



JUNE, 1955

LOS ANGELES CORRAL

PUBLICATION 30



*Yours - without apology -
The Bookbinder.*

IDAH MEACHAM STROBRIDGE, 1855-1932

THE BRANDING IRON

OF THE LOS ANGELES CORRAL OF
THE WESTERNERS

Published Quarterly in
March, June, September and December

OFFICERS — 1955

LORING CAMPBELL Sheriff
232 South 6th St., Burbank, Calif.

JAMES F. GARDINER Deputy Sheriff
14925 Ramos Pl., Pacific Palisades, Calif.

DAN GANN Registrar of Marks & Brands
1466 North Kings Rd., Hollywood 46, Calif.

GLEN DAWSON Asst. Registrar
141 Anita Drive, Pasadena 2, Calif.

HENRY H. CLIFFORD Representative
639 South Spring St., Los Angeles 14, Calif.

HOMER H. BOELTER Deputy Sheriff
in Charge of Branding
828 North La Brea, Hollywood 38, Calif.

BERT H. OLSON Keeper of the Chips
619 North Rexford Dr., Beverly Hills, Calif.

LONNIE HULL Daguerreotype Wrangler

DAN BRYANT Wranglers

GORDON BOELTER Wranglers

PHIL LOOMIS Wranglers

Address Material for Publication to

The Roundup Foreman

DON MEADOWS

640 Terraine Avenue, Long Beach 14, Calif.

CHARLES N. RUDKIN Asst. Roundup Foreman
1490 Lorain Rd., San Marino 9, Calif.

CORBIN'S ADVICE

by CYRUS B. CONDRA

"I am a hunter by birth, a veritable nimrod from away back . . ." wrote Ben Corbin, Boss Wolf Hunter of the Dakotas, in the preface to his *Corbin's Advice, or the Wolf Hunter's Guide*, 76 pp., cloth, Bismarck, No. Dakota, 1900. Published at 50c and now virtually unknown, this little volume was written by a frontier hunter who without doubt killed and collected bounties on more wolves than any man before him, or probably since. Corbin was born in Virginia and hunting was his life.

"My father hunted redskins with Daniel Boone and counted the notches on his gun-barrel, a notch for every scalp, fourteen in all. Hearing father tell about making money catching wolf and bear, and crawling under rocks after them, and shooting them, and tying a hickory withe around their necks, and have two men pull him out while he hauled the bear or wolf out, too, it encouraged me to go into the business."

Corbin followed the frontier west and moved to Emmons County, North Dakota in 1883. Unfortunately the state paid only two dollars for old wolves and one dollar for cubs (50% discount for cash) while other states paid five, ten and even fifteen dollars. Corbin counted it "a poor day if I don't average four to seven," and wanted the bounties raised.

"At Long Lake Creek I shot an old wolf fifteen times before I killed her. The bank fell in behind me, and it was all I could do to dig out, yet our county commissioners want me to kill wolves for \$1 or \$2 a head and run the risk of being eaten alive. If they read my book through, they will change their tune."

Supported by stockmen, Corbin campaigned to make wolf killing profitable. In 1899 North Dakota contained 266,000 sheep and 343,000 wolves. "Put a bounty of \$5 or even \$10 on old wolves, and shut off the wolf supply factory," he urged. The problem was serious; 171,000 female wolves would each produce six or seven cubs that year, to feed on mutton, veal and poultry at the farmer's expense.

Corbin, sixty-five years old, colorful and armed with a grievance, wrote and spoke to editors, county commissioners and even addressed the state legislature. He met opposition. The fight grew warm and then hot. Into a melee of curses, shrieks and threats of lawsuit he finally fired his major broadside, "*Corbin's Advice*, like a cannon load of scrap iron. The most fabulous hodgepodge of frontier reminiscences, wolf-lore, newspaper excerpts, jokes, doggerel and statistics ever lumped together and issued in the holy cause of making a fast buck, it even contains the Gettysburg Address. But, it was solid. After 55 years it still stands as an authentic and worthwhile record of a serious frontier problem; the costly depredations of the parasitic and uncurbed varmints. *cont'd. page 4*

The West Isn't Dead

After drifting with Westerners from many corrals and looking over the stock that carries the Steerhead brand it becomes evident that the West isn't dead. It has just entered a different period of activity. The modern Westerner is as aggressive and colorful as any Old Timer. He just travels a wider range and rides a different horse. All Westerners are not with the Steerhead outfit, but all ride herd on the same material. Some riders are top hands with clear eyes, quiet understanding and deadly sincerity; others are brush-busters who fill themselves with mental bug-juice and shoot up the country with irresponsible abandon. But all are a part of a living West. They all round up the raw Americana and turn it into consumer goods. Today more people absorb the products of the West than ever before. The modern Westerner is responsible. He cuts out the good stock, runs down the strays, opens the water holes, and pushes back the frontier. He roams in far places looking for good feeding ground. Sometimes he gets lost. So, the West isn't dead. It is still an open country for those who are willing to face it.

—DON MEADOWS

A SAGEBRUSH WESTERNER

by EDWIN H. CARPENTER, JR.

Idah Meacham Strobridge, 1855-1932

Several years ago a movie poked some fun at the men who always took off their hats when The Old West was mentioned. There is also a group of *aficionados* who think of the desert with a capital D. The best-known literary representative of this view is Mary Austin, but apparently the first writer to attempt to convey the feeling of The Desert was Idah Meacham Strobridge, born just a century ago.

Humboldt, Nevada, at the turn of the century was not the place one would look for a center of arts and crafts or literature, but there, in the attic of a ranch house, was the Artemisia Bindery, a non-commercial shop in which Mrs. Strobridge, after the tasks of running the house and the ranch and a nearby gold mine, did bookbinding and other handicrafts and wrote short stories which she sent off to *The Land of Sunshine* in Los Angeles. Charles F. Lummis, its editor, was proud of this contributor, and wrote an article about her frontier bindery and her work in his issue of January, 1901.

She came of a California pioneer background. Her father, George Washington Meacham, had been in California in the '50s—he is said to have built the first Protestant church in California—in Nevada in the '50s, and later in California again, living in both Oakland and Los Angeles. He married Phebe Craiger, and their daughter, who was born in the Moraga Valley on June 9, 1855, later combined her father's first name and her mother's maiden name to form a pseudonym, George W. Craiger.

Idah Meacham attended Mills Seminary in Oakland, and in 1884 married Samuel H. Strobridge. Three sons were born to the couple, but all died in infancy, and their father died after only four years of married life; thus during the most active part of her career Mrs. Strobridge was a childless widow.

When she first appeared on the scene as an artisan and writer it was in Nevada, as has been mentioned, but soon she moved to Los Angeles. Perhaps Lummis would not have written so enthusiastically about her if he had known that shortly she would build a house three or four blocks from his and engage in a rivalry to capture visiting "lions." The house Mrs. Strobridge built on the edge of the Arroyo Seco—at 231 East Avenue 41—is still standing, though it has been cut up into apartments. It is U-shaped, with a huge sycamore in the courtyard, and had a screened-in corridor and rooms for the bindery, which continued to be



called the Artemisia Bindery. The whole establishment was known as "The Sign of the Sagebrush." Pictures of the house and some of the rooms will be found in the advertising matter at the back of Mrs. Strobridge's books. At one time she also had a shop called "The Wickiup" in San Pedro, located in a wing of an old bathhouse.

Living in the house on the Arroyo until her death in 1932, Idah Meacham Strobridge carried on multiple activities. She wrote, published, and bound her own books, did other publishing and binding, was an elocutionist, and was an active genealogist; there are still in Los Angeles genealogists who received their training from her. She was a member of several social, genealogic, and literary organizations. Those who knew her in her later years describe her as rather small, round-faced, and active. She was not at all interested in elaborate dress, perhaps even verging on the dowdy, but she did object to showing her age in a photograph, and did not allow any to be taken after she was about fifty. The smaller picture here reproduced was taken about 1905, and is apparently her last photograph, though she lived a quarter of a

A NOTE ON SOURCES: (Charles F. Lummis): "A Sage-Brush Oasis," *The Land of Sunshine*, January, 1901, pp. 28-32; Edgar J. Hinkel, ed.; *Biographies of California Authors* (2 vols., Oakland, 1942), Vol. I, p. 214; Franklin Walker: *A Literary History of Southern California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950), pp. 204-205; obituary of George W. Meacham, *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 1914; and interviews with Ralph Mocine, artist, and Ella Tafe, genealogist and Librarian of the Sons of the American Revolution, Los Angeles. The half-tone block of the smaller photograph was kindly lent by Mrs. Tafe; the larger photograph was used to illustrate Lummis' article, the inscribed copy reproduced being in the writer's possession.

century more. In her later years she failed to keep up the necessary repairs on her house, and is said to have expressed the wish that it would fall down at her death.

It is by the books she bound, those she published, and those she wrote—often overlapping categories—that Mrs. Strobridge is most apt to be known to present-day book collectors and those interested in the West. Her sketches of desert life, mostly concerned with the Black Rock area in northern Nevada, portray an awe and love of the desert, but are realistic in their approach, and do not gloss over the hardships of desert life, particularly for a woman. The stories are to be found in files of *The Land of Sunshine* and other periodicals and in the three books which Mrs. Strobridge published herself after settling in Los Angeles: *In Miner's Mirage Land* (1904), *The Loom of the Desert* (1907), and *The Land of Purple Shadows* (1909). These books were issued in printed wrappers in editions of one thousand. Copies could be had in three-quarter or full leather from the author's bindery. In the full leather copies the chapter-head vignettes were hand colored. Each book was signed on the limitation page; as will be seen, copies bound by her were signed in a colophon, and copies often occur with presentation inscriptions, so a single copy may be much autographed. A feature of Mrs. Strobridge's books which adds interest for those collecting western Americana is the presence of the early work of such western artists as Duncan Gleason and Maynard Dixon. The Artemisia Bindery also appears as the publisher of works of others, especially *The Hieroglyphics of Love*, stories about Los Angeles' Sonoratown by Amanda Mathews Chase (1906).

Although Mrs. Strobridge seems to have been self-taught as a binder, her work is well executed, and won medals at the California State Fair in 1908 and the Seattle Exposition in 1909. Despite Lummis' enthusiastic description, however, she used leather which has not stood up well, and her bindings are apt nowadays to be

weak or broken in the hinges, or at least subject to powdering of the surface at points of wear. Once one has seen a few of her bindings he will readily recognize her rather square formats, blue cloth with leather spine and corners, and the ornaments she used. There is no difficulty in identifying a Strobridge binding, though, for she used a device uncommon in bookmaking: a binder's colophon. This is an engraved page bound in at the end, in which the date, the number of the job, and her signature are added by hand. Hers is a firm signature; she was a workman proud of her output, and we may well visualize and remember her as the Western ranch-woman "Binder" of the picture on the cover.

Corbin's Advice *cont'd. from page 2*

The fact is, that Corbin, whose recorded kills ran to the hundreds, seldom used a gun and never resorted to poison. Most of his wolves were caught with bait, line and a hook of his own devising. The first thing he did on reaching Emmons County was to dig 42 artificial wolf dens on his land, and the wolves moved in to start producing cubs for a money crop.

An interesting feature of the copy of *Corbin's Advice* in my possession is the way it was sent to Judge Freeland, of Corydon, Iowa. Corbin pasted an address label on the front cover, placed a stamp partly on the label and partly on the cover and dropped the book in the mail. It went through unwrapped. The stamp is cancelled. On the front cover is the round post office mark, "Glencoe, North Dakota," still legible.

We cannot say here whether the legislature ever followed *Corbin's Advice*. This man who encouraged wolves to breed for a dollar a head would have prospered if they paid him five. Unless there is a record somewhere of a vast wolf business around 1901, the legislature must have voted agin' him.

The West is vast and has many facets. Minor but important episodes and persons have left their enduring stamp on Western history. These exploits and personalities are scattered through the volumes that fill the shelves of many Westerners. They become more important when drawn together into a design that illuminates some part of the larger mosaic. Edward S. Wallace has done a good roundup job in *The Great Reconnaissance* (Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1955, 288 pp., illus., biblio., index, \$5.00), which he prefaces by saying, "This is the informal story of the men who explored, surveyed, and mapped our new boundary with Mexico after 1848, and then the huge area within it, before the outbreak of the Civil War." Bartlett, Emory, Fremont, Carvalho, Whipple, Mollhausen, Hardy, Ives, Derby, Marcy, Heap, Beal, and many others pass in review. —DON M.



Photo by Ed Carpenter, 1954

OUTLAW WORDS

by BOB ROBERTSON

The Old West, which might be more accurately termed the Young West, was in the popular mind, a place teeming with outlaws, outlaw men, horses, cattle and other wild beings who bucked against rules of order. From those early law breakers have come words and names which, with changed meanings, are part of our American language.

As an example, *cimarron*, which, in English, has come to be a name for the big-horned, wild sheep of our western mountains, had its beginning in the West Indies and South America during slave-trading times.

Some of the "blackbirds" sold to traders by slave hunters were of wild African tribes that did not submit docilely to captivity and forced labor. These *brancos* broke away at every chance and took to the tall hills (*cimas*), where they hid and lived, the wild free life of their jungle ancestors.

English slavers called these outlaw Africans bush niggers, and Spanish slavers named them *cimarrones* for their habit of lurking among the wilderness *cimas* or hilltops. The English word *maroon* (a castaway) is a contraction of *cimarron* (a fugitive slave) and the name was extended, in Latin American, to mean also a feral animal or domestic beast gone wild.

Feral horses, cattle, even dogs, are called *cimarrones* on the *llanos* of Sud America and, in Spanish usage, the female animals are called *cimarronas*, feminine gender of *cimarron*. A bitter variety of yerba mate, the plant which furnishes the traditional beverage of the gaucho, is likewise known by the name of *cimarron*.

In the Spanish-speaking portions of North America, *cimarron* and *cimarrona* only occasionally are applied to feral animals of domestic breeds. Such words as *bronco*, *bronca*, *mesteno*, *ladino* and *ladina* and others better serve to describe the untamed beasts of range and rancho.

Mexicans and their neighbors of adjoining countries designate as *cimarrones* the wild species of animals and plants which have domestic counterparts. The wild cousins of tame sheep, goats, pigs, turkeys, geese and ducks are the *borrego cimarron* (bighorn sheep), *chivo cimarron* (Rocky Mountain goat), *coche cimarron* (pecary), *guajolote* or *cocono cimarron* (wild turkey), *ganso cimarron* (wild goose) and *pato cimarron* (wild duck). Wilderness relatives of common plants of garden and orchard, too, are named for the original *cimarrones* who sought freedom in the wilds. *La rosa cimarrona* and *el romero cimarron* are sylvan counterparts of the rose and rosemary of dooryard acquaintance. *Cebada cimarrona*, the wild cousin of common barley, is a weed little loved by stockmen whose range it trespasses.

The backwoods seem to have been a favorable environment for the spawning of outlaw

elements and from the wilds of the Pyrenees Mountains came another outlaw word which today is little known except among historians, students and collectors of ancient firearms. That word, in English, is *miquelet* which came from the French word of the same spelling but different pronunciation. French *miquelet* was derived from Catalan *miquelete*, which varied in spelling and pronunciation in Spanish dialects in the form of *miguelete*, *miguelito* and *miquelito*. In modern English, *miquelet* is applied to Spanish militiamen and provincial guardsmen, and among firearms antiquarians, to a gun of early Spanish flintlock design.

Long before the coinage of the name *miquelete*, the Pyrenees had been the arena of smuggling, brigandage and international intrigues in which the mountaineers developed a professional proficiency. Although classed and treated as criminals by the authorities of the French and Spanish governments, the *montañeros* considered themselves and their professions respectable, if not quite legal, and they became organized to the point of being a guild. The Pirenaicos developed great skill with guns and were not satisfied with any but the best. Not for them were the matchlock arms with glowing, smoking slow matches to betray them; nor were the cumbersome, complicated wheel locks suited to the operations of the *Contrabandistas*.

It is certain that Spanish craftsmen were among the first to make successful guns employing the flint-and-steel principle and there is some evidence that they might have devised the system. It is equally certain that the Pyreneans were early users of the improved arms. It is uncertain whether or not the so-called *snaphaunce* or Spanish lock of the late sixteenth century was a Spanish invention but it is a certainty that the flint lock which later came to be called *miquelet* was designed in Spain early in the seventeenth century.

The new lock of Spanish pattern was efficient and suited to light, effective firearms that immediately became popular and in great demand among the mountain clans. *Pistolas* were handy tools of offense and defense; *carabinas* (carbines) and *trabucos* (musketoons) were short and easy to carry horseback; *fusiles* (rifles) were effective at long range and *escopetas* (muskets) and *bocachas* or *trabucos naranjeros* (blunderbusses) were efficient scatter guns for night operations.

In the latter part of the seventeenth century, one of the periodical wars between France and Spain was in progress and the well-armed mountain men of Aragon and Catalonia banded together under the leadership of one Miquel de Prats, an able Catalan guerrilla fighter. Miquel is the Catalan name for French Michel, Spanish Miguel and the English Michael, and the war-

continued on page 7



Hashing over the evening's activities at the Westerners first annual rodeo on May 19 are, from left, range hands W. W. Robinson, Loring Campbell, Glen Dawson, Ward Ritchie, Edwin Corle and Larry Powell.
—Photo by Lonnie Hull.

CORRAL CHIPS

picked up by the ROUNDUP FOREMAN

Westerners from all over the Los Angeles range bunched at the Mona Lisa Restaurant early on the evening of May 19 to greet old friends and meet others who were but names on the Tally Sheet. It was the first annual rodeo of the Los Angeles Corral. Fifty-eight waddies were on hand. Range talk was fast and stimulating, for top hands in Western art, literature, history and experience were there with their windies.

Lawrence Clark Powell who rides herd on the books and bookkeepers at the U.C.L.A. library was the dinner speaker. He expressed himself on "Writers of the Southwest." The Southwest, he said, using Ed Ainsworth's definition, is where the mesquite grows, but Larry added that he had seen mesquite growing in the Kew Gardens of London, England, so the range is pretty wide. Particularly, he confined his territory to Arizona, New Mexico and round about. The writers he discussed were not the historians, archeologists and explorers but the men and women who have created a world-wide concept of the Southwest through their artistry and fidelity of interpretation. Mary Austin, Zane Gray, Harvey Fergusson and Willa Cather were cited as examples. The real literature of the land is measured by its influence on people, and not by its volume of sales. Ward Ritchie, maker of books and a life long friend of the speaker, introduced the librarian by exposing some intimate details of his life.

Grubchecks were autographed by the following people: John W. Hilton, Warren Howell, Jonreed Lauritzen, C. B. Foster, Dan Gann, John Waddell, James N. Wilson, Glen Dawson, Edwin Corle, Larry Powell, Loring Campbell, Ward Ritchie, Harlan Thompson, Marioff A. Speer, Fred W. Hodge, Billy Dodson, Percy Bonebrake, A. C. Newton, Jack Reynolds, Ben H. O'Connor, Capt. D. C. Kemp, William Neil Smith, Harvey R. Starr, Homer H. Boelter, C. N. Rudkin, Lonnie Hull, Don W. Hamblin, Robt. L. Dohrmann, Andrew Rolle, Philip

Johnston, J. H. Boyes, Edwin C. Rice, Don Meadows, Bert Olson, H. C. Holling, James Algar, W. W. Robinson, George Fullerton, James V. Mink, Frank S. Dolley, R. J. Woods, Noah Berry, Jr., Paul Galleher, Carroll Friswold, Clifford M. Drury, Hank Clifford, Don Boelter, Herb Boelter, Geo. F. Griffin, W. B. Shields, Robert Bennett, Arthur H. Clark, W. T. Genns, Clarence Ellsworth, Iron Eyes Cody, Burr Belden, Carl Dentzel, Ed. Ainsworth.

Thursday, March 17 brought the LACorral close to the old days of the range when Walter W. Gann talked about "A Boy Below the Caprock in the '90s." In these days when most of the cow-talk comes out of books it is refreshing and stimulating to hear yarns at first hand. Walter Gann did a fine job. It was a real Westerners meeting.

A warm, appreciative talk was given by Dr. Andrew Rolle of Occidental College on "The Life and Times of William Heath Davis," at the Mona Lisa roundup on April 21. Davis was not a great man, but was a mirror of his time. He lived and observed during the great days of hides and tallow in California, and left a readable account of his life. Dr. Rolle deftly placed his subject in a large picture of affairs rather than making him a minor hero. The days of Davis were very much alive and the speaker brought them to the present.

Westerner Wm. D. McVay of Cleveland, Ohio has sent the BI a copy of the 75th Anniversary Edition of the *Tombstone Epitaph*, dated May 5, 1955. Twenty-four pages of "news" clipped from past issues of the *Epitaph* and *Prospector* give on the spot coverage of the Earp-Clanton fracas, brawls, earthquakes, Apache troubles, etc. A great issue of a paper, and an item for any Westerners library.

There's a new Corral in Tucson, Arizona. Clay Lockett, 72 West Broadway, Tucson is Sheriff.

New Members...

DWIGHT L. CLARKE—A second generation Californian, native of Berkeley, California with a long established and widely known hobby of California history and bibliophile. Professionally, he has been a banker, starting in San Francisco, followed by 16 years of banking in Bakersfield. In 1932, he moved to Los Angeles and has lived and worked here since that time.

CARROLL FRISWOLD—Although he is now a 'native Californian,' Carroll Friswold was born in North Dakota and his greatest Western interests lie in the period shortly after the end of the Civil War with the appearance of the Western Gunmen—Marshals and Badmen. Another facet of interest is the Northern Plains Indian and his conflict with the white man. Mr. Friswold is an established and well-known businessman in Altadena.

DONALD BOELTER—Don needs no introduction to you. He has been a corresponding member for many years, and is the son of our ex-sheriff, Homer H. Boelter, and a nephew of Gordon Boelter. Don is married and is raising a family. He is a native Californian, but his deepest interests are founded in the early history of the Dakotas, Montana, and Idaho.

Outlaw Words *cont'd. from page 5*

rriors, or outlaws, of Miquel de Prats soon were familiarly known as Miqueletes, the diminutive plural of Miquel. The French equivalent of that diminutive was Miqueler; the English is Mike or Micky.

The reputation of Miquel de Prats' guerrillas and their Spanish flintlocks drew attention from far places and, down to modern times, *miqueletes* have been the choice of Spanish provincial governors and national guard leaders in the selection of militiamen and irregular soldiers. The *miquelete* flintlock remained a favorite in Spain, Spanish America, Africa, Arabia, Russia and even Scotland until flint-and-steel firearms were outmoded by the percussion inventions of the Scottish clergyman, Reverend Alexander Forsyth.

In Nueva Espana (Mexico) and the Californias Catalan volunteers armed with *pistolas*, *trabucos* and *carabinas de miquelete* defended frontier settlements and missions against Comanche, Apache, Yaqui and other tribal enemies.

The name Trabuco, attached to a mountain, a canyon and a creek in Southern California, commemorates the loss of a musketoon by a soldier of the Portola expedition of 1769. Modern translators of Spanish say that the lost gun was a blunderbuss but it is doubtful if such a clumsy weapon would have been carried on a frontier *jornada*. But, straight-bored musketoon or bell-mouthed blunderbuss, it is quite probable that the *trabuco* was of *miquelete* pattern.

From the Santa Fe Daily New Mexican, January 7, 1883—When a cowboy goes into a western newspaper office to demand satisfaction, the editor always explains that the assistant editor who wrote that article "has just gone out to kill a man, but will be back in a few minutes." The cowboy never waits.

The first white woman to enter what is now our Southwest was Casilla de Amaya, wife of Miguel Sanchez Valenciano, a member of Antonio Espejo's expedition of 1582-83. Besides the parents, three young sons were members of the party, the youngest only twenty months old. A fourth child was on the way when the family started on its long journey homeward from the Zuni Indian country. What a woman!
—F.W.H.

The new Kansas City Posse of the Westerners has broken loose with an active membership and a well defined program. A big meeting was held at the old Grintner House, built in 1857 on the site of the first Kaw River Ferry, on the evening of June 14. Alan W. Farley spoke on the Delaware Indians in Kansas. Frank Glenn is the Sheriff.

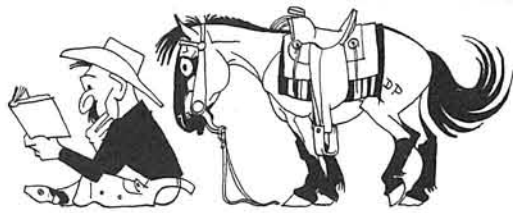
Dr. F. M. Fryxell, 1331 42nd Ave., Rock Island, Illinois, is engaged in preparing a biography of Ferdinand V. Hayden, organizer and director of the first U. S. Geological Survey of the Territories. Dr. Fryxell is in search of personal correspondence of Hayden as well as his diaries. Westerners are asked to suggest sources of information that Dr. Fryxell has not yet explored.

Ed Carpenter, who wrote the story of Idah Meacham Strobbridge in this issue of the BI, is a staff member of the Huntington Library, and is at the present on leave working in the New York Public Library on a biography and bibliography of Noah Webster. (Yeh, Noah wrote more than the dictionary.) June 9 of this year was the centennial of Mrs. Strobbridge's birth, and we do well in recognizing a true Westerner.

No wonder the N.Y. Corral is active. Peter Decker thereof offers a book for sale that was printed four years before the incidents described took place.

Westerner Marion Speer of our Corral has been awarded a medal of honor for forty years active service in the American Red Cross. The medal was personally presented by President Eisenhower. Only five such medals have ever been awarded. Marion's Western Trails Museum, long at Huntington Beach, has been purchased by Knott's Berry Farm and will be housed in a special building now under construction. Marion will be director, and will have a full time curator to help him conduct the museum.

DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL...



ALIAS BILLY THE KID, by C. L. Sonnichsen and William V. Morrison (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1955. 136 pp. \$4.00).

Here is the yarn spun by Bill Roberts, the man who claimed to be Billy the Kid. Fanciers of the Kid will ever be indebted to Morrison for having painstakingly gathered the surviving court records and locating some never-before-published pictures. They may, however, quickly lose interest in the story itself, for Roberts never makes it seem even remotely possible that he could have been the Kid. Here are none of the insights or new information that we would expect from an actual participant, nor is there a balanced presentation of the evidence. Thus, the reader is told that Roberts left Silver City in 1872; he is not informed that the Kid arrived there in 1873 and left in 1875. He is advised in a footnote that there is a story in Silver City that the Kid's name was McCarty; he will find nothing in the book to indicate that this is thoroughly documented by contemporary legal records and newspaper items—not is there anything in Robert's tale to account for this name. He is given Robert's account of the Lincoln battle; he is not warned that practically all of it is directly contradicted by the sworn testimony at the Dudley Court of Inquiry—including that of the Kid himself. Morrison shows that there is no proper legal record of the death of the Kid, but Roberts conspicuously fails to show that the Kid was not killed. More's the pity; if he had been even a little convincing it would have made for better reading.

—PHIL R.

JOHN WILLIAMS GUNNISON (1812-1853), *THE LAST OF THE WESTERN EXPLORERS*, by Nolie Mumey (Denver, 1955. 500 copies signed. pp. 189, map, illus. \$10.00).

John Williams Gunnison was born Nov. 11, 1812 in Goshen, Sullivan County, New Hampshire. His American ancestry went back to Hugh Gunnison who settled in New Hampshire in 1631. John entered West Point in 1833 and, despite serious eye trouble which necessitated leave of absence, he graduated with honor in June 1837, second in a class of fifty.

He was commissioned a second lieutenant, saw service in Florida against the Seminoles and in the Cherokee Indian Nation. He made surveys of Lake Michigan and other northwestern lakes. In 1849 he accompanied the Stansbury expedition, his duties to survey a new route from Ft. Hall to the Mormon settlement in Utah Territory.

Gunnison's place in history, however, results from his own expedition of 1853, the year of his death. As captain, he was ordered by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, to survey a route from

the Mississippi to the Pacific for a proposed transcontinental railroad. His command made its start near Westport, southeast of Ft. Leavenworth, proceeded to and up the Arkansas River past Bent's Fort, up the Apishpa River, across to the Huerfano River, up the San Luis Valley and across Cochetopa Pass. Then down the Gunnison to the Colorado, across and down stream a ways, then West across the Wasatch Mountains to the Sevier River. On Oct. 26th Captain Gunnison, taking a small detachment up river, was ambushed by Indian arrows and rifle fire which killed him and his detachment with the exception of four men who managed to escape.

Dr. Mumey's book is much the most complete account of Gunnison. There is his usual careful research brought together in a readable, beautifully printed volume.

It is regrettable perhaps that Dr. Mumey's books are published only in very limited editions, restricting readers to a very small group. This is especially true of this latest book of his; a book of great value to the western historian and student and a high spot of western literature for 1955.

—MERRELL K.

Another book about the great path-minder John Charles Fremont is apt to be redundant and boring, but not so is William Brandon's *The Men and the Mountain; Fremont's Fourth Expedition* (William Morrow & Co., N.Y., 1955, 337 pp., biblio., index, \$5.00). Brandon has written a book that is scholarly, objective, detailed and dramatic. His fine choice of words, sensitive appreciation and poetic handling of a blundering tragedy raises the book far above the average historical writing. The author is much more gifted and competent than the man he is writing about. Fremont's stature is not increased by the book, but the men who worked, and sometimes died, to make Jessie Benton's husband a hero stand out as rugged, resourceful and very human individuals. New sources of information have been tapped. Careful research and an intimate knowledge of the terrain covered by the Fourth Expedition places Brandon in a position to write a moving narrative that is detailed and forthright. It is honest. The work will be pleasing to both the Fremont admirer and the critical analyst. It is a great book of interpretation of one phase in the life of an opportunist gone sour.

—DON M.

Out Carson City way, on the Nevada sand flats, Westerner Bob Robertson has a trading post and a vast amount of cowboy lore stored up in his cranium. Only a small bit of his information is printed in this issue of the BI.