

## **Rose Valley**

Rose Valley is located in Inyo County between Owens Valley on the north (south of Olancho), and Indian Wells Valley on the south (north of Nine Mile Canyon)

In 1864 territory from Mono and Tulare Counties had been set aside to be later called Coso County. This did not materialize, so in 1866 it was organized and became Inyo County, making Independence the County Seat.

Inyo County is the second largest county in California, yet with less population than many smaller counties. The name Inyo according to W. A. Chalfant is the Indian word meaning "dwelling place of the Great Spirit"

To the west of Rose Valley is the southern end of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, east are the Coso and Argus Mountain Ranges. Sierra is derived from the Spanish language meaning, "saw-tooth mountain", and Nevada is also from the Spanish language meaning, "snow covered"

The south end of Rose Valley is the narrow end of a large funnel, with it becoming larger the further north you go, causing a pressure area which pushes the rain clouds up over the mountain ranges, giving us the arid valley

Between the years 1861 and 1971 many changes have taken place. With the entrance of white man into the valley came the birth of several communities.

The only remaining community today in Rose Valley is Little Lake, 22 miles north of Inyokern and 50 miles south of Lone Pine. There is camping and fishing at Little Lake Ranch, food and lodging at Little Lake Hotel, also a post office, and service station to serve the people.

This community is a welcome place to many travelers today as it was in the past, giving them a chance to rest before going on their way or spending the night.

Little Lake has played its part in past history. With many springs in the area it was a watering place for Indians and early prospectors.

In 1873 Remi Nadeau built a way station here to water and feed his teams on his route to Los Angeles. Stage coaches, cattle drovers, weary horse travelers all stopped here for a rest and a cooling drink of water

Before the entrance of white man in the valley it provided food and shelter for the Indian. It has been proven the Indian was here 3000 plus years ago.

It was on the Little Lake Ranch that Willy Stahl first found the site of Pinto Man. In 1948 under the direction of Doctor Mark Harrington of Southwest Museum the site was excavated and found to contain many stone artifacts. The site was named Stahl Site after the discoverer

The findings at this site gave man a great insight into the culture of these people and some idea how this valley looked.

It was found this valley once hosted green fertile land, many trees and flowing streams, and much wild game.

The Owens River, at one time in history, flowed from the north over what is now called Upper Fossil Falls (located east of the red cinder cone mountain on the Little Lake Ranch), continuing along the lava cliffs through the now present lake onto the lower valley. At the top of the falls along what was once the edge of the river you can see the remains of Indian house rings. Looking closely you will find grinding holes in the lava rocks. Very few chips or artifacts are found here. I'm sure this is due to flood waters washing them down over the falls onto the lower falls and out into the valley

With the passing of time (thousands of years) many earthly and atmospheric changes have taken place, giving us the arid valley of today. These changes bring us to the Indians of the valley before the entrance of white man, Indians of the Shoshone Culture, the Piute.

The Piute weaver of this and the surrounding areas were known to be outstanding in their basket making. Their weaving was finely woven with intricate designs.

Many desert plants and trees in the mountains provided much of their food, pine nuts, acorns, mesquite bean, chia, wild grain, and squaw tea to name a few. There must have been many many more unknown to white man.

Fresh meat was provided by the hunters, rabbit, deer, bear, or any wild game available.

Many plants of the desert were used for medication. One story told to me, about the treatment of a white man, I feel is well worth repeating. At this point. It seems that one of Little Lake's residents had a sore on the top of his hand and one of the doctors had classified it as skin cancer. An Indian man told this man he could cure the sore. Feeling he had nothing to lose he let the Indian try. The Indian went out in search of the plants he would need. The basic plant was called squaw root, the other things added were not made known. After grinding these items together he placed it upon the sore then wrapped it with a rag, told the man not to take it off and he would be back in a week. This was in the early 1900's. The Indian man returned in a week, removed the dressing, took a knife and loosened the edges of the sore and when he lifted the scab it came off in the shape of an octopus. The area healed leaving a small scar.

Climbing over the lava cliffs and walking through the sandy desert it is possible to find signs of Indian camp sites long forgotten. Obsidian flakes, beads, and grinding stones are all indications of a camp. If you are lucky you may find an arrow point or two.

Scattered among the rocks along the old river bed and lake are many pictographs and petroglyphs, some extend up the cliffs so high they are out of sight unless you desire to climb up, others have been covered by the rising waters and sand.

My husband Eddie, an amateur archaeologist, has quite a large collection of artifacts from this and surrounding areas. Included in his collection are artifacts from southern California to

northern California. He has arrow points, shell, stone, bone beads, also Russian and French trade beads. In his wandering he has found old cavalry buttons, an undated coin, and other items yet unidentified. I feel it is one of the best private collections around. Eddie is always willing to show his collection to anyone interested. Many youth groups have been to see it and he lets the children hold and feel some of the objects. This seems to give the children a deeper feeling and understanding of the past.

The first explorers and prospectors in the valley found the Indians to be friendly in nature. It was not until the cattlemen arrived that real hostility began. The Indian in fear of starvation due to the cattle feeding on their seed land and the shooting of the wild game, white man needing grazing land for his cattle, neither trusting the other, murder and hostility started. The U S Cavalry was called into the area to help to establish peace in the latter half of 1860, from Fort Teyon.

Trouble continued for another year and a half before the first peace treaty could be signed between the cattlemen and the Indians, this taking place on January 31, 1862, at the San Francis Ranch, in Bishop, California.

Peace was not quick in coming, there were several chiefs of small groups who had not signed the treaty and did not feel they were compelled to honor it. Trouble still continued in some areas but to a lesser degree.

On July 4, 1862, Colonel Evans with a troop of 200 men arrived at Independence to establish a fort to help maintain peace. (Fort Independence)

One act of hostility which took place in Rose Valley in 1864, to me shows a barbaric action of both white men and Indians. Mr and Mrs. McGuire had a way station along with grazing 10,000 head of cattle on 1,000 acres at Haiwee Meadow (now Haiwee Reservoir). Mr McGuire had to be gone for awhile and when he returned he found the renegade Indians had set fire to his house and had killed his wife and small son. (Haiwee is the Indian word for dove).

Some of the men from Lone Pine hearing of this, banded together and took it upon themselves to retaliate, not waiting to make sure the Indians wanted were in the Indian camp at Owens Lake, they wiped out all of the camp except for a couple of small children. By 1866 the valleys were said to be safe from Indian hostility, but the troop of cavalry stayed on at Fort Independence until 1877

In 1870 with mining of more and more ore from the Cerro Gordo mines, the silver bars were beginning to stack up faster than they could be taken from the camps.

Remi Nadeau, whom I mentioned earlier, took over, organized and operated the Cerro Gordo Freighting Lines from Owens Valley through Olancha, Little Lake, Freeman Junction, Mojave and on to Los Angeles. He built way stations and feeding barns every twenty miles along the route. Twenty miles was a full day's trip between stations. A round trip to Los Angeles took three weeks or more. This route was called the Midland Trail, now Highway 395 (Editor's note the Midland Trail ran parallel to and west of Highway 14 through most of the Indian Wells Valley to the highway's intersection with Highway 395 At this point it again veered to the west and north until reaching Grapevine Canyon south of Little Lake.)

Lawlessness and silver brought many bandits to the area, one of the most infamous bandits was Tiburcio Vasquez and his gang of desperadoes. He was one of the most feared of all outlaws in southern California. After he was caught and executed on March 19, 1875, what was left of his gang led by man called Chavez committed several robberies, one of them being at Little Lake Station in 1875

With the closing of the mines, there became less need for a freight line, so by 1881 the freighting service came to a close.

Private stage lines, weary travelers, and cattle drovers continued to pass over the Midland Trail, stopping at Little Lake for a rest before moving on to the next stage stop, perhaps the same stations Nadeau built.

Little Lake was homesteaded on October 18, 1898, by Charles W Wittock. Mr Whittock operated a store, cafe, and had a small post office to serve the people, in a thick adobe walled building. To the north of the adobe was a saloon, to help wash the dust from the throats of the cowboys, travelers, and other workers in the area.

On December 12, 1908, Mr Wittock sold the easement to the Nevada-California Railroad.

Mr Shuttock purchased the land from Mr Whittock on April 15, 1910, and continued in the same line of business.

Mr William W Bramlette bought the land from Mr Shuttock on November 2, 1915 Mr Bramlette, a very ambitious man, immediately started to put in new buildings and improvements. He first built a new store, then a garage and a new hotel, along with many other buildings used for various purposes.

The Little Lake land was sold by the Bramlette family in 1952, and since that time there have been numerous owners.

In 1908 the Southern Pacific Railroad began to lay rails from Mojave to "Siding 16", now Inyokern, then to "Siding 17" later called Leliter, on to "Siding 18", known as Brown, then continuing to Little Lake in 1909

The inducement for the Southern Pacific to bring the rail from Mojave to Indian Wells Valley, Rose Valley, and then continuing on to the Owens Valley was the proposed construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct.

With the railroad completed as far as Siding Sixteen, families began arriving to work on the railroad and the Aqueduct construction, or to farm.

Supply and demand brought into being Inyokern, Leliter and Brown. It also expanded the business of Little Lake. Many families took out homesteads, planning their future in raising cattle, farming, or developing a business for tourists.

Many people living in the valley today are children and grandchildren of these hard working men and women, the true pioneers of our valleys.

After the completion of the Railroad and the Los Angeles Aqueduct, many people followed other jobs, but many remained to carry on here in the valleys. This decline in population also brought a decline in the business portions of the communities. By 1951 Leliter and Brown were truly ghost towns, and today all that may be seen to show where once had stood are a few foundations and bared ground.

The people from Brown and Leliter moved to Inyokern and Little Lake, enlarging these two communities. These two communities are the only two remaining of the original populated areas in the early 1900's.

In the 1900's pack stations continued to be a retreat for the city dwellers, with camping and fishing giving them relaxation from the fast pace of city living. Little Lake, Thelan, Cowan, and Sam Lewis pack stations were a few along the old Midland Trail road.