LOS ANGELES CORRAL
WESTERNERS
The Branding Iron
J. GOODMAN

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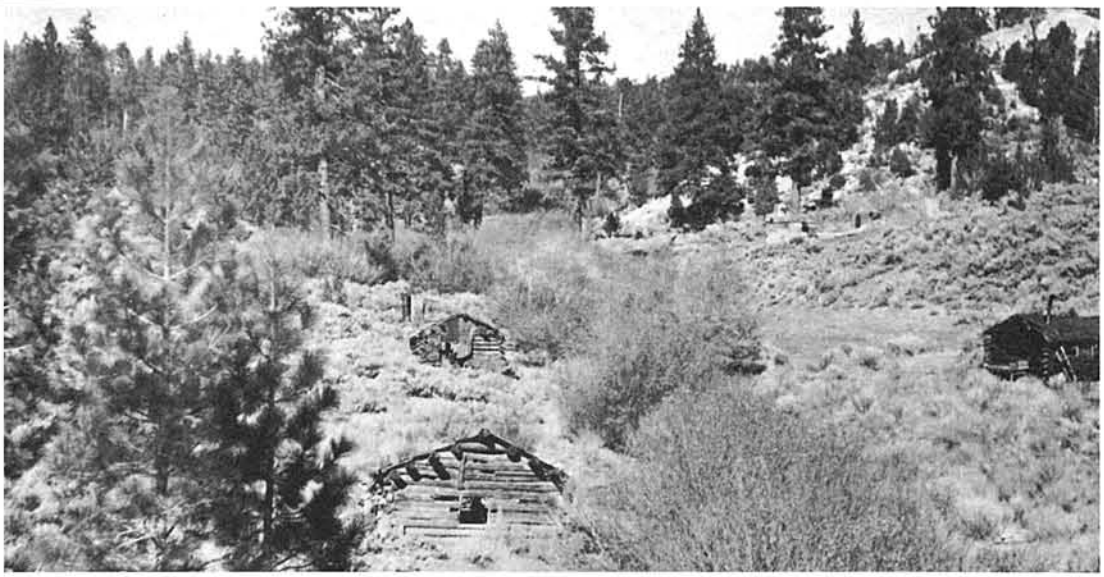

MINERS' CABINS, HOLCOMB VALLEY, *ca.* 1890
— San Bernardino County Museum.

Billy Holcomb's Discovery

By JOHN W. ROBINSON

William Francis Holcomb was tired and a little discouraged. For several months he and a small band of prospectors had been digging in the gravels of Bear Valley, but the returns in gold were barely worth the effort. The winter of 1859-60 had been cold and bleak, and food was scarce — so scarce, in fact, that the mining camp in Bear Valley had been dubbed "Starvation Flat." According to Big Bear historian Austin Drake, "boot soup," occasionally flavored with venison or pack mule, was the mainstay of their diet for days on end. It was springtime now, and the grizzlies which infested the San Bernardino Mountains were beginning to awaken from their long slumber. Holcomb had fared none too well as a miner, but he was a marksman with a rifle, and this morning early in May 1869 he set out from Starvation Flat in search of bear meat. In the course of his wanderings, he ascended Polique Canyon to the crest of the forested ridge just west of Bertha Peak and gazed northward upon a beautiful green valley, until then unknown to the prospectors. Holcomb wanted to explore the valley right

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The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL

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DONALD DUKE
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THE BRANDING IRON solicits articles of 1500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

JANUARY

Dr. Al Miller's famous "Medicine Show" was in town during the early portion of January and scheduled for the January 14th Corral meeting. As the black wagon pulled into the port cochere of Taix, dusk set on the far western horizon. The rattle of bottles was soon silenced as the good Doctor stepped from his van and gathered his paraphernalia for the hour long show, following the usual feast. After a few glasses of red eye, members began to circle the giant lantern slide machine as ceiling lights dimmed. Past Sheriff Miller began his yarn, while colored medical art flashed on the screen. As time passed, only the din of slurping peyote broke the silence.

Scene at the January meeting with Iron Eyes Cody (left) presenting the peace pipe to Dr. Al Miller, speaker of the evening.
— *Sid Platford Photograph.*

Members with dry eyes gazed in awe at the screen and viewed Miller's "Medicine in the Old West (Chapter II) —A Bicentennial of the Indian and White Man's Medicine." Those with new batteries in their ear trumpets learned that America is not so advanced, the Indian was prac-

ticing medicine here 10,000 or so years ago, and without Blue Cross. Herbs and plants were basic medicine, together with a bit of chant, prayer, and a dance or two. No blood was drawn or quartered during the evening, as Taix had warned Miller to keep his favorite leeches bottled. They also requested he not dispense any of his "Swamp Root" within the building. A fine evening of yarns, history, a bit of medical art, and a suck of peyote.

FEBRUARY

Larry Meyer's "Bicentennial Out West: Looking Beyond the Eastern Seaboard in 1776," one of the most engaging of talks before our Corral, reminded everyone that the American West had a rich history long before the revolution of 1776. The lures for exploration and settlement beyond the Mississippi were numerous: the quest for the fabled Northwest Passage; the enticing legends of gold and silver; the pursuit of fur-bearing mammals; the desire to spread Christianity; and the imperial rivalry between France, England, and Spain that sparked a zeal for colonization. All of these were powerful forces. Larry rightly pointed out, however, that in the hoopla of this Bicentennial year and the close focus on such founding fathers as Adams, Washington, and Franklin, other notable names in our past should be remembered too: Drake, Cook, Coronado, Escalante, De Anza, Garces, and a host of other individuals who contributed in a lasting way to our heritage.

Corral Chips

The eleventh and last volume of *Clifford M. Drury's* monumental series on the history of the Oregon Mission is to appear with the Arthur H. Clark Co. imprint in April. This volume will contain an edited version of the diary of Elkanah Walker for the period of 1838-1849, when he lived with his wife at Tshmakain near present-day Spokane.

Henry Clifford addresses the Pasadena Kiwanis Club and, later, the San Diego Corral of The Westerners on the subject of "The Russian-American Fur Company and Its Impact Upon California."

Among the Westerners attending the Eighteenth Annual Symposium of the Historical Societies of Southern California, sponsored by the Conference of California Historical Societies and held in San Juan Capistrano, were *Dutch Holland, Everett Hager, Henry Welcome, Don Meadows, Dwight Cushman, Sid Platford, Bill Kimes,* and *Wade Kittell,* plus C.M.'s *Max Johnson, Bill Burkhart,* and *R. Coke Wood,* president of the Conference. *Don Meadows* was a participant in an interesting panel discussion on "Facts and Fancies of History in San Juan Capistrano."

The 1976 Mobil Almanac, a special edition of *Mobil Farm Future* published by Mobil Oil Corporation, features a short article on frontier wagon train travel based heavily on excerpts drawn from Florence and *Ward DeWitt's* book *Prairie Schooner Lady: The Journal of Harriet Sherrill Ward, 1853,* published by Westernlore.

C.M. *Jim Gulbransen* appears before The Friends of the Leonis Adobe and enlightens them on the history of the Lopez family in San Fernando Valley history and on the restoration of the Lopez Adobe.

The scholarly and well-known physiognomy of ex-sheriff *Ray Billington* graces the front page of the "Buckskin Bulletin" as part of an article written by *Dan Thrapp* on Ray's opening address to the International Congress of Historical Societies meeting in San Francisco.

Past-sheriff *Harvey Johnson,* almost confined to his house now, is taking good advantage of his time by writing. He has just finished a book about his childhood on the family cattle ranch about twenty miles north of Lubbock, Texas, and is planning another on a trip from Amarillo to California on what was then nothing but an old cow trail.

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Holcomb's Discovery . . .

then, but the sun was sinking low in the west and he reluctantly turned back, arriving in camp well after dark. The little valley he had discovered preyed on his mind and he determined to visit it at the first opportunity. Perhaps it might bring a change in his fortunes.

Ten years earlier, in 1850, 19-year-old Billy Holcomb had left Indiana and crossed the plains to seek his fortune in the California gold rush. But a decade of rambling from prospect to prospect, panning, digging and sluicing – from the Mother Lode country to the Kern River – had left him, in his own words, "not only broke but a little in debt." In 1859, with a prospector friend named Jack Martin, Holcomb drifted south to try his luck in the San Feliciana diggings near present-day Newhall. But again fortune eluded him. "We did not spend much time there and bent our way toward Los Angeles, having heard something about a place called Bear Valley in San Bernardino County, where we were told there was a new country not much explored or prospected and a great deal of game," Holcomb wrote years later. "So we made up our minds to go and see what we could find there."

After a brief stay in Los Angeles, Holcomb and Martin loaded up with flour, salt and bacon and struck out eastward for one more fling at mining. All they knew was that Bear Valley lay somewhere in the mountains to the east, but no one they met along the way could tell them how to get there. Finally, upon reaching Lytle Creek, a rancher directed them toward the canyon of the Santa Ana River, where he said the long, twisting trail to Bear Valley began. The two prospectors crossed the San Bernardino Valley and ascended the canyon to Converse Flats, where they spent the night in company with some other miners. In Holcomb's words, "Next morning we continued our way, crossing over snow of considerable depth, but after some difficulty we got there."

It was February 1860 and very cold when Holcomb and Martin reached Bear Valley. They camped with the Jo Colwell party at Starvation Flats and immediately started prospecting the stream and gullies. The two newcomers had very little luck at first, and were on the verge of giving up on Bear Valley when Holcomb "went up on the hillside near the company's claim and there, in as unlikely place as we could find, struck a good prospect. We immediately went to work and could make about $4 a day with a rocker." Holcomb and Martin decided to stay in Bear Valley a while longer. Martin returned to Los Angeles to fetch his family, and while he was gone Holcomb went hunting for bear and discovered the verdant valley to the north.

There are conflicting stories as to just how Billy Holcomb discovered gold in the valley that was later named for him. At least three different prospectors have been named as Holcomb's sole companion when he made his historic find. Some stories say he discovered gold accidentally while hunting grizzlies, others claim he went to the newly-discovered valley with the intention of prospecting and the bear hunting was merely incidental. Fortunately, Billy Holcomb told his own story of that fateful discovery at a meeting of the San Bernardino Society of California Pioneers held in San Bernardino on April 30, 1888, 28 years after the event. Following are his own words as to what happened after he looked down upon the virgin valley from the west ridge of Bertha Peak:

"A few days after, in company with Jim Ware, I went over to see the new valley. We found four grizzly bear in the valley, two of which I killed. On returning to camp we told them of the beautiful valley we had found, etc. The next day several of the miners went over with us to get the bear and to see the new valley. We went around and up through what is now known as Van Deusen Canyon, a distance of about 10 miles, packed the bear on Jacks [mules] and returned to camp the same day.

"Not long after that I made up my mind to prospect the new valley for gold. So one afternoon I proposed to Ben Choteau to go over that same day and camp a night or so in the new valley and prospect for mines. We went over that afternoon and found a grizzly in the valley, which I shot and wounded. We followed him a short distance when dark overtook us, and we camped that night in the valley. Next morning early we struck out to track the

BILLY HOLCOMB
— Santa Fe Federal Savings

wounded bear and followed him over a quartz lead which he took notice of and on beyond. The bear got away from us and, returning by our quartz lead, we began to examine it and found gold in the rock. We took some dirt in a handkerchief from below the lead and went to camp in the new valley. Here we dug a hole in the main gulch to get a place to pan out our dirt, and as the dirt looked pretty well that came out of the hole we were digging, we thought we would try it first. We did so and got a good prospect. We now tried what we had brought down in the handkerchief and found a very good prospect.

"We returned to Bear Valley and reported our find, which created a great excitement, and I must confess that I felt almost overjoyed at the discovery we had made. We now began to prepare for a move on the new mines. And on the 5th day of May 1860 we located the first mining claims ever worked in this place now called Holcomb Valley. And just ten years to a day from the time I left my home."

So, if we accept Billy Holcomb's own story as being true, his companion on that day of gold discovery was Ben Choteau — a Cherokee Indian, according to Big Bear historian Austin Drake — and not Jim Ware or Jack Martin as others have claimed. And Holcomb went to his new valley with the intention of looking for gold, although the actual discovery took place as he and Choteau were tracking a wounded grizzly.

Holcomb and seven other prospectors set up camp in the main gulch between what is now called Upper and Lower Holcomb Valley. To again quote Holcomb, "We started in to using rockers to wash out our gold with. We were quite successful from the start. We had not worked long 'till some of our gold dust from Holcomb Valley began to be scattered about in the different avenues of trade, and another rush was on, excitement became great, and prospectors gathered from all directions, some on horseback, some with pack mules and burros, and many on foot with their outfits on their backs. By the first of July, Holcomb Valley was swarming with prospectors. Every day strangers would call on us, and watch us taking out the gold and ask us many questions, which we answered truthfully. We were making from $5 to $10 a day to the man. Many buildings were now going up of some kind; some temporary concerns, mere brush sheds and some pretty substantial structures. We continued our mining operations, conveying our pay dirt to our rockers with horses and cart, and in sacks on the backs of burros."

So began the greatest gold rush in the history of the San Bernardino Mountains.

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Jewish Student Militancy in the Great Depression

The Roosevelt High School Blowouts of 1931

By Abraham Hoffman

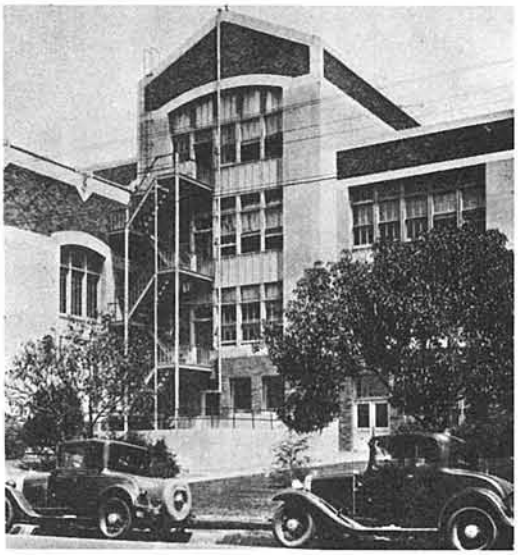
The "blowouts" and demonstrations that occurred spasmodically at Theodore Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles after March 1968 were not unique in the school's history. Although none of the students or faculty in 1968 knew anything about it, and none but a few old-time residents of the area might recall it, during the Great Depression Roosevelt High School appeared in newspaper headlines that read much the same as those of 1968. "Student 'Riot' at Roosevelt," "School Principal . . . Blames Entire Affair on Students Involved," "Students Suspended for 'Free Writing.'" These headlines appeared in Los Angeles newspapers in 1931, not 1968 or 1970.

Many of the issues involved in both sets of student disturbances were surprisingly similar, as if the school had not moved with the events of almost forty years. Yet there were differences: the ethnic group was different, the students in 1931 lacked community support, and the earlier demonstrations failed to accomplish tangible results. The full outcome of the more recent "blowouts" is yet to be determined, but the Eastside Community's Chicano activists have a long-buried precedent for their grievances, one articulated by Jewish militant students a generation earlier.

In 1931 Boyle Heights, the Los Angeles community supplying most of the students who attended Roosevelt High School, contained a large Jewish element, though the school also had a rainbow of other ethnic and religious groups. As winter passed into spring that year, the economic depression that had paralyzed the country showed little indication of ending, despite President Herbert Hoover's optimistic predictions. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the New Deal, the unique California panacea of Upton Sinclair's EPIC movement, federal relief programs – all were in the future. For the present, the Communist party had been sponsoring a series of meetings and calling for "Red marches" on the Los Angeles City Hall to protest the failure of local welfare officials in meeting the needs of the city's poor. Attempts to coordinate relief work had bogged down amid bureaucratic red tape and rhetorical platitudes, and the best the city could offer its unemployed was the idea of a clearing-house for jobs, a work-sharing program of sorts, and an endorsement of a deportation drive against Mexican aliens.

As the students at Roosevelt High School pursued their education, the world outside promised little for them; and the usual rhetoric of school journalism seemed irrelevant in the face of the greater problems of unemployment and poverty. Some students were dissatisfied with the world within the school as well as the greater one beyond the school's grounds. Rules seemed arbitrary and autocratic; the food in the school cafeteria presented a persuasive argument for bringing one's lunch, however meager its contents, from home; and the use of corporal punishment was a long-standing grievance of those who had been on the receiving end of a yardstick or paddle.

With 1930 drawing to a close, several students decided to express their dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in school, and the world in general, through publication of their grievances in an independent newspaper. This paper, *The Roosevelt Voice,* was published by the Young Pioneers, a youth organiation avowedly proleftist in its sympathies. The student action was triggered by an editorial that had appeared in the Roosevelt *Rough Rider,* the official school paper, in which Soviet Russia had been condemned. The U.S.S.R., outside the pale of diplomatic recognition



THEODORE ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL

since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, seemed to attract the sympathy of young people in much the same fashion as Castro's Cuba captured the imagination of the New Left of a later generation.

The anti-Russia editorial prompted a sixteen-year-old student, Victor Goertzel, to write a rebuttal that was to appear in the *Rough Rider's* student opinion column. When the article was not accepted for publication, Goertel wrote another article, and it was this second article that appeared in *The Roosevelt Voice*. Goertzel did not confine himself to a defense of Soviet Russia. He also criticied the *Rough Rider*, claiming it was "used by the board of education to put over anti-working-class propaganda." The student opinions favoring Soviet Russia were suppressed, Goertzel argued, only because of the political views.

Principal Thomas Elson summoned Goertzel after the article had been published. When the student admitted writing the article, the principal suspended him. Elson, who had previously clashed with several other students over the issue of the Soviet experiment in Russia, notified Goertzel's father of the suspension. He charged the youth with having "assisted in the publication of malicious and untruthful statements concerning Roosevelt high school faculty members and administrative officers for the purpose of making trouble and stirring up insubordination of students who attend the school." In Elson's view, the articles "were in my opinion decidedly disloyal utterances for any student of an American educational institution to make." At the same time, Elson denied he was punishing the students for their opinions. "No one has ever been expelled from Roosevelt high school for radical views. We want students to think."

Another student, a sixteen-year-old girl named Aida Handler, admitted she had provided information for another article in the same issue of the *Voice*. This second article attacked overcrowded classrooms, lack of typewriters in the typing classes, and poor cafeteria food. Although the girl readily admitted providing details for the article, she denied writing it. Like Goertzel, the girl was suspended. Elson accused her of "impudence" to school authorities.

Suspension of the two students occurred on December 31, 1930, and was to last until January 7, 1931. In the interval the school administration expected the students to apologize for their actions, after which they would be reinstated. When neither student agreed to make amends, the suspension was extended, and Elson ordered Goertzel to Jacob A. Riis High School, a disciplinary school that was a long streetcar ride away from Boyle Heights. Goertzel's parents retained an attorney who requested reconsideration of the transfer, but the request was denied.

As Roosevelt High planned its mid-year graduation exercises, pressures increased on Aida Handler and two other girls to retract radical statements. Although the Handler girl had been permitted to reenter school, her refusal to compromise led Elson to deny her and the other two girls their graduation diplomas. Elson insisted that his decision was based not on the girls' opinions, but on their attitudes.

The stand taken by the girls was a daring one, for the consequences of their decision were considerable. "Last week when I was reinstated," Aida Handler informed the press, "the authorities informed me I would not be given my diploma." The central issue was the *Roosevelt Voice* article, and her differences with Elson over it, according to the girl, provided the principal with the reason for charging her with impudence. As a result, "They are not only going to deny us our diplomas but

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they are going to ignore our applications for recommendation to college. They have taken no action on these applications but have asked us to wait until we are called for."

Unlike Miss Handler, a second girl, Martha Tillin, did not belong to the Young Pioneers, but she viewed with sympathy the arguments in *The Roosevelt Voice*. The daughter of Russian immigrants, she reported that Elson had asked her for a statement of total loyalty to the United States, but that she felt "a good citizen should take an interest in his government and see its defects." Miss Tillin stated that Elson promised the diploma would not be granted until she affirmed her loyalty to the United States.

The third girl, Miriam Brooks, was a straight-A student who considered herself "a good American." She felt the school's interpretation of the situation in Russia was "only one side of the question," and that she "was trying to get the other side." Ironically, although she was being denied her diploma, Miriam Brooks did receive the customary fountain pen awarded students for scholarship excellence by the California Scholarship Federation.

It is impossible to determine the degree of originality in the thoughts and expressions of these dissenting students. They were all above-average in their school work and seemed to have no problems with school authorities other than the issue of citizenship and loyalty arising from the *Voice* article. The Boyle Heights Community consisted in large measure of East European immigrants and their American-born children, and these children seemed to possess an unusual degree of sensitivity to the difficulties presented by the Depression. Dissatisfaction with local governmental attempts to deal with the Depression's problems was widespread. In the week during which graduation ceremonies took place in the city's high schools, hundreds of demonstrators descended upon the City Hall in a Communist-inspired "hunger march," to be met there by police and fire hoses. When the Young Pioneers distributed a circular to Roosevelt students and the general public attacking the Board of Education and the Roosevelt faculty and administration, it was thus done in a period of social dissatisfaction and unrest. Elson felt it necessary to issue a lengthy rebuttal to the Young Pioneer circular.

Elson's statement appeared in the January 26, 1931, issue of the Los Angeles *Record*, under the headline "School Principal Tells Why Diplomas Refused/ Blames Entire Affair on Students Involved." He reviewed the circumstances surrounding the suspensions and explained why the diplomas had been denied. In Elson's view, the central issue was one of school discipline. The students had claimed they were being unfairly harassed for having dissenting opinions, and they refused to discuss the matter with Elson unless their attorneys were present. This standoff had resulted in Victor Goertzel's transfer, but Aida Handler had agreed to have her mother meet with the principal. However, according to Elson, neither Aida nor her mother "would admit the facts upon which the suspension was ordered or agree to any sort of restitution."

THOMAS ELSON, Principal
Theodore Roosevelt High School

Aida Handler was an outspoken girl, and her comments had clearly angered Elson. She and her mother readily admitted the girl's membership in the Young Pioneers. "Membership in this or any other organiation was not a basis for any actions in these cases," insisted Elson, "but it seemed

evident that their subscription to the tenets and philosophies of these organization [*sic*] were dominating these young people in their violent opposition to the spirit as well as the letter of Americanism." Elson accused the students of "insolence and unpatriotic utterances," and it was for these reasons that they had been suspended.

Elson also remarked that Mrs. Handler had been active in radical affairs for at least five years. He accused the Communist organizations of escalating school problems into major controversies. The Brooks and Tillin girls had become involved as a result of Young Pioneers demonstrations. No compromise with the students had been possible, although Elson had hoped "to secure in a simple form some statement to indicate that these girls were at least not opposed to those principles which Americans, who take some pride in their heritage, look upon as a test of loyalty. I failed utterly to secure anything but bitter criticism."

Despite Elson's disclaimers, it is difficult to see the distinction he made between attitude and activism, or his declaring that he encouraged independent thought but opposed disloyalty. Articulation of independent thought provoked problems that were safely buried if the ideas were left unspoken. Such a view by the school could only contribute to an already tense situation. With the start of the spring semester, further incidents were not long in coming.

On Friday, February 20, Joe Lutsky, a sixteen-year-old who was a member of the Young Communist League, was suspended by Elson after the youth refused to salute the flag. Apparently late to school, Lutsky was stopped by Elson while the school's R.O.T.C. band participated in the flag-raising ceremony. Elson ordered the boy to salute the flag in the band's presence. Lutsky refused to do so, arguing that he could not perform such an act while the country suffered from the harshness and inequities of the Depression. According to Lutsky, Elson then ordered him to get down on his knees and when he refused, the principal struck him. He was later summoned to the principal's office and officially suspended. Elson denied the boy's version of the incident. The International Labor Defense, a Communist-sponsored organization, undertook Lutsky's defense. A month later, however, the suspension remained in effect.

The next incident, and the most serious of the confrontations, occurred about three weeks after Lutsky had been suspended. Two fifteen-year-old girls, Bertha Goldstein and Dora Smelansky, were suspended for distributing pamphlets protesting an anti-Soviet speaker invited by Elson to give a presentation at a school assembly. The girls, both Young Pioneers, were ordered to appear before the Board of Education on Wednesday, March 18, for further questioning as to their actions. Sympathetic students spent the week distributing a mimeographed paper around the school grounds, protesting the latest round of suspensions. On Thursday, March 19, the demonstrators, including some of the previously suspended students, were met by a group of students who did not share the views of the Young Pioneers or the Young Communist League. A fight ensued, with the "vigilance committee," as the faction supporting the school was called, emerging the winner. They confiscated several hundred copies of the protest newspaper and brought the demonstrators to the principal's office, where they were held against their will until finally released. Two adults, Louis Shapiro, age 42, and Samuel Garborg, age 74, were arrested on suspicion of criminal syndicalism by Captain William Hynes, leader of the Los Angeles Police Department's controversial "Red Squad." Elson denied knowledge of the fight or the bringing of the youths to his office. He did, however, suspend four more students.

One more incident remained before the demonstrations at Roosevelt High finally ceased. It involved a student named Sam Schatz, who had been observed misbehaving between classes. The student court found him guilty and sentenced him to ten demerits and five "swats." Roosevelt High School at this time operated under a demerit system whereby thirty demerits received in one semester could result in expulsion. Swats were administered by a physical education teacher who ordered the offending student to grab his ankles, forcing him to bend over, as the Los Angeles *Record* put it, "at a convenient angle. Then the paddle descends upon him from the rear."

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Schatz had received corporal punishment once before, and he had no desire to take it again. His protest reached both the newspapers and the offices of the Board of Education. Deputy Superintendent J. B. Monlux declared, "The swatting system is not recognized by the board of education. The board's rules provides that corporal punishment may be applied only with a light switch or strap." He went on to state that "Swatting is outside the rules of the board. If it is done, it is done without the authority of the principal, the superintendent or the board." Unfortunately, Monlux did not comment on the interesting detail that sentences of corporal punishment were being handed down by a student court.

Monlux's disavowal of the theory of swatting, or his failure to recognize its existence in fact, coupled with the *Record's* optimistic prediction that "Roosevelt high school's 'swat system' of corporal punishment may be near its end," may bring cynical grins to Roosevelt alumnae who felt the sting of the paddle clear into the 1960s. Elson, out of the city for a week, could not be reached for comment. Schatz's protest had little to do with political ideology, but his complaint was one that had been included among the grievances cited by the student militants.

The two men arrested at the March 19 demonstration were brought before Municipal Court Judge Ellis Egan on April 20. The charge had been reduced from criminal syndicalism to disturbing the peace, and the judge quickly disposed of the case by dismissing the charges because of insufficient evidence.

Demonstrations, outbursts, blowouts — whatever they were, the protests subsided after the headlines describing Schatz's revolt against corporal punishment. To learn of the later involvements and allegiances of the protesting students would take a considerable degree of detective work after the passage of over four decades. The Eastside neighborhood underwent a period of transition in the 1940s, accelerating after World War II until by the mid-1950s the ethnic composition of the community had radically changed. Where Yiddish had once been the lingua franca of business on Brooklyn Avenue, Spanish was increasingly heard. By the time of the Chicano demonstrations of 1968, the Eastside *shtetl* had become a Chicano *barrio.*

Those involved in the disturbances of 1931 would now be in their mid-fifties; no doubt some of them are grandparents who may well be deploring the radical changes in society advocated by another young generation. What is important is to assess the significance of the protests in the context of the time in which they occurred. The student activists viewed Communism with sympathetic eyes, for what was being taught in the abstract to them in school did not match the reality of the deepening economic depression. Terms like loyalty and Americanism were empty of meaning when the capitalist structure could be seen tumbling down wherever young eyes might look.

Unlike the Chicanos of the late 1960s, the Jewish militants failed to garner much community support. Their protests for the most part were brushed aside, and later events — the creation of the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Stalinist purges of the mid-1930s, and the New Deal offered by the Roosevelt administration — suggested reform rather than revolution as the cure for the ills of the Depression. Pressures from the Chicano community after the blowouts of 1968, on the other hand, have succeeded in moving the Los Angeles Board of Education, however slowly, towards an understanding of the needs of minority students.

In assuming an assimilationist, WASP orientation to education, the Los Angeles public schools long presented an autocratic structure bearing little resemblance to the ideals of democracy preached in civics classes. An official newspaper; suspensions for dissent; a puppet student court system; and hall passes, bathroom permits, tardy slips, summonses to the attendance office, vice principal's office, counseling office, or elsewhere on the school grounds suggest a society far more totalitarian than democratic, one in which discipline dominates over learning. Such an atmosphere can prove especially volatile for minority students, particularly that percentage of them who somehow find a way to articulate what others may silently endure. That the students of 1931 and 1968 chose to demonstrate at the same school may be more than just historical coincidence.

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IRON TAIL'S PHONEY PEACE MEDAL

By AL HAMMOND

IRON TAIL

Silver medals had been presented to Indian chiefs and leaders by the countries of England, France, and Spain much earlier than when the medal giving policy of the United States was adopted. The silver medals became known as peace medals and were presented at the time of Indian visitation to the nation's capital, at the signing of a peace treaty, or when important government officials visited Indian tribes. The medals came in different sizes. The largest was given to head camp chiefs, those of smaller size were given to leading war chiefs, while the smallest were received by minor chiefs and leaders.

The peace medals were given with such flowery speeches and so much ceremony that it became an outstanding event in the lives of the Indians. They were being honored and recognized for the first time. Food and other gifts usually accompanied the peace medal presentation. Noted tribal leaders were receivers of government peace medals, but unfortunately there were those who were not chiefs or leaders that were instead "yes" men who were of more service to our government than to their own people. It was a conspicuous practice and did impress the Indians.

By the late nineteenth century the honor that was received by the giving of peace medals had begun to wane. The government policy had degraded and started to fall in disuse. Shrewd Indian traders and outsiders who showed no scruples had started to bring in use cheaper metal and were casting lower grade peace medals. The workmanship didn't compare with the finer cast official silver medals. Indians could, in fact, buy and trade for the disreputable medals on most reservations. The peace medal giving was therefore discontinued when they became so easy to acquire and were becoming quite common.

Iron Tail was a noted Oglala Sioux Indian and traveled extensively here in the United States and Europe with the Buffalo Bill Cody "Wild West Show" and also the 101 Ranch Wild West Show. He was a much photographed Indian and had been seen by thousands over the years. James Earle Fraser, one of America's most gifted and prolific sculptors, designed the buffalo head nickel and used Iron Tail's features in composite with two other Indians.[1] Iron Tail was so prominent on the coin that it's difficult to realize two other Indians were used in the sculpturing of this famous nickel. It did add and help build the fame of Iron Tail.

The imitation peace medal, photographed and accompanying this article, was owned by Iron Tail. It is not known where he acquired it. He could easily have bought it or traded for it. It's even possible he might have received it for a gift. He

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THE IMITATION MEDAL

often received gifts from unknown white people and thoughtful friends. In spite of the fact these dishonest peace medals were numerous, they have become collector's items today. Like the originals they are difficult to locate.

White people weren't the only ones to get in on the imitation peace medal gravy train. An Indian living in Nebraska told of having molds and casting many. His asking price was $15.00 each and he later dropped the price to $10.00 for his friends. Somehow his white friends fared even better, cash register wise. He offered them at $2.00 apiece in quantities of 50 or more with the understanding that under no conditions were they to be sold to Indans in Nebraska or Dakota.

[1]Many Indians have made claims that their features were used on the Buffalo Head Nickel and it has reached the point of being ridiculous. Latest claimant was of course a chief – Chief Running Water – who at the age of 111 claimed he was the son of Chief Sitting Bull and was raised on the giant King Ranch in Texas. In spite of the passing of time there will be others making the Buffalo Head Nickel claim.

In the promotion of Glacier National Park, the handsome Blackfeet Indian, Two Guns White Calf, found himself cast by whites as the Indian of the nickel. When talking to him in the early 1930's and asking him about the nickel, I found him quiet and embarrassed. I'm sure he knew what had happened.

James E. Fraser, who was the designer, said, "The Indian on the Buffalo Head Nickel is not a portrait of any particular Indian, but was made from three portrait busts which I did of Indians. I remember two of them. Iron Tail was the best Indian head I can remember. The other was Two Moon. The third I can not recall. It seems that one, Two Guns White Calf, was of the opinion that it was his head that was so portrayed. I never saw Two Guns White Calf nor used him in any way." Fraser later said the work was of a Plains Indian, which eliminated from contention many Indians making the claim. It's understandable why many Indians believed they were used as a model because many Indians had posed for many artists.

Corresponding Members Welcomed by Corral

The Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners extends the hand of friendship to the following new Corresponding Members.

They are: Walter Bailey, Los Angeles; Douglas Fairbanks, Van Nuys; F. A. Hogrebe, Palos Verdes Estates; J. M. Lauritzen, Chatsworth, and Charles T. Moore, Fullerton.

Corral Chips...

A classic research volume for both lawyers and California history buffs, *Hoffman's Reports on the Land Cases,* has been reprinted in facsimile with a fine introduction by C.M. *Kenneth M. Johnson.*

The Platrix Chapter of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus has named *Don Torguson* as "Noble Grand Humbug."

Doyce Nunis spoke on the highlights of California history and discussed some of the important documents on display in the Huntington Library to their Docents.

Artist Kirk Martin and C.M. *Ardis Walker* are collaborating once again in a wedding of poetry, fine printing, and engraving. The subject is a philosophic poem, "The Pageant," with a setting in the Boreal Plateau of the Sierra Nevada.

Telephone calls from Washington, D.C. are commonplace recently for *Bill Kimes* who has again become consultant for *National Geographic*—this time on a John Muir volume. When the Society surveyed their extensive membership on most desired subjects for their publication program, they learned that John Muir was the leading choice of the many suggested topics. Since the popular vote was so overwhelmingly in favor of Muir, it was decided that the Muir volume would be the

lead book in the Bicentennial year. This will be the first time that *National Geographic* will have published a volume devoted exclusively to *one* individual.

The highest honor the City of San Francisco can bestow upon any individual is "The Order of Saint Francis of Assisi," which was awarded to C.M. *Al Shumate* by Mayor Alioto.

Currently on leave from Cal State, Los Angeles, is C.M. *Mary Gormly* who will devote her time to setting up an Archive of Pacific Northwest Archaeology at the University of Idaho, Moscow. The archive eventually will consist of articles, clippings, manuscripts, books, conference papers, slides, and films – all of which will pertain to the archaeology of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Western Montana, British Columbia, and Alberta.

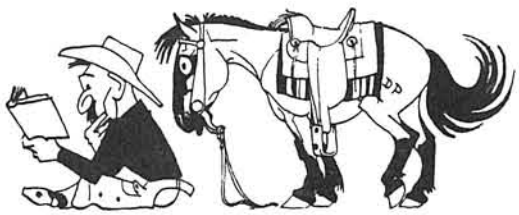
C.M. *Bruce Bryan*, Curator of the Southwest Museum, recently put the first issue of volume 50 of *The Masterkey* on the press. This commences the 50th year of publication of the Museum's well-known quarterly, which began its life back in 1927. In celebration of the occasion, which also marks Bruce's 16th year as editor of Southwest Museum publications, the magazine will have a gold cover.

"Historical Perspectives on the Family and Society;" a Bicentennial Symposium, sponsored by the History Team, Los Angeles Bicentennial Committee; The National Archives and Records Center, GSA Region Nine; and The Department of History, University of Southern California, was held at USC on January 24, 1976. Presiding over the first morning session was C.M. *Jean Bruce Poole* and over the second Associate Member *John W. Caughey*. Luncheon speaker *Doyce Nunis* is to be congratulated for arranging this fine symposium program. Participating in the afternoon workshops were *Clifford Drury* and *Elwood Holland*. Betty Welcome, Symposium Registrar, was assisted by C.M. *Marie Harrington*. Noted among the 400 attendees were *Dwight Cushman, Dudley Gordon, Wade Kittell, Henry Welcome, Walt Wheelock*, Associate Members *Todd Berens, Don Franklin, Bob Scherrer, Ray Wood*, and C.M.'s *Bill Burkhart, Peg Cassidy, Abraham Hoffman, Dick Howser, Frank Newton* and *Victor Plukas*.

Iron Eyes Cody serves as Master of Ceremonies for the Fort Mojave Indian Days in Needles, a festive occasion which features dancing and singing by various tribes, along with a display of native crafts and abundant Indian food.

For some unknown reason, we only recently learned that the Cosmos Club of Washington, D.C. awarded their 11th Annual Cosmos Club Award to Horace Marden Albright. The award was presented to Horace last April 15th at the John Wesley Powell Auditorium. The citation was awarded for his pioneer conservation in a time when the word was hardly known.

Lastly, we note with deep regret the passing of *Dan Bryant*, one of the earliest and most fondly remembered Westerners in the Los Angeles Corral. A memorial gift to the Southwest Museum, as is our tradition, has been made in Dan's name.



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL ...

CAT'SPAW UTOPIA, by Ray Reynolds. Self Published, 1972. $6.65.

This is the story of Topolobampo, in the Mexican state of Sinaloa, the fabled site of a transcontinental railroad that the 19th century never saw, the site of a Utopian dream city where there would be no taxes, no corruption, no competition, no ugliness, and where every worker would be his own capitalist.

Only once in history, says the author in his Foreword, does the projector of a great railroad, and the projector of an equally great concept of a Utopia-by-the-sea, happen to be the same individual. Perhaps only one man in history could have planned all that Albert Kimsey Owen foresaw, and perhaps no-one, not even Owen himself, could make those grandiose dreams into a living, working reality.

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Who was this man Owen? The youngest son of a Pennsylvania physician, he was born in 1847, and was raised without his mother, who had died in giving him birth. Dr. Owen believed in strict discipline and in a good education for his sons, and Albert Kimsey Owen was able to derive profit from both. His young manhood experiences were primarily in the West, following the lines of the early railroads, and even reaching out into New Mexico and Texas far ahead of the Iron Horse. He also found employment as a surveyor in his home state, and for a while was official surveyor for the city of Chester, Pa., a position from which he was ousted by "local politics." Disgusted with urban life he headed west once again, to try his hand as a railroad surveyor. Meeting with ex-General William J. Palmer, who was then superintending the route for the Denver and Rio Grande, Owen threw in his lot with Palmer, and the two men spent some time surveying possible routes for railroads through all of the southwest, and a good deal of northern Mexico as well.

In September 1872 Owen left Palmer in Mexico City and set out for the mysterious harbor he had heard of, called "Smuggler's Retreat," where men, driving mules laden with copper ore, transferred their loads to great ships that took the ore, perhaps illegally, to Wales.

Owen found Topolobampo Bay, as the natives called it, everything that he had been led to believe – a land locked harbor, deep enough for large ships, and teeming with fish and shellfish, backed by a fertile plain well watered by a large river, the Fuerte, and literally thousands of unclaimed acres that could be purchased or leased. It was an ideal site for the two things that Owen was already dreaming of, one of them being a terminus for a transcontinental railroad that would link the State of Sinaloa to the great cities of St. Louis and Chicago, and that would provide an outlet to the Pacific that would be at least five hundred miles nearer to the Missouri-Mississippi Valley than were San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Puget Sound. But the second idea in Owen's mind was of equal importance, and that was the founding of a series of communes, or Utopian-style colonies of Americans, at Topolobampo and at other places on the level plain that could be irrigated by the abundant waters of the Fuerte River.

An ardent student of the French social philosopher Fourier, and of the Englishman Robert Owen (to whom Albert K. Owen does not appear to have been related in any way), he had long ago absorbed from these writers, and from others, the concept of the role of the worker in producing capital. He advocated the founding of a "Credit Foncier Company," which would be the model and mother of many such colonies of Americans along the route of the proposed Texas, Topolobampo, and Pacific Railroad. The Credit Foncier was to be in charge of a group of directors, with great powers to control the colonies and to keep out all subversives, such as political parties, secret societies, clubs, and churches. Prospective colonists had to agree to abide by a long list of "Principles," and were expected to do a day's work for "credits" rather than for cash. All workers (at least for the first six months of the colony) were to be paid the same number of "credits" regardless of the type of work, and with these credits a man would obtain food, lodging, furniture, and the like, and when he raised a family his children would receive education, medical care, and so on, and he himself would be entitled to retirement compensation after 30 years – all of it without the use of cash, or banks, or loans, or interest, or any of the other less desirable institutions of civilization.

All of this sounded very good to dispossessed farmers, and to small business men who had been caught in the toils of the money lenders; consequently, many colonists signed up to go to "Pacific City," which was to be built on Topolobampo Bay, the first shipment of colonists arriving November 17, 1886, most of them being Californians. They were followed by more and more emigrants, until by 1893 a total of 1,245 men, women, and children, from nearly every state of the Union, could claim to have been "colonists" at or near Topolobampo.

But alas for the grandiose schemes of Albert Owen. The colonists were fractious; some were lazy; some were liberal, some conservative; none could agree to work harmoniously while others loafed. The

rains came and destroyed crops; the hastily constructed dams on the river broke; the "ditch," which cost thousands of man hours of labor, was imperfectly surveyed and failed to carry properly its precious burden of irrigation water; and one of the colony's leading citizens, the editor of the local newspaper, a Mrs. Marie Howland, turned out to be an advocate of a rather liberal brand of sexual freedom that scandalized the more conservative element of the colony.

Meanwhile, back at the round-house, the plans for the railroad across the precipitous Sierra Madre were meeting with the same kind of problems. Owen travelled all over America, and went to London too, trying to raise capital. The concessions he had obtained from the Mexican government ran out, so he hastened to Mexico City to renew them. And while he was away he was unable to control the rebellious colonists, now under the leadership of a Kansan named Christian Hoffman, who had come originally with a contract to construct the "ditch" for Owen, and whose primary concern was that he and his men should be repaid for their work, in cash or in land.

By 1893, after many colonists had returned to the States in disgust, all that was left of the colony was a handful of still faithful Owenites, face to face with an equal number of embattled Hoffmanites, who by that time had formed their own company under Mexican law. Owen and Hoffman were obliged to allow President Porfirio Diaz (whose principal concern was to get the railroad built) to settle their argument, each side claiming that the other side was in illegal possession of the irrigation ditch that was the artery of the colony's life. Diaz declared Hoffman's claim to the ditch and to the land he had acquired to be legal; and to crown the misfortunes of the Owenites, "The Plan" that Owen had tried to put into execution for twenty years, the Utopian concept of labor without cash, the magnificent idea of equality for workers regardless of ability, was declared to be unconstitutional according to the laws of Mexico.

This was the end. The colony could not survive this crushing blow; and although some Americans continued to live in Sinaloa until 1913, Albert K. Owen never again set foot in Topolobampo.

Author Ray Reynolds, who teaches Communications at Grossmont College near San Diego, has done a magnificent job of reconstructing the day-by-day life of the colonists as they grubbed out a path for the "ditch," nearly starved during the first year or so of the colony, but bravely set up schools, held dances, fiestas, musical concerts, argued socialism and religion, printed and distributed their own newspaper, and posed for scores of photographs taken by Ira Kneeland, the official photographer for the colony, while their leaders, Owen, Hoffman, Mrs. Howland, and others, argued and fought over the best way to run a colony, and how to finance a railroad.

The book is lavishly illustrated with about 100 photos and maps, most of the photographs being taken from the glass plates originally exposed by Ira Kneeland in the 1890's, and carefully preserved, some in Fresno and some in upstate New York, by descendants of the colonists and of Albert Owen himself. It is also enriched with copies of original documents – circulars, government reports, agreements, newspaper articles, and the like – which form part of the raw materials from which this fascinating story has been woven. The Appendix has a state-by-state roster of all 1,245 colonists, as well as a bibliography and an index. Since the work is privately published, and is even now nearly out of print, it is sure to become a collector's item. Westerners are urged to send in an order at once if they want a copy; only a dozen or so copies remain unsold.

– RAYMUND F. WOOD.

WESTERN CAMPFIRES: Reminiscences of Western Camping Over Half a Century, by Harry C. James. Northland Press, 60 pp., 1973.

The many friends of corresponding member Harry James will welcome this volume, for in it he chronicles some of the highlights of the Trailfinders, an organization founded by the author more than 50 years ago in Southern California to promote camping activities among young men.

Their remarkable expeditions have been wide-ranging, taking them on visits through a roll call of natural wonders: the Grand

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Tetons, Zion National Park, El Morro, Grand Canyon, Oraibi, Joshua Tree, Glacier National Park, and Yosemite, as well as a host of lesser known locations. Everywhere the procedures for campfire evenings followed an anticipated and welcomed pattern: individual reports of the day's activities that were worth sharing, a talk by one of the counselors or by some guest, games that could be played in a small area, and lastly music whenever possible.

The pervading theme of the book, however, is the excitement, the joy, the adventure, and the new dimensions of spirit and mind that emanated from the rich contact with nature that characterized Trailfinder outings.

In the hectic press of contemporary urban life, it is refreshing and restorative to read accounts like this of the outdoor experience. But I can't help but note the air of nostalgia and regret that this may be, alas, an experience that is becoming less and less available to succeeding generations. Considering this, *Western Campfires* is perhaps a requiem for a vanished era, a period both deeply felt and fondly remembered by the author.

—Tony Lehman.

Wild Legacy: California Hunting and Fishing Tales, by V. Aubrey Neasham, Howell-North Books, 178 pp., 1973. $6.50.

Californians are familiar with the stories of the vast herds of elk and antelope that many years ago roamed the valleys, the great number of grizzly bears to be found in the foothills and in the mountains, while the fish, birds and waterfowl existed in abundance. The history of their reduction has been put together by Dr. Neasham through a fine selection of tales covering the past 150 years. The book is aimed at the sportsman, but the western historian will find this anthology of interest as the stories that are included have been taken from published reminiscences, books, and newspaper accounts that the author considers having a basis of truth.

The book is divided into three periods, Spanish-Mexican, American (1850-1900) and the Twentieth Century, each presenting chapters on various species of wildlife with information and facts about the animal or fowl and the economic or other factors of the times providing a setting for a story or tale.

Time and again the reader is made aware of the thoughtlessness of the human race on one side and the concern of a great many others on the side of conservation. The sea otter, the land otter, and beaver were hunted almost to extinction in the late Mexican and early American periods. Elk, deer, and antelope were widely sought by market hunters in the mid 1800's, to the extent that the elk and antelope were rarely seen after 1870 in spite of closed areas established in 1852 by the state legislature and extended statewide in 1854. Unfortunately the enforcement was left to the counties and it wasn't until the establishment in 1883 of a State Bureau of Patrol and Enforcement that the regulations became effective. Deer, like the coyote, have been able to adapt to encroaching land development by man and today still exist in great numbers.

Great concern developed over the increase in trout fishing, so much so that in 1870 the legislature created a State Board of Fish Commissioners whose authority was later extended to control game. To increase the number of fish and to make up for the loss of others (salmon in the Sacramento River for example) some 32 species of fish have been introduced into California streams, the most noticeable being the striped bass of which millions are found in the rivers and along the coast, all from a plant of 135 fish in 1879 into Carquinez Straits and a second plant in 1882 of 300 fish into Suisun Bay.

The tales of the Twentieth Century period differ from the earlier era stories, for here we find the lion hunted with a camera, deer and bear hunted with bow and arrow, a California Big Horn Sheep attacked and killed by two eagles, and at sea seven marlin taken in one day by a single fisherman, and all but one released. A different attitude.

The final chapter is on Fish and Game Administration and the plan and goals for 1980. In the face of increased hunting and fishing, we can only hope that these goals are realistic and that they may be reached.

—Dutch Holland.