



Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Vol. 24 No. 7

September 2009

Come Get 'Glimpses of Early Inyokern'

In honor of Inyokern and its gala centennial celebration this month, we will feature a presentation by Liz Babcock entitled "Glimpses of Early Inyokern." The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Historic USO Building.

Liz is an HSUMD boardmember, our newsletter editor, the Maturango Museum's history curator and the author of "Magnificent Mavericks," Vol. 3 of China Lake's history, a book covering the years 1948-58. Her part-time jobs at the *News Review* and the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce have also involved some rubbing of shoulders with those planning the upcoming celebration.

Because she is planning an exhibit at the Maturango Museum in honor of Inyokern's special anniversary, she has been collecting photographs for the exhibit. "It occurred to me that people might enjoy an evening of looking at a slideshow of these photos and reminiscing about their memories of Inyokern in the early days," she said.

Pat Farris, *News Review* publisher and a member of the "Inyokern — 100 Years Under the Sun" committee, will also share some of her recollections and speak briefly about what's planned for the Sept. 25-26 centennial celebration.

HSUMD meets on the third Tuesday of each month, and the public is welcome to attend. For more information on this or future meetings, call Society President Bruce Wertenberger at 375-2369.



From left, Ruth, Esther, and Marion Hansen hold grapes grown on their Inyokern Ranch, circa 1925. This and many other charming old photos will be in Liz Babcock's slide show at our September meeting.

Vivian (Hansen) Van Devender collection, courtesy Pat Farris



Events of the Centennial Celebration

Friday, Sept. 25, 5:30 p.m.

Kickoff dinner featuring
Claudean Ives McAlexander
Torres Steakhouse

Saturday, Sept. 26

- Pancake breakfast ☀ Stagecoach rides ☀ Antique autos
- Parade, 11 a.m., from the post office on Locust along Third Street to the end ☀ Cheerleaders' dunk tank
- ☀ Cookies & Conversation all day in Town Hall ☀
- ☀ BBQ, Bobby Daniels' place, Third Street, noon-10 p.m. ☀
- Dining and dancing – Joe Walla Band

Next Field Trip — In the Works

No field trip news as of publication time, but Jim Kenney is working on a date and place for the next great desert adventure. To learn more, please call him at 760-371-2458.

President's Message – HSUMD's Summer Activities



I hope that all of you had a good summer.

Everything is going along fairly well with the Historical Society, although we certainly could use more rentals to help pay our historic USO building expenses.

This past July the Ridgecrest Community Theatre Troupe put on a series of one-act plays to a sold-out audience. We expect more plays from the group later this year.

Carol Porter is making headway with recording our accessions and related work. When you patronize the newly-opened Pizza Factory on Triangle Drive, you will see copies of some of the historic pictures in our collection. Carol worked with Accessions Chair Mike Leming to come up with a policy for providing the pictures — then Carol made it happen.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an article on the upcoming "Yard Sale." If you have any goodies to donate, please call Kathy Armstrong at 375-2643.

— Bruce Wertenberger



Sister Cities members from both Ridgecrest and Tepatitlan — including Miss Tepatitlan — cluster around Ridgecrest's Sister City sign.
Photo by Roger Brower

USO Bldg. To Welcome Sister City Event

The Ridgecrest/Tepatitlan Sister Cities Organization will hold a fund-raiser for HSUMD at the Historic USO Building on Thursday, Oct. 1. You'll want to attend!

The festivities will start at 6:30 p.m. and will feature entertainment and dancing and a few special visitors from Tepatitlan. The admission of \$5 will be donated to HSUMD.

BOUGHT YOUR BRICK YET?

We'll soon be installing more inscribed bricks in front of the USO Building — but there's still a lot of room for more!

You can honor a friend or relative and help the USO Building restoration effort by buying a 4- x 8-inch brick for \$100 or an 8- x 8-inch brick for \$250.

The 4x8 brick has space for three lines, with 21 characters per line, and the 8x8 brick has space for six lines, 21 characters per line (and do be sure to count a space between words as one of those characters).

Our treasurer, Andrew Sound, would be happy to help you figure out the spacing or answer any other questions you may have about the bricks — see his contact information on the back page.

Goffs Acquires Shady Myrick Collection

In news involving two familiar people — John Lightburn and Dennis Casebier, both of whom have spoken at recent HSUMD meetings — John has moved the Shady Myrick collection to the Mojave Desert Heritage & Cultural Association facility managed by Dennis in historic Goffs Schoolhouse.

The collection includes hundreds of rock and gemstone specimens and an extensive library of photographs taken of Shady and his family during the 1930s on what is now Mojave B Range.

Congratulations to both John and Dennis — the collection appears to have found an excellent home.



PATRIOTIC FUNDRAISERS

Kathy Armstrong and members of her Fundraising Committee watch as the Parade of 1000 flags streams by the USO Building last Saturday, Sept. 5. Kathy and her helpers kept the building open so the patriotic marchers and parade watchers could visit before and after the parade.

The committee will be at the building again this Friday, Sept. 11, to accept your donations for our big biannual yard sale and silent auction. And do come back on Saturday and/or Sunday to make your purchases.

See details in the article below.

*Photo by Liz Babcock
(yes, carrying a flag too)*

★ Yard Sale & Silent Auction ★ Historic USO Building ★

Two HSUMD activities very much need your participation this month. First, Kathy Armstrong, chair of the Fundraising Committee, and her marvellous helpers will be at the USO Building this Friday, Sept. 11, between the hours of 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. to accept your donations of gently used treasures for the yard sale that will take place over the following two days.

Please do remember to ask for a receipt — since this is a nonprofit effort, all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent the law allows.

On Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 12 and 13, the building again will be

open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at which time you'll be able to purchase a variety of beautiful, valuable and useful items — all to benefit the USO Building renovation efforts! For more info, call Kathy at 375-2643.

Next Month Only — Different Meeting Place

Preparations for the Community Light Opera and Theatre Association's Haunted House — an elaborate presentation you're sure to enjoy — will be going on in the USO Building next month, so for that month only, our regular meeting will take place at the Maturango Museum — usual date and time.

USO Giftshop Needs Your Help!

A tip of the HSUMD cap to Giftshop Coordinator Chris Cane-Prosser and her helpers!

Want to get your cap for that purpose, to keep the sun off your eyes in style or to let people know you're proud of our Society? Our new cap and matching polo shirt also make great souvenirs of our town. These and other items are available in our giftshop, which will be open during our September meeting. It's not too early to shop there for Christmas gifts!

Chris is also looking for public-spirited people to contribute a few hours to work in the shop and welcome visitors to the building. "Unless we get some more volunteers, we will only be open for events," she said.

Please let her know you can help by calling 793-0741 or e-mailing christinecane@msn.com.



Fondest Memories of Inyokern, 1910

In honor of the centennial of Inyokern, being celebrated this month on Sept. 25–26, we offer this glimpse of what life was like as homesteaders began moving into our valley and laboriously breaking ground to establish their claims. Below are excerpts from Iral J. Roller's writings as published by his son, Ralph P. Edwards in around 1970. This document and the photographs illustrating it are in the collection of the Maturango Museum, and we are indebted to the museum for permission to publish them. — ed.

In 1910 the Owens River Aqueduct was just being finished, bringing water to Los Angeles from the High Sierras up in Inyo and Mono Counties. To supply this construction, a railroad had been built from Mojave north connecting with the narrow gauge at Owens Lake. This rail line gave access to the Mojave Desert area that, up to this time, had been served only by horse drawn stage.

Quite a number of Pomona people, my father included, became interested enough to make the trip and pay a locator twenty-five cents per acre to furnish him with a description of land he had selected to file on. Returning from his rather interesting trip to Independence where the United States Land Office was then located, he informed me that he had filed on land near Inyokern and if I were interested, I could prove up on it.

I decided on attempting the hot, disagreeable part first. It was required that water be developed within three years to irrigate the land filed on, but only one-eighth of my 160 acres would actually have to be cleared and farmed. I would clear 20 acres of the greasewood and brush for my first year's requirement. We purchased an old buggy and a fairly sound horse. When college was out I left Pomona the last day of June, fed my horse at noon in the Monrovia Livery Stable. . . . Reaching Burbank at nightfall, I camped off the San Fernando Road under a tree.

There were just occasional road signs 60 years ago and the pavement ended near San Fernando. In preparation for the journey, I had written down the watering places and directions given to me by Harry Joos who



“Going out to break greasewood” are Iral Roller (at left on the wagon) and Ralph Berry, “the very congenial person I lived and worked with, summer 1910 Just starting out teams and rakes to one of the claims. During the noon hour while the animals were being fed from the wagon, I would crawl beneath in the cool shade and fall asleep with a wet bandanna over my face in the 110 degree heat,” said Iral.

had made the trip by team and wagon the year previous. . . . No air mattress in 1910, but the ground was not quite so hard the second night. . . . [Mr. Roller then recounts adventures along the road. We take the narrative up again on the fifth day of his trip.]

This morning I tied the water bag and some things on the buggy seat beside me in a sort of crowded fashion so there would be no room, just in case some character wanted a ride. The road up the stream bed in Red Rock Canyon was too wet and soft. I was directed to go over the ridge through Jawbone Canyon. At the fork in the road, an old weathered sign toppled over by the wind had been carefully propped between two rocks pointing the right way for me to go. A few hours jogging in the cool morning

air took me over the Jawbone grade past Dove Springs to the little store at Ricardo, near the north end of Red Rock Canyon.

The next water was Freeman, at the easterly entrance of the pass named for Captain Walker. He was one of the officers in Fremont's expedition making its way to Fort Independence during the Indian troubles in 1867. Freeman was once an important stop for stages to Mojave or those going through the Kern River area to Bakersfield. Searls [sic] Borax teams from near Death Valley also came this way. I paid fifteen cents for allowing my horse to drink at the long watering trough. While he rested, I sat under the arbor with the station keeper. He told me of old Raymond who once kept the place and how he made music by blowing a

Our Business Members — *please patronize them!*

Welcome to our newest business member — **Cal-Sun Pools.**

Allen County Public Library,
Genealogy Department
AltaOne Federal Credit Union
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor
Baxendale's Antiques
BevLen Haus – Bed & Breakfast
DeathValley.com
The Flower Shoppe
TJ Frisbee Bicycles, Inc.
George Import Service

H & R Block
L. R. Haugen, Realtor
High Sierra Auto & Truck
Phyllis M. Hix, Attorney
Hockett's Building Supply
IWV Insurance
JRP Historical Consulting
Dick Lewis Domestic Water Systems
Jack & Dana Lyons, Realtors
Netzer-Russell Consulting, LLC
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The News Review (Farris)
The Pleistocene Foundation
Kenneth G. Pritchard, Attorney
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Sierra Odyssey, LLC
Sierra Wave Tank Sales
Southern Sierra Medical Clinic
Spectrum Graphics
Gary P. Staab & Assoc., Inc.
The Swap Sheet

Inyokern —

From p. 4

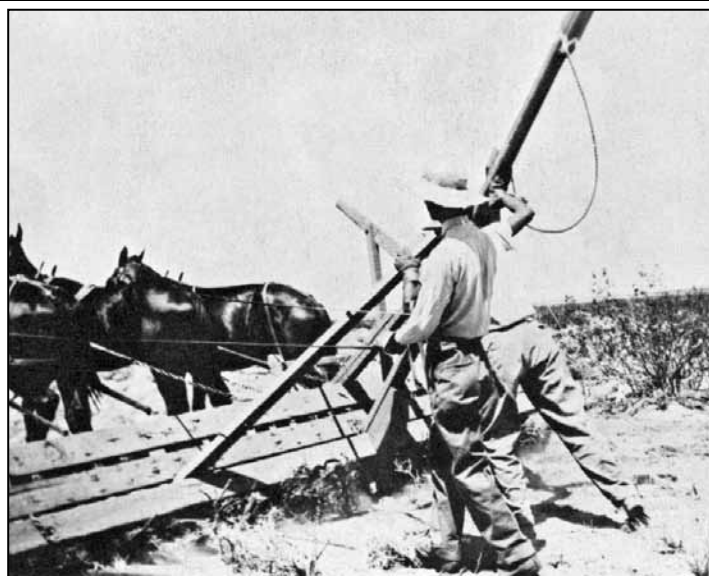
trumpet to make his pet coyotes howl. He pointed out the huge Robbers Rock up the north side of the pass where the bandits hid to come down and rob the stages.

I drove out onto the ungraded county road again that takes you north to Bishop. Now I could look east twenty miles across the floor of Indian Wells Valley with its friendly hills and the Paniment [sic] mountains far beyond. To the northeast was the white alkali sink they called "China Lake." Chinese had once dredged there for gold.

The remainder of the valley was covered with greasewood still green from the three inch winter rainfall. Twenty acre square clearings were occurring at irregular intervals here and there over valley floor giving the area sort of a checkerboard effect. In a day or so I would begin clearing one more; here I would spend my summer, then drive back over the one hundred and fifty miles in time for school in September.

Here the continuous narrative ends, but Roller provides additional text to illustrate several photographs. He mentions that he moved back to Inyokern in 1912 to live on the land and that he remained there for the following five years. More of these photos will be shown at the September meeting.

Berry and Roller guide a heavy rake across the desert, 1910. "The rake was devised so the teeth, made of two-by-fours sharpened and nailed closely enough together, would catch the smaller tufts of brush and pull them out and also gather up the other loose brush as it went along."



Roller's dad and several friends stand ready to move Iral's little house to his Inyokern homestead, September 1912. From left are J. Roller, Mr. Roe, Harry Coffan, and George Roe. Iral Roller had built the 12- by 14-foot house during

the summer of 1910. Having a structure on the property was required by the homesteading laws. Cramped as it was, he lived in it for five years.

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**You could be seeing this
newsletter in color!**

Check out our website, www.maturango.org/Hist.html, for an archive of our newsletters. Thanks to our gracious webmistress, all the recent issues are included in the archive as color PDFs.

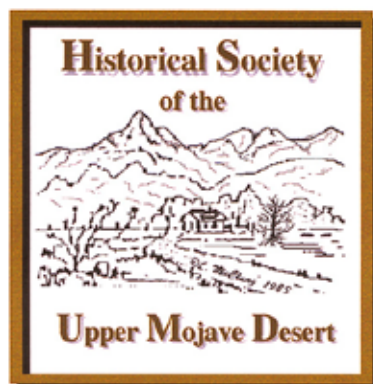
Important Reminders

- ★ Annual dues are \$20 per family for the calendar year.
- ★ Business Member dues are \$30 for the calendar year.
- ★ Please remember the Historical Society in your wills, trusts and other gift giving. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

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SEPTEMBER 2009 MEETING

Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2009, 7:30 p.m., Historic USO Building