Arcularius family were early settlers in the Owens Valley and William Arcularius purchased a Round Valley ranch in 1875. In 1919, they purchased their Long Valley ranch from William Symons. This land lies to the north of the Upper Owens River. They ran sheep and cattle on the meadows, and further developed the meadowland by leaching out the alkali salts and clearing sagebrush. A guest ranch fishing lodge was begun in the early 1920s along the river. The Mammoth Meadows ranch was purchased from Lloyd Summers, Charlie's son, and only recently sold for development into the Snow Creek Condominiums.

The Cashbaugh family were early settlers in the Bishop Area, ranching on former Frank Shaw ranch land. From the 1870s to the early 1900s they drove their cattle up into Coyote. In 1910, they drove cattle to summer pastures over Bishop Pass and Mono Pass, and

after the U.S. Forest Service was organized, they received Forest Service grazing permits to graze both areas. They purchased their 1,920 acre Hot Creek Ranch in Long Valley from William Symons in 1919.

There are major, well-used cattle, sheep and horse trails traversing the Owens Valley to Long Valley. The Dry Trail began at Five Bridges, crossed the volcanic tableland east and north of the Owens River gorge and continued on to Casa Diablo Mountain, Layton Springs and then dispersed to the various Long Valley ranches on the north side of the upper Owens River. The Rickey Trail began in the Owens Valley, went to Round Valley, then to Ainsley Meadow at the base of the Sherwin Hill for the first night's camp. The Trail then wound up to Swall Meadows, Sand Canyon, Rock Creek, Little Round Valley, Whiskey Creek and on to Hilton and McGee Creeks. The ranches on the south side of the Owens River used this trail. After Highway 395 was improved and more subdivisions constructed, the Rickey Trail became difficult to use, so most livestock drives used the Dry Trail.

The Cashbaughs called the Dry Trail, which they used, "the Old Dry Road." In 1875, the Cashbaugh

Ranch conducted its 100th cattle drive, with Wilfred Partridge, son of Wallace Partridge, as a cowboy. The drive trailed from their Hot Creek Ranch, to Layton Springs, Casa Diablo Mountain, and finally to winter pasture at the Lake Field on Highway 6, southwest of Laws, previously part of Frank Shaw's Owens Valley Ranch. The Rancho Samataguma Ranch held its last cattle drive over the Dry Trail in 1983.

Later lessees of Long Valley were: Green Cattle Co., Roy Mills, Emma and George Rhineackle (M brand), Alex Reeves, Les Stewart, and a Mrs. Simpson. Alex Reeves sold his lease to Les Stewart who later sold to Rancho Samataguma Ranches, owned by Mrs. Violet Spencer. George Brown was cattle boss for Reeves.

One by one, the Long Valley ranches were sold to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and leased back to ranchers without water rights, until most of the ranches in Long Valley are now owned by the City. Ironically, one of the few remaining ranches still in private property is the Indian ranch on Hot Creek. The City has continued to purchase all remaining private ranches.

Crowley Lake flooded wide green meadows, and sagebrush reclaimed some of its own. The ranch houses, barns, and many corrals in Long Valley soon disappeared as the DWP was not interested in being a landlord and maintaining the buildings. The log houses with their long verandas described by Dorothy Doyle are

gone but the grassy fields are still irrigated and tended by current Long Valley ranchers, providing summer grazing for thousands of cattle. Sheep flocks graze the brush covered lower slopes of the surrounding mountains. Visitors can still watch cowboys working cattle and view the pastoral scenes of today reflecting the unique heritage of the not so distant past.

These early pioneer settlers were vigorous, energetic, rugged, and courageous people. They were enterprising opportunists who took bold actions and through all their hardships endured and persevered. An inspiring legacy is left for us preserve their memories.

The great cattle drives no longer trail up and down the livestock trails between Long Valley and the Owens Valley. Ranchers now ship their livestock in huge livestock trucks. However, the mountain pack stations still trail their horse and mule remudas up and down the Dry Trail and the Rickey Trail as they have for many years. The hoots of the cowboys echo across the vast open valley to the high mountains above. The spring and fall horse drives are a glimpse into the past, when thousands of cattle, horses and mules made the twice yearly treks. *

Editor's note: More detailed stories can be found, in past volumes of THE ALBUM, concerning Mono Trails, Dog Town, Aurora and Bodie, the McGee, Frank Shaw, Summers, and Arcularius families, and George Brown.

Heading south on a cloudy autumn day, after a long summer of work,



AN OCEAN VIEW

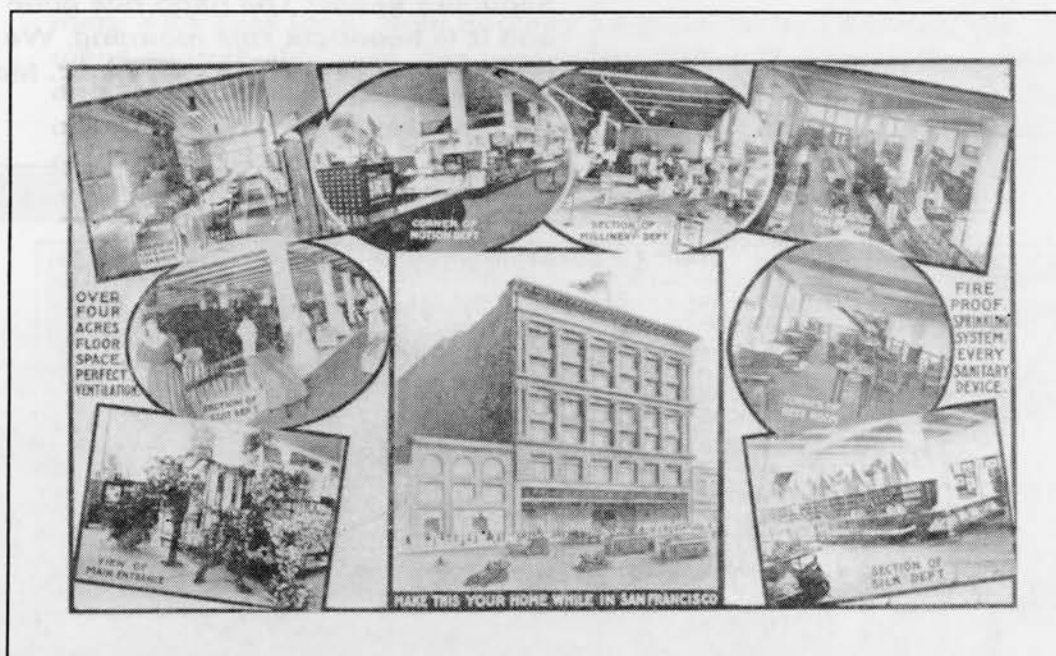
... from Big Pine

Special for THE ALBUM
from Willma Willis Gore

During 1955's spectacular March, my Aunt Clarice Tate Uhlmeier, lifelong Owens Valley resident, and I set out west of Bishop into Round Valley, to survey the lovely spring colors. When we came upon an incongruous street sign, "Ocean View," we laughed together that anyone in sight of the snow-crested granite waves rising in glorious dominance over the valley would so yearn for the seashore that he'd (she'd?) name a Valley street, "Ocean View."

The street sign reminded Clarice of the trip her mother and father, Esther and Thomas Tate of Big Pine made in 1908 to San Francisco to "see the ocean and the fleet."

Among the postcards found among family memorabilia is one sent to my mother, Elva Tate (Willis) from an unnamed San Francisco friend on April 23, 1908. It is a promotion from Hale Bros. Inc. San Francisco Department Store.



The printed message is titled: COME TO SAN FRANCISCO TO SEE THE FLEET. It reads: "We want you to bring your friends and make use of our store as your headquarters while you are here. Enjoy a restful hour in the comfortable chairs of our rest-room. Make use of our reading and writing rooms, branch post office, long-distance telephone, telegraph call service, information bureau, and our checking desk where parcels can be left free of charge. You will feel perfectly at home in our restaurant where dainty luncheons are served at moderate cost - the service and food are of the best. You have only to come to be welcome." On the picture side of the postcard are various views of the interior and exterior of Hale Bros.

Apparently Mother didn't mention the postcard's information about the fleet to her parents, but when her dad, Tom Tate, was in the Big Pine barber shop later that spring he heard for the first time about the arrival of the Pacific Fleet.

According to Clarice, her dad hurried home. "Get your duds together, Esther," he told his wife. "We're going to San Francisco to see the fleet."

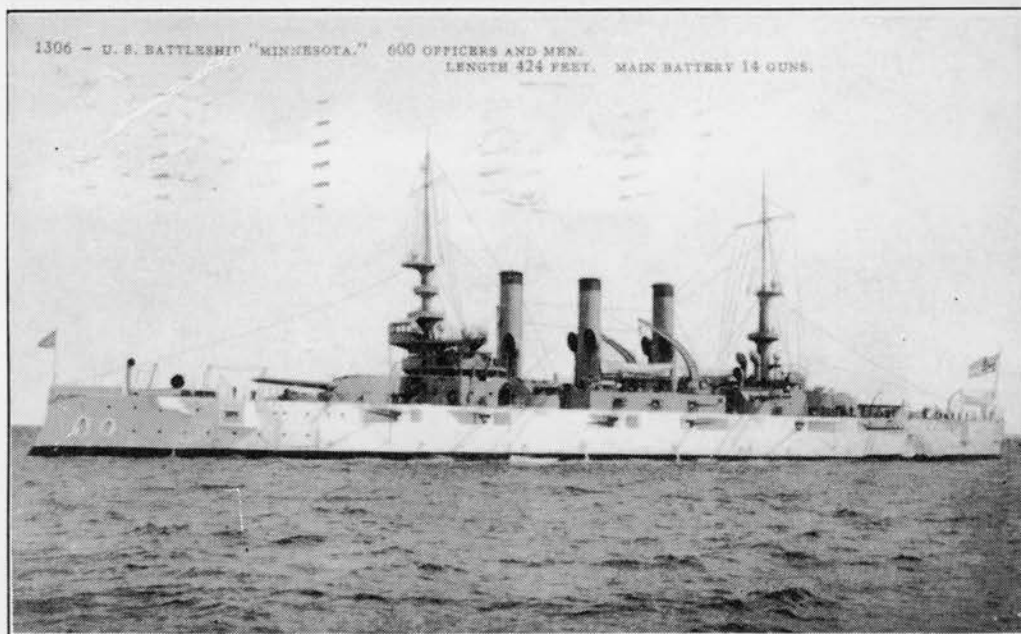
The trip was joined by other Big Pine couples as evidenced by references to various hometown folks on Esther's picture postcards, all mailed (one-cent postage each) to her children: Elva Tate (Willis) my mother, then 15 years old; Clarice Tate (Uhlmeier), 8; and their older brother Perl Tate, then in his 20s.

En route northward by train, Esther's postcard mailed on May 5, 1908 from Sodalville reads: The wind has gone down and it is beautiful this morning. We leave at noon. Had a fine sleep last night. Mother."

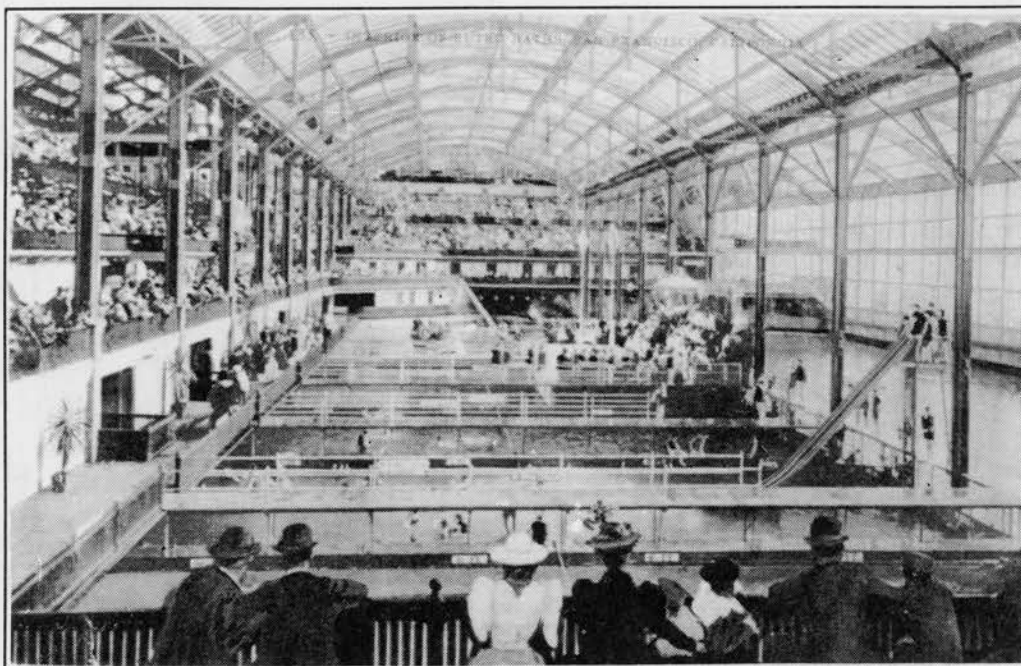


1009 Sunset at the Golden Gate, San Francisco Bay, California

Sunset at the Golden Gate. On May 8, Esther wrote: "We saw the Fleet from Telegraph Hill. It was fine. Saw a man go up in the clouds in a balloon and come down in a parachute. Saw a parade from the fire escape (of their hotel) with a lot of Big Pine people. Tell May (Smith) that Effie and Millard (May's son and daughter-in-law) were to see us. They are looking fine and we are going out as soon as we get time. Mother."



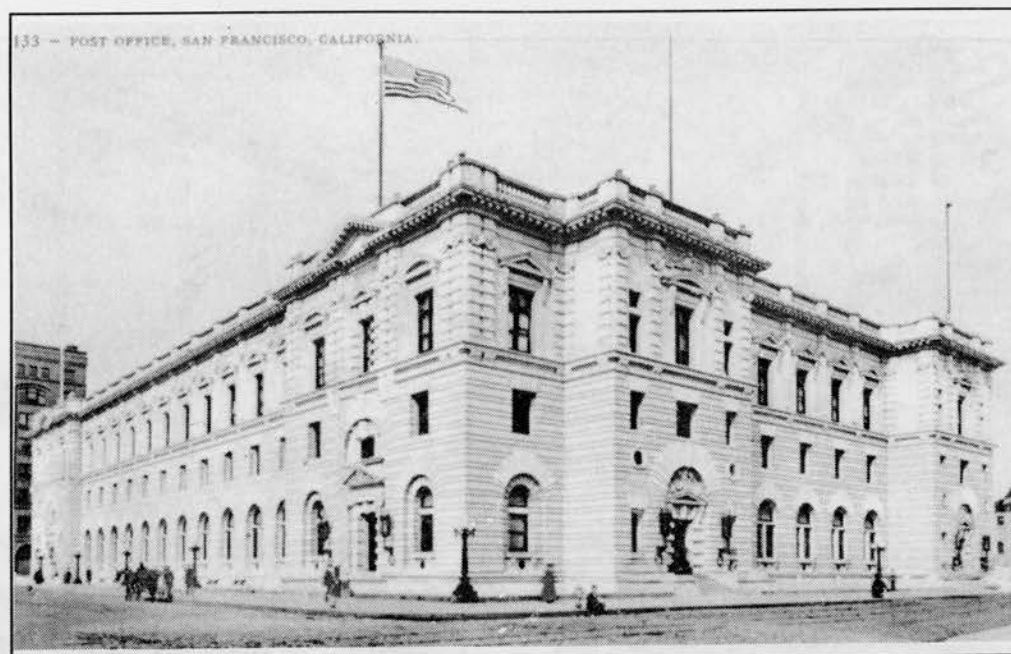
The May 9 card was sent from the Hotel Corona, 11 Taylor St. It pictures the U.S. Battleship Minnesota, 600 officers and men; 424 feet long, Main Battery 14 guns. Esther wrote: "We went aboard this war ship yesterday. Will & Florence Hines, Mr. and Mrs. Peterson (Annie and Arthur "Salty"), Roland (?), and ourselves. We went out on a large three-deck vessel and were gone several hours."



The May 12 card pictured a bath house. "We sat among these people you see and watched the bathers dive and slide into the water from that small platform. Irving (possibly Joseph) was with the bathers and we all went to the park together to listen to the music."



Waves of The Pacific, May 12, 1908. "It is bedtime and we have just got back from a show. We went in an auto. It was fine. We will go again tomorrow for a two hours' spin. A crowd of us got together so it doesn't cost much. We have changed our hotel. I bought a croquet set for you and Clarice. You will have lots of fun so get the ground ready. Mother."



Post Office, May 19, 1908 "Dear Elva, It is raining and has been cold enough for a coat, sometimes two. I had to get me long sleeved underclothes. This is a nice place to visit, but give me the clear sunshine. For me the fog spoils the view to a great extent. Martha sends her love to both you girls. Love from Mother."

210 - CHINESE WOMEN AT SUTRO HEIGHTS, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



Chinese Women at Sutro Heights. May 13, 1908. "Dear Perl, Annie & Arthur (Peterson) and Bob (possibly Logan) Left for home today and will tell you all the news. We are seeing everything we can think of. Lots of love from Mother."

1228 - CROCKER BUILDING AND CROCKER NATIONAL BANK, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL



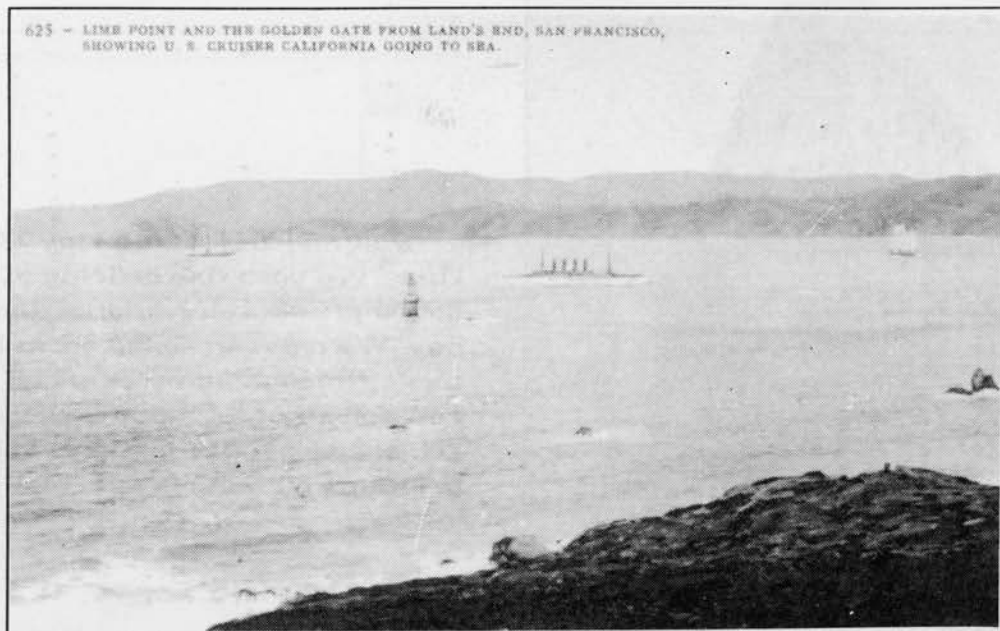
Still another dated May 13 goes to Elva: "We pass this building (Crocker Building/Crocker National Bank) every day. We were in China town last night; were through one store. The hand embroidery they have is very wonderful, several large pictures that look like paintings all done in silk. Mother"

246 - PARAPET AT SUTRO HEIGHTS, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

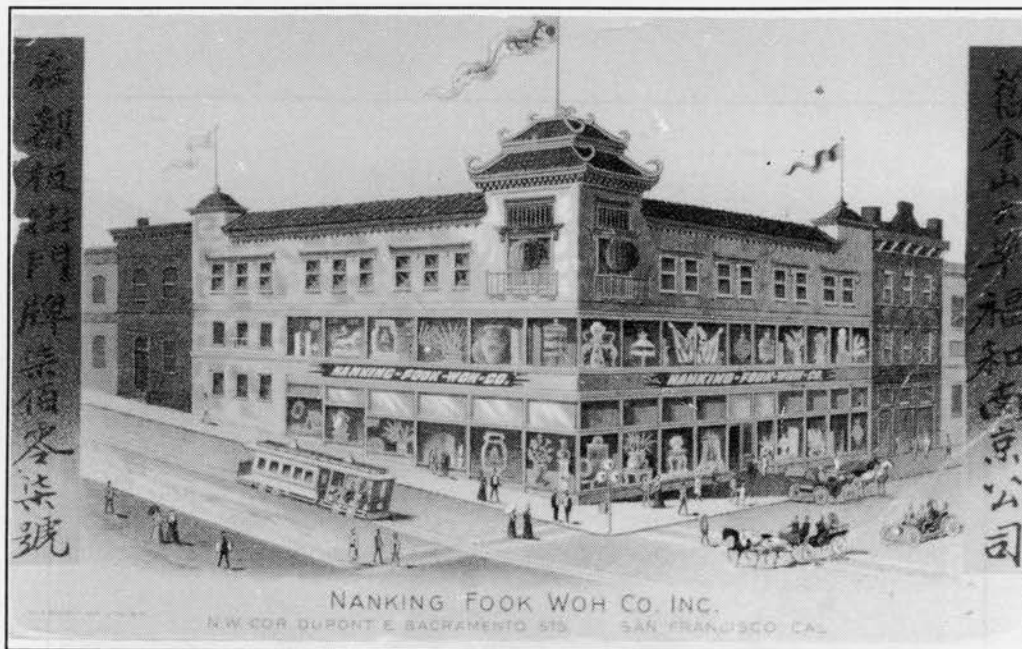


Parapet at Sutro Heights, May 14, 1908 "Dear Perl, Here is where we see over the grand old ocean. It is more beautiful than anything else. I could look at it all day and never tire if the wind would forget to blow. I don't see when they wear their summer clothes here. I wear my coat even in my room, sometimes, and had to get me long sleeved underwear. Mother."

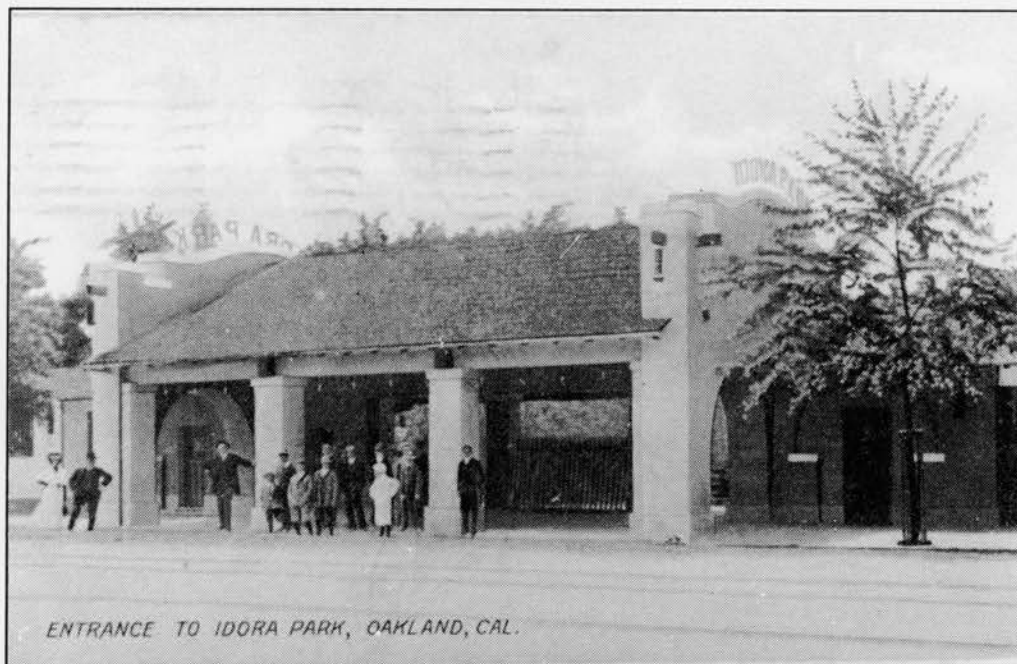
625 - LIME POINT AND THE GOLDEN GATE FROM LAND'S END, SAN FRANCISCO, SHOWING U. S. CRUISER CALIFORNIA GOING TO SEA.



Lime Point and Golden Gate from Land's End, May 14, 1908, "Dear Elva, I happened to see this card with the California on it so send it. The Right (Wright) boys were here to see us. They look fine. Roland went out to take the examinations (Navy) yesterday but backed out. He says he don't think he would like it. We will go to Oakland today and hunt up Ethel and the rest of the folks. (Ethel Price was a relative of Tom Tate) Love from Mother."



Nanking Fook Woh Co., Inc. Dupont & Sacramento Sts., S.F.
May 14, 1908 "dear Perl, This is where we saw some beautiful things made by hand. Their needle work and carved work can beat America's. No word from home yet. Mrs. Price wants to know if you are still as handsome as you used to be. Love from both of us, Mother & Father."



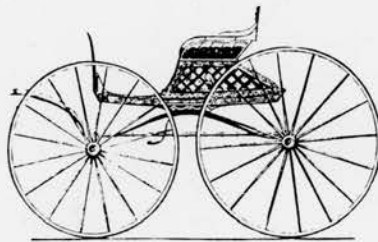
Entrance to Idora Park, Oakland, CA. Hotel. Hamilton, 504 15th Street San Pablo, Oakland. May 20, 1908 "Dear Elva, Have been to this park today then came back and had four teeth pulled. I am glad I waited to come here. Dr. Jarvis is doing the work and he is all right. Will have the rest out tomorrow. Love from Mother."



Cliff House and Seal Rocks. Undated. "Dear Children. I wish we're going home today for I am getting homesick, but we can't leave for a few days. Love to all, Mother," *



Editor's Note: Although we have shown these postcards in black and white, they are beautifully colored. Willma Gore has her mother's lifetime collection of old postcards, and will bring more pictures and stories to future ALBUMS.



THE ALBUM
Times and Tales of Inyo-Mono