

## Lloyd Mitchell 1910-1978

*by Andrew S. Dagosta*

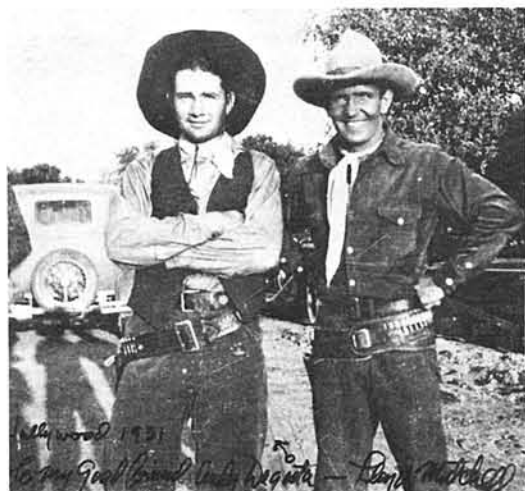
Back about 1968, on one of my frequent trips to the Glendale Public Library, I would go into the auditorium and look at the art exhibits on display. On one particular occasion I had, what was to me, a very pleasant surprise. Here was a room full of western art, and I spent a good hour looking over these paintings. I was into painting the west myself and it was pleasing to study another cowboy and Indian artist. The artist of this exhibit signed his work as Lloyd Mitchell. Fortunately for me there were some business cards he had left for anyone interested in his art. At that time, I took one thinking that I would like to meet him someday. Before I made contact, I wanted to visit the exhibit again. I decided to call

right away and made an appointment to visit his studio.

Lloyd was always happy to visit with any western buff, so needless to say, we met and hit it off from the start. I spent a couple of hours with him on that visit and didn't get a word in edgewise. For another artist it was absolutely great just to talk to someone that liked the same things that I did. As Lloyd would say, 'Horses an manure!'

The first visit with Lloyd had a dual purpose for me. I had put some of my own paintings in the trunk of the car and was hoping that he would critique them and he did so with great sincerity. It was the beginning of a lasting friendship.

Lloyd was instrumental in helping me  
(Continued on Page Four)



Lloyd Mitchell as a cowboy actor in the early 1930's.

# The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS  
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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.

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Los Angeles Corral



## THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

### JUNE

"Rancho Dominguez" was the scene of this year's annual *Fandango*. This famous California landmark, and former seminary, offered early arrivals tours of the old adobe. The social hour was conducted on the broad lawn of the park, followed by a catered feast with tasty wine. The program was presented by Corresponding Member Anna Marie Hager and she spoke about "Some Book Totin' Westerners!" Those who missed this superb presentation will find it published in a future issue of the *Branding Iron*.

### JULY

Bob Weinstein, speaking on Pacific Coast Maritime History, reminded us that a great debt is owed to the early photographers of the West. His slides of maritime activities were outstanding. Each picture told an exciting story and left the viewer wondering how the moment could have been so dramatically captured without today's highspeed film and portable camera equipment.

### AUGUST

Associate Member Louis Heintz had been scheduled to speak on "Mining in the West." The Corral was stunned and saddened to learn of his passing two hours before the meeting.

Reliable John Kemble favored us with his usual eloquent and scholarly delivery of a fascinating presentation on the development of the San Francisco waterfront.

## Wranglers Are Thanked

Thanks are due to Head Wrangler Bill Warren and his able group of workers, all of whom helped make this year's *Fandango* a notable one. Among those we noted lending a hand tending bar, selling tickets, or facilitating parking were Bill Burkhart, Abe Hoffman, Bill Lorenz, Bruce Walton, and Walt Wheelock. Good work, gentlemen.



## Corral Chips

*Hugh Tolford* converts his dollars into West German marks (not a bad idea these days) and travels abroad as the special invited guest of several Western Corral and German Public Television. At the famous Western ghost town set outside Frankfurt, Hugh presents his excellent slide program on the Tonopah-Rhyolite boom towns for an evening confab where a translator interprets Hugh's commentary for his foreign audience.

Bibliophiles should note that the Ross Valley Book Company, with C.M. *Robert Hawley* as one of the owners, has opened their interesting new shop in Marin County where they will specialize in Western Americana. Somewhat closer at hand, C.M. *Howard Karno* has inaugurated his bookstore on Westwood Boulevard where the specialty will be volumes dealing with Latin America, Mexico, and Baja California.

*Jim Fassero* continues his valuable and dedicated community service as founder and president of the San Pedro Heart Foundation.

New active member *Abe Hoffman* enralls members of the San Fernando Valley Historical Society with a fascinating and informative talk on "The Owens Valley

Aqueduct Controversy".

Representing the United States at the 42nd World Shooting Championship in Seoul, Korea, is C.M. *David Kimes*, a member of the U.S. Army Reserve and the current holder of the world's record with the big bore 300 meter standard rifle.

*Bill Hendricks* and *Walt Wheelock* miss the July Roundup to travel to Ensenada where they are the honored guests at the annual banquet of the *Comité Pro-Restauración y Conservación de las Misiones de Baja California*. On the previous evening Bill attends a dinner in Tijuana and is presented with an honorary membership in the Tijuana Historical Society.

Honorary Member *Horace Albright* is feted at Ventura's Pierpont Inn as the special guest of the present director of the National Park Service.

In ceremonies featured on nationwide television, *Iron Eyes Cody* presents a full eagle feather headdress to President Carter and gives the Chief Executive a new name: Wamblee Ska, or "Great White Eagle." According to CBS News, this is the first time an American president has been so honored since Calvin Coolidge.

*Doyce Nunis* is appointed by Mayor Bradley to the Los Angeles 200 Committee, a 44-member body which will plan and implement the celebrations in 1981 for the bicentennial of the founding of the city.

The 10th Annual Pow Wow of the Orange County Indian Center is dedicated to C.M. *Paul Borcharding* and his wife, both of whom have been active in volunteering their time and resources to the welfare of the American Indian.

C.M. *Peter Burk* is busy these days serving as chairman of the Mojave National Park Coalition, a group which is urging the passage of legislation in the Congress to create a National Park of nearly 1,200,000 acres in the Mojave Desert. Interested Corral members can get more information and literature by writing Peter at P.O. Box 106, Barstow, California 92311.

Deputy Sheriff *Tony Lehman*, a teacher of English at Chaffey High School in Ontario, receives a plaque from the Kiwanis International as an Outstanding Educator.

(Continued on Page Fourteen)

*Lloyd Mitchell . . .*

develop my painting — he was never too busy to take a few minutes or an hour to talk horses, their actions, moods and all other aspects of western life.

I invited Lloyd to a Westerner meeting and encouraged him to join, and am sure that a great many of us are glad that he touched our lives — many of us will never forget the way he could light up a room with his personality and humor.

Lloyd introduced me to the Death Valley 49'ers Encampment and art show as he had been attending almost since its inception. He was an invitational artist and had a great following; you could almost be sure to find a great number of people around his display enjoying his "Skinny Saloons" and even more than that, just gabbin' with him.

Ed Trumble, of the Leaning Tree Company, was so taken by these works of art that he commissioned Lloyd over the years to do 28 "Saloons" which have been reproduced as prints and Christmas cards.

Lloyd was many things in his lifetime, among them a cowboy, a bit character actor in early day motion pictures, a bill collector, a liquor salesman, the proprietor of a liquor store, and best of all a fine cowboy and Indian artist. Lloyd could tell you some hair raising stories of his collection work for a

stove company. Some of these experiences never made the *Branding Iron* as they weren't western.

Mitchell was one of the foremost Western painters to me, and his studio was packed with canvases of cowboys, Indians, saloons and wild horses. He was raised in the Van Buren-Fort Smith area of Arkansas, near the border with Oklahoma, and was immersed in the legends of the American West at an early age. He left home when he was 16 to make his place in the world. His first job was on a big ranch. He later came to Hollywood, as he stated in his *Branding Iron* feature a couple years ago, and did bit parts with Tom Mix, Bob Steel, Ken Maynard and Joe Cody — a brother of Iron Eyes Cody. He began his painting career during World War II while serving on a minesweeper in the Pacific. He sketched life on shipboard, painted battle scenes, and would paint portraits of his shipmates.

Following World War II, Lloyd attended Chounard's Art Institute in Los Angeles, and studied under such famous California artists as Will Foster, Enjar Hanse, Same Hyde Harris, Trude Hanscom and Robert Frame. At one time he told me he believed he had painted some 2,000 pictures during his lifetime, many of which were hanging in prominent places across the country.



Cowboy and Indian art enthusiasts gather. (Left-Right) Andy Dagosta, Ken Mansker, Floyd Tomlin, Iron Eyes Cody, and Lloyd Mitchell.

When Lloyd had his first stroke, he couldn't paint and this was the biggest cruelty of all, because it was his life. I think the most touching thing that happened to me was when Lloyd asked me to critique a painting that he had been working on, with a magnifying glass, as his eyes were failing badly. What do you say to a man of such great talent who wanted to paint no matter the degree of difficulty?

In July, as well as any of the other months since his illness, he would come to my office

in the afternoon and then go with me to the Westerner meetings. On this last occasion, he looked exceptionally well and I told him so and of course he responded by saying that he still hoped he could paint again. As we all know, this was not to be. I have lost a great friend and all those hours we spent together talking about cowboys will be remembered. I can say that Lloyd Mitchell enriched my life and made me a better person. I'm sure he is still painting those great "Skinny Saloons" up there in that great art gallery in the sky.



"Snowshoe" Thompson

## High Sierra Skiing, Gold Rush Style

*by Powell Greenland*

A familiar sight along Interstate 80, nearing the crest of Donner Pass, is the world-famous Boreal Ridge Ski Area. Here, behind an imposing sculpture of Snowshoe Thompson, is located the Western American Skisport Museum where William Berry, ski historian and curator, has painstakingly assembled an outstanding collection of skiing memorabilia with particular attention to the early history of skiing in the Sierras. It was inevitable, therefore, that the place has also become a sort of shrine to the memory of the legendary Snowshoe Thompson whose fantastic accomplishments on snowshoes make him well deserving of the

honor. But attention is also given to a much more obscure area of skiing history which deserves a broader focus.

The story of the earliest use of skis in California leading to the first organized skiing competition in the United States is an integral part of the fascinating history of an important but little known gold producing region of California.

The first rush of miners to the goldfields in 1848, 1849 and early 1850 was concentrated along the streams and river bars in the Sierra foothills scorned the higher elevations. Ironically it was a wild story of golden rocks strewn around the shore of a lake



conjured from the confused brain of J.R. Stoddard that finally led about a thousand men into the higher reaches of the Sierras. They never found Stoddard's "Gold Lake" but they did discover rich placers in Onion Valley, Poorman Creek, and Sawpit Flat.

At about this same time an old sea captain named Sears led another party into the adjoining area along the great divide which separates the North Yuba and the South Feather Rivers making rich discoveries along Slate Creek. Thus, this vast wild and spectacularly scenic area of the High Sierra marked by canyons 2,000 feet deep, rugged peaks and dense forests, remote even today, became the setting of feverish gold mining activity. These placers would someday be among the richest mines of northern Sierra and Plumas counties.

Communities quickly formed in typical gold-rush style with tents and brush huts cluttering the landscape to be gradually replaced with more substantial log and whipsawed structures. Colorful names such as Whiskey Diggings, Howland Flat, Poker Flat, Gibsonville, Port Wine, Scales, St. Louis, Poverty Hill and Rabbit Creek were given to the dozens of mining camps springing up in a ragged line along Slate Creek, Poorman Creek and their tributaries. These settlements had one thing in common unique from their lowland counterparts — deep snows and long winters.

The first year or two found many of the miners seasonally traveling to the lower elevations to escape the winter snows. But mountain life appealed to many and soon a hearty breed made these mountains their year-round home, some even bringing their wives and children. It was soon apparent this particular region of the Sierras was one of extremely heavy snows. During the winter of 1852-53 the shivering camps of Onion Valley recorded a snowfall of 25 feet, bringing all activity outside the crude shelters to a complete standstill for days at a time.

Conditions demanded a remedy and it was not long in coming. A Norwegian sailor, Charles Nelson, who had turned miner after deserting his ship in San Francisco, introduced skis in the area as early as 1853. Nelson explained that ski was the Nor-

wegian word for snowshoe, and snowshoes they were then universally called. Even today some oldtimers in the more remote communities stubbornly cling to this appellation.

Snowshoeing spread rapidly throughout the mountain communities with most of the inhabitants participating. These early snowshoes were often crude and poorly constructed and it was even reported that barrel staves were widely used. But despite these awkward beginnings, it proved a method of mobility across the deep snows. Communication with the other mountain camps became possible and even a significant amount of work could be carried on in the tunnels of the drift mines which were becoming extensive in the district.

Each new season marked an improvement in both the fashioning of the snowshoes and in the skill of the user. Soon the more adept could fairly sail over the snow and fly down the slopes at breathtaking speeds. At this point snowshoeing in these remote snow-bound camps ceased to be just a means of mobility and became rather an exciting and exhilarating sport.

John Porter, known as "Old Buckskin" of Sawpit Flat, was the first inhabitant of the region to make his living by handcrafting snowshoes. Fashioning them from native spruce, he departed from the early flat-bottomed construction and invented the groove which first appeared in 1857. Porter's "shoes" were usually around eight feet long with the groove beginning near the curve of the toe to the balance of the full length. Each skier also carried a single pole looking very much like a broom handle sharpened at one end with a flat disc secured 3 or 4 inches from the point to keep it from being thrust too deeply into the snow.

Many communities could soon boast of their own snowshoe or ski specialists, each striving to perfect their designs and craftsmanship. "Shoes" were generally of two types: traveling, which were usually around 8 feet in length, and racing, which ranged from 10 to 13½ feet long. The widths varied from 3¾ inches to 4½ inches with thicknesses of about ⅝ of an inch at the curve of the toe tapered in both directions from under the shoe strap, at which point it was a

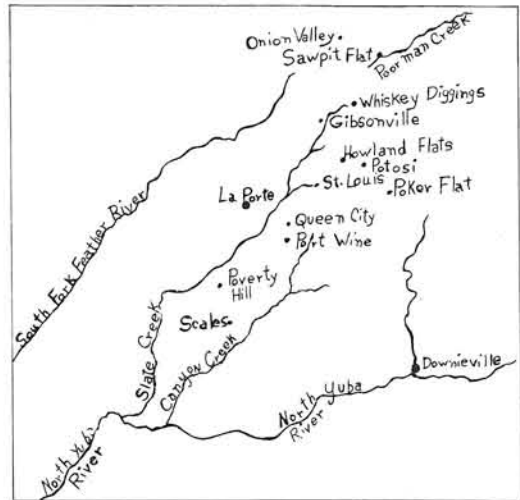
full 1½ inches in thickness.

Although the bottoms were carefully planed, sanded and polished to a high finish, it was learned from the beginning that wax was needed to give a good gliding surface to the "shoes". However, when snowshoeing became a highly competitive sport, simple waxing was not satisfactory. All sorts of highly secret special concoctions were invented to add speed to the "shoes." These closely guarded formulas called for special ingredients in the proper proportions cooked in secret like a witches' brew. In fact, this "dope" as it was universally called in the mountains became so specialized that various types were used for different times of the day and for all kinds of snow conditions. Wet snow, dry snow, morning snow and afternoon snow all required a different dope.

Specialists in dope making became highly in demand and soon each town had its own maker of outstanding dope. The first recorded "dopeman" was Bill Clinch of Sawpit Flat who became widely known for his "Sierra Lightning." Most dopes contained such ingredients as spermaceti, pine pitch, camphor, balsam fir, and oil of spruce stirred together in various proportions and cooking times.

Racing took place from a standing start down a steep slope on a measured course of about 1,200 feet. The start was signaled by a drum beat with the skier getting his start by propelling himself forward as quickly as possible with his ski pole in both hands. As he gained speed he would squat as low as possible to offer the least wind resistance, leaning well back on his heels to keep weight off the leading edge of his skis. As the winner flew past the finish line a red flag was waved to signal the finish.

The first such organized race was held in Onion Valley as early as 1855, a full year earlier than Snowshoe Thompson's initial mail run across the Sierra. Two years later organized races were held at La Porte, formerly called Rabbit Creek. At that time gamblers and saloon owners put up a purse of several hundred dollars with hundreds more changing hands as betting on snowshoe racing became widespread throughout the mountain mining camps.



**Birthplace of Skiing in America.**

La Porte, which is located in about the center of this once great gold mining area, famous for its drift mining, hydraulic mining, and ground sluicing, soon became the hub of snowshoeing competition. In 1867 with the establishment of the Alturas Snow Shoe Club and the first annual competition, skiing history was made with the first organized skiing competition in the United States. These annual La Porte downhill races were continuously held until 1911. Robert Oliver, a Cornish miner of Sawpit Flat, became the first champion of organized ski racing at the 1867 event by skiing the 1,230 foot course from a standing start in 14 seconds flat.

The first races were staged on a weekend but by the third annual races held in February 1869, four days were devoted to the event with thousands in attendance urging on their hometown favorite. Later a full week would be set aside for these annual affairs. Dances and balls were scheduled every night and races with elimination matches highlighted each day. A purse of a thousand dollars was common, with many thousands more changing hands in the saloons and gambling halls.

The third annual meeting of the La Porte races sponsored by the Alturas Snow Shoe Club was highlighted by the appearance of the famous Snow-Shoe Thompson. It was reported he had come over from Alpine County to see for himself if the fantastic

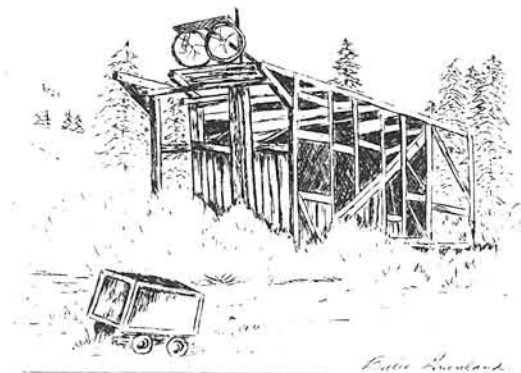
speeds he had heard about were actually true. He brought along his own shoes which were a source of curiosity to the Plumas County skiers. They found them to be the "old-fashioned Norwegian type," 7½ feet long with a flat bottom and no groove. Some sources say they were made of maple, others oak, but in either case inferior for racing purposes to the spruce skis used in the area. Thompson likewise expressed complete ignorance of the dope which was such an all-important factor in the races of the Sierra-Plumas County area. By the end of the competition it was not surprising, therefore, that he was badly beaten in all of the events he entered.

It is worth noting, however, that these were simple down-hill races on a straight track with no jumps or turns or difficult terrain. Even the "Plumas Boys" would admit that they would be no match for Thompson in the type of snowshoeing that had made him a legend in his own time. This is probably the reason they did not accept a challenge by Thompson to come over to Alpine County and race with him on a course that he would personally lay out.

Rival towns quickly organized their own clubs to compete in the annual La Porte races but they also staged their own events with neighboring communities. Snowshoe racing became so popular that events were even staged for women and children. There were also "fun" races for couples — the man standing with his feet in the straps with a woman standing on the skis just behind him with arms clasped around her partner's waist. In these events the teams would usually end up in the snow with legs and skis going in opposite directions.

While all of the recorded races in the Slate Creek and Onion Valley areas were described as "downhill," reports from the town of Jamison in the adjacent Plumas Eureka Mining District were pictured as what we would term today, "cross country." One such race reported in March 1871 was run on a course three miles long with many turns and uphill as well as downhill sections, making it truly a cross country race.

The Plumas Eureka District was very jealous of its early history of skiing activity



**Plumas Eureka ore-bucket tramways, the first ski lift in California.**

and claimed that the ore-bucket tramway between the Eureka mine and mill was the first ski lift in California if not the United States. Today the few remaining old-time residents of Johnsville, the only inhabited settlement in the area, like to refer to the center of this early ski activity as the "Eureka Bowl" and will argue that this section of Plumas County is as important as any other in the history of snow sports.

Fortunately for the historian, most of the early material relating to organized skiing was duly recorded in the *Mountain Messenger*, an early weekly newspaper dating back to 1855 when it was established in Gibsonville. It moved to La Porte in 1856 and finally to Downieville a few years later. It is still published regularly making it the oldest continuously published weekly in California. Early pages were filled with the news of the dozens of towns that crowded the region, some separated by only a mile or two. Today only the village of La Porte is still inhabited, the rest are all silent. Some are marked by a few remaining weather-beaten buildings weakened and slanting from the heavy winter snows. Others can be identified only by rubble or foundations while most are merely sites recognized by the scars of years of hydraulic mining when giant nozzles washed away the mountain sides. This is all that remains to remind us this remote region once produced over 90 million dollars in gold and was the birthplace of skiing in America.



# RICHARD SOMERSET DEN, MD — 1821-1895

## “The Irish Physician to the Dons”

# His Life, Death and Resurrection

*By Edward E. Harnagel, MD*

Richard Somerset Den, MD, generally considered the first “regular” physician in Los Angeles, was born in Garanbara, County Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1821. His forebears were Norman-French aristocrats who had crossed the Channel with William the Conqueror. Royalty and many Crusaders were numbered in his family tree. Cromwell, in the 17th century, confiscated the ancestral estates.

His preliminary education was in Dublin and at the City Infirmary and Leper Hospital in Waterford where he remained for six years, receiving a thorough practical course in medical science. In 1839, he passed his examination and received his qualifications as an obstetrician, and in 1840, the certificate was awarded to him at Dublin in anatomy, medicine and surgery. Continuing to pursue his studies, he received his final qualifications in 1842.

Shortly thereafter, he obtained appointment as surgeon on the “Glenswilly” of Glasgow which sailed from London bound for Australia and India in August, 1842. Some passengers were somewhat adverse to accepting his services because of his youthful appearance. However, the entire complement, passengers and crew alike, arrived at Sydney in excellent health after a journey of many weeks. It was said that he was the only ship’s surgeon during that period who landed his passengers in good health and without a death occurring on board. The passengers were profuse in their thanks to him and tried to persuade him to stay in Australia but the “Glenswilly” changed her course from India to Valparaiso and then sailed north to Mazatlan. While in port, the Doctor received the welcome news that his brother Nicholas, from whom he had not heard in many years, was living in Santa Barbara. He resigned his position as ship’s surgeon and booked passage on the

barque “Claretta” which landed at San Pedro, and then made his way to Santa Barbara on the ship “California,” arriving September 1, 1843.

He intended to pay a brief visit to his brother but month after month passed without any other vessel touching on the then almost unknown shores. The longer he remained in this country, the more he became attached to it. Further, he was prevailed upon to stay in the Santa Barbara area by wealthy Spanish Dons and the few Americans and other foreigners residing there. Yielding to their requests, and in obedience to the laws of Mexico relating to foreigners, Dr. Den presented his diploma as a physician and surgeon to the government in March, 1844, and received a special license to practice medicine. During a sojourn to Los Angeles in 1844, he was called on to perform some operations which he did successfully. A petition signed by leading Los Angeles citizens was presented to him inviting him to stay here and giving him every reassurance of a lucrative practice. He then settled in Los Angeles in July, 1844, and remained until the Gold Rush days.

In 1846-1847, during the Mexican War, he was the chief physician and surgeon of the Mexican Forces located in Southern California. He also treated American prisoners confined in Los Angeles during that war, among them Don Benito Wilson and Thomas O. Larkin, the only American Consul ever appointed in California while this State was under foreign rule. Dr. Den gave his bond to the authorities and had Larkin removed from prison to the home of the vintner, Don Luis Vignes, who provided comfortable quarters for Larkin and other prisoners. Forty years later the medical school of the University of Southern California began classes in what had been the Vignes Winery on Aliso Street.

In 1846, Dr. Den became the sole owner of the Santa Barbara Mission, exclusive of the church and priest quarters, upon payment of 7500 pesos in gold to Governor Pico. Pico had no authority to sell the Mission and some years later, title to it reverted to the Catholic Church.

In 1848, in company with countless others, Dr. Den became an Argonaut, organizing his own prospecting party and fitting it out at his own expense. His party tried its luck at Sullivan's Diggings near the town of Angels Camp in Calaveras County, prospecting during that and the following year with only limited success. As were many law-abiding persons, he was horrified by the disregard for law and order which he saw on every hand in the gold fields. One Sunday, for instance, in Sullivan's Camp he was witness to a particularly shocking event, a "Miners' Court." A burly, illiterate Australian convict was accusing a ragged, trembling Californian named Primotivo Soliz of stealing his mule. The charge was false and Soliz was being framed since the Australian coveted the "greaser's" rich placer claim. But a "Miners' Court" was not convened to render justice: the Californian was summarily hanged. Such events were not uncommon Sunday morning entertainment.

Since there was a great demand for his professional services, he discharged his men and began the practice of medicine again in 1849. Malaria was common due to the influx of Argonauts who had become infected while crossing the mosquito-infested jungles of Panama en route to Eldorado. Business was very brisk. There were always knife wounds to suture, broken bones to set, bullets to be probed for. Fevers and diarrheal diseases were epidemic. On some days he netted \$1000 from practice. This, however, cannot be considered a stupendous sum at a time when a shirt sold for \$40 and a shovel for \$200. While practicing in the Mother Lode country, he made a brief trip to San Francisco in 1850, and while there became one of the seven original organizers of the Society of California Pioneers.

In 1854, he returned to Santa Barbara and resumed medical practice. He also had considerable real estate holdings including an interest in the large Rancho San Marcos

which he owned jointly with his brother Nicholas. A dispute arose between the brothers over the ownership of the rancho, and Dr. Den brought legal action to require his brother to execute a conveyance of a half interest based on the doctor's contention that he had paid \$1500 in exchange for the deed. The defendant brother won the suit, but the wound between the brothers never healed. Dr. Den lost his interest also in the Santa Barbara Mission which was returned to the Catholic Church. Further, the decimation of the cattle herds during the severe drought in 1862 and 1863 brought the doctor to the brink of bankruptcy, as it did so many in this area who had invested heavily in land and cattle.

Presumably because of these losses, he then returned to Los Angeles in 1865 and continued in the practice of medicine until his death in 1895. He had a very large following among the Spanish and Mexican landed gentry of Los Angeles who held him in high esteem and affection. They called him Dr. Don Ricardo and coined the phrase, "Despues de Dios, Dr. Don Ricardo," which translates, "After God, Dr. Richard."

From several early writers one gets a vivid impression of this "Irish Physician to the Dons." Harris Newmark in his *Sixty Years in California*, an excellent history of the period 1853-1913, comments:

*Old Dr. Den will be remembered not only with esteem, but with affection. He was seldom seen except on horseback in which fashion he would visit his patients and was all in all somewhat of a man of mystery. He rode a magnificent coal black charger and was himself always dressed in black. He wore, too, a black felt hat; beneath the hat there clustered a mass of wavy hair as white as snow. In addition to all this, his standing collar was so high that he was compelled to hold his head erect; and as if to offset the immaculate linen, he tied around the collar a large black silk scarf. Thus attired and seated on his richly-caparisoned horse, Dr. Den appeared always dignified and even imposing. One may, therefore, easily picture him a friendly rival of Don Juan Bandini at the early Spanish balls as he was on intimate terms with Don and Doña Abel Stearns, acknowledged social leaders. Dr.*

*Den was fond of horse racing and had his own favorite race horses sent here from Santa Barbara where they were bred.*

A pioneer physician, LeMoyne Wills, also remarked:

*Dr. Den was a typical rubicund Irish gentleman of the old school, a veritable character out of Dickens. He always wore a black stock and a high hat with a brown frock coat and he jauntily rode a black saddle horse with Spanish bit, saddle, tapideros and all appurtenances, sitting a little to one side swinging gracefully to the horse's swinging lope. He was seen every day on the street making his calls always on horseback. He had his office at home in the Baker block and was in great demand among the pioneer families of Mexican and American descent. He was a bachelor and very dignified, almost pompous, in his manner and had a delicious rich Irish brogue. Always most courteous, he allowed no liberties or familiarities, would have fallen dead had anyone slapped him on the back and called him "Doc." When quizzed by curious people as to what was the matter with so-and-so, he would reply with great emphasis, "He is sick." "What are you giving him?" if one ventured so far. "Medicine, of course." If a patient would ask, "What are you giving me?" he would haughtily answer, "That is my business," which settled the questioner and did not give away his treatment. He used to ride fifty to one hundred miles often, so great was he in demand among the wealthy California families and great were his fees for such services. He was especially courteous, dignified and ethical with medical men, particularly so in consultations.*

Prior to his death, Dr. Den prepared the tomb for his final resting place, tersely stating, "If I do not prepare my place of burial, none of my relatives will." He also wrote the inscription which was engraved on his large and impressive tombstone which he had selected himself. In 1895, he was found dead in bed "with a smile on his sweet old face . . ." A coroner's inquest was held, and an autopsy report was "death from natural causes." He was buried in the Old Calvary Catholic cemetery which was

located on the site where Cathedral High School now stands. This is just east of the Pasadena Freeway near the Hill Street on-ramp.

This is not the end of the Den story. In 1930, Old Calvary cemetery was closed and those buried there removed to other cemeteries. Since none of his relatives claimed him, the Los Angeles County Medical Association paid \$175 to have his remains transferred to the then new Calvary cemetery on East Whittier Boulevard. This event was later described in this grisly manner:

*We just saw Dr. Richard S. Den! It was 1:15 pm, August 1, 1930, when the stone was rolled away from the mouth of the tomb of that grand old medico, Richard Somerset Den. He was the Nestor of California Medicine. There was present a committee of devotees of historical medicine to witness the glorious California sunshine bathing once again the last Surgeon-General of the Mexican Army in California.*

Not content with the removal of his cast iron coffin, these "devotees" opened it, removed the shroud and head wrappings and later the clothing. The old doctor's wrists were bound together with a red bandana handkerchief and between the two was an octagon gold fifty-cent piece bearing the date 1851. Also in close proximity to his hands was a golfball-sized piece of gold-bearing quartz. Pictures were taken of this event which are in the photographic collection of the library of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. They clearly reveal that the shroud, jacket, tie and vest with shiny lapels were in an excellent state of preservation, but the state of deterioration of the body was such that, even with the assistance of photographs taken during life, recognition of the old doctor was difficult even in "glorious California sunshine." The efforts of the "committee of devotees" presumably to honor Dr. Den proved futile. Recent inquiry at Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles reveals no record of his reburial there. According to cemetery officials, those from the Old Calvary cemetery not claimed by next of kin were put in a common unmarked grave. Further inquiry indicates

that there is a Richard Den buried in Calvary cemetery in Santa Barbara. Whether this is the old doctor has not been definitely established. The Santa Barbara grave has no marker and further, there is another body in the same grave, that of a William Den.

One is reminded of the lines, crudely engraved on Shakespeare's monument at Stratford-on-Avon:

*Good friend, for Jesus sake  
forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here  
Blest be the man that spared  
these stones  
And cursed be he who moves  
my bones.*

As Shakespeare threatened, Dr. Den from the Great Beyond may justly have cursed those "devotees of history" who pried into his coffin and disturbed his earthly remains.

To complete the story of Dr. Den this writer felt compelled to locate his present gravesite and to photograph the monument. Inquiry by telephone as well as a personal visit to Calvary Cemetery was futile; after a thorough search cemetery officials could find no record of his burial. Those not claimed by next of kin, I was informed, were put in a common unmarked grave; and it was initially believed that this was the fate of Los Angeles' first physician.

Thinking that perhaps his nieces and nephews in Santa Barbara area might have claimed his body and reburied it in a family plot in that city, an inquiry was made of the Santa Barbara Historical Society. Prompt response disclosed that there is indeed a Richard Den buried at Calvary Cemetery there. However, the burial date was 1900 which, of course, fits neither the date of Dr. Den's burial or reburial. Further inquiry indicated that this Richard Den was Richard Aurelio Den, who died at the age of 4 and was probably the son of William Den with whom he is buried. This Richard was the grand-nephew of the old pioneer physician.

After publication of a biographical sketch of Dr. Den in the LACMA Bulletin, I received a long letter from Mr. Tom Bowen of Fallbrook, California. The article had been forwarded to him by Theodore Lynch, MD of Pasadena. Mr. Bowen stated that he had

been associated with the Catholic cemeteries and that he had been the cemetery representative present along with the three LACMA physicians at the exhumation of Dr. Den in 1930. He further wrote:

*"Something that you did not mention in the article was that I put my hand in his side and removed his heart (which had been removed at autopsy for pathologic study) which still had attached to it a clump of fatty tissue at its base. I am the only living person who touched this distinguished member of the medical fraternity and it was all done with reverential respect for the dead and especially a famous personality.*

*"There was absolutely no charge made for the removal. This was true of all bodies removed. I saw to it that a beautiful spot was chosen for his final resting place which is an entire lot of several graves located in section "C" or "D" of Calvary Cemetery. The \$175 could have been applied to the removal of the monument which identifies his grave and the epitaph sort of tells of his coming around the horn of South America and never leaving his adopted country. Don't let anyone in the cemetery tell you otherwise. I hope these thoughts clarify a few honest errors which might have left the wrong idea in the minds of some readers."*

Some months later, armed with Mr. Bowen's letter, I again visited Calvary Cemetery. The officials were quite cooperative, but again a thorough search of their records revealed no evidence of Dr. Den's reburial. Somewhat dismayed, I thought I might make a personal search of sections "C" and "D" myself. One sees many familiar names in the cemetery: Wolfskill, Dockweiler, Mead, Guasti, Duque, among others. I was reminded of the famous line from Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, "Paths of Glory Lead But To The Grave." But I could not locate the tombstone or grave of Los Angeles' first physician.

Just as I was preparing to leave the cemetery I saw a gentleman get out of a car in front of me, wave animatedly and point to a tombstone. This was Mr. Ed Kozovich, an official of the cemetery who minutes before had gone over the records with me searching in vain for Dr. Den's name. Perhaps



stimulated by my inquiry, he decided to join the search and having seen me drive around section "C" and "D" in one direction, he got in his car and drove around in another. Near the boundary of these two sections, as he was turning a corner, his eyes fell upon the inscription *Den* at the bottom of an obelisk-shaped monument. With considerable excitement we examined the marker and found to our considerable satisfaction that it was that of the "Irish Physician of the Dons" bearing this inscription which he, himself composed:

*Here Repose the Remains Of*

*RICHARD S. DEN*

*Born Co. Kilkenny, Ireland in 1821*

*Departed from Home and Country in 1842*

*Arrived in California in 1843*

*Since Then Never Left the  
Land of Adoption*

*Died July 20, 1895, age 74 years*

*May He Rest in Peace*

*Amen*

We can only echo this sentiment and hope that his earthly remains will not again be disturbed or brought to public view. For the record, the grave site in Calvary Cemetery is Lot 1090, Section D.

## Smoke Signals

*by Iron Eyes Cody*

Little is known today about wampum belts used by the Cherokee, Iroquois and other woodland Indians. The early day Cherokee made wampum belts from shell beads. The beads ranged in color from white to dark purple and were interwoven into various symbolic designs on eleven strands of sinew and usually consisted of some one hundred and eighty beads. I have copies of two belts in my collection.

The belts were used for teaching and for recording history, and they were used in getting together with early immigrants from Europe. Because the belts were given as gifts, the immigrants thought the belts were a medium of exchange, thus the slang word "wampum," meaning money, became popular.

The Cherokee used strings of wampum in early days with the British settlers in South Carolina in 1775 for negotiations. The Iroquois, Shawnee and Delaware Indians first introduced the use of the belts to the Cherokee. This started other Indian tribes visiting the Cherokee towns.

The Mohawks gave the Cherokees treaty belts of black and white. The white represented the Iroquois who were at peace, the black beads represented the white men who had killed the Iroquois. When used ceremonially the white represented peace, health, welfare and prosperity. The black represented hostility, sorrow, death, condolence and mourning, ideas all expressed by the dark or purple beads. White tinged red by vermillion or other red colors was used as a challenge or declaration of war, or to invite friends to join in a war. A belt message might say, "We must have friendship for all Indian nations, for the interests of all nations of Indians are one."

After all the battles with the Iroquois the Cherokee joined their family group and later were removed from their land to Indian territory, now called Oklahoma. Tribal leaders of the Cherokee nation gave yearly interpretations of the belts, but this ended with statehood in later years with the coming of land allotments.

Leaders of Red Bird Smith movement decided the Ketowah Society was the rightful keeper of the wampum belts. At this time they were held by Bob Ross, son of Chief Ross of the Cherokees. Through the efforts of Wilson Girty, a member of the Cherokee Council and the district captains of the Ketowah Society the belts were returned.



### *Corral Chips Continued . . .*

On hand for Baja Symposium XVI meeting in La Paz and San Jose del Cabo are eleven avid Westerner Baja buffs: *Glen Dawson, Everett Hager, Bill Hendricks, John Kemble, Tad Lonergan, Henry Welcome, Walt Wheelock*; Associate Members *Bill Lorenz* and *John Swingle*; and Corresponding Members *Anna Marie Hager* and *Howard Karno*. Past-Sheriff Kemble spoke before the group in La Paz on "The Sea Otter Trade in Baja California."

*Robert Weinstein* delivers an address for a symposium on maritime history organized by the Bath Museum in Maine, and presents a talk on "Photography and History" at a conference in Ottawa sponsored by the Public Archives of Canada. Also, the Spring 1978 issue of *California History*, the quarterly of the California Historical Society, is graced by one of Robert's knowledgeable articles entitled "North from Panama, West to the Orient."

For the last nine years, the Academy of Magical Arts has held its annual awards banquet at the Century Plaza Hotel in Century City and the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. This black tie affair is likened to the Academy Awards for motion picture arts. Nominees for awards are selected on their magical acts and in recognition for service to the magic industry. Westerner *Loring Campbell* received a "Special Fellowship" this year for his performances through the years which have brought admiration from his audiences as well as fellow magicians.

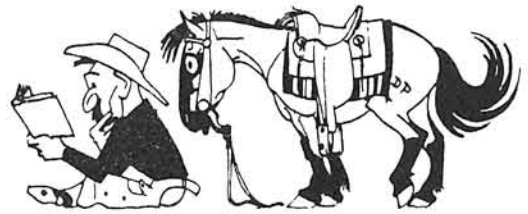
*Bob Cowan* is interviewed on three separate occasions by the U.C.L.A. Oral History Program. Topics of these valuable and interesting recollections are life with his scholarly father, *Robert Ernest Cowan*; Bob's exposure to books and how the *Bibliography of the History of California* came about; and his association with businessman-bibliophile *William Andrews Clark*.

*Ernest Marquez* is currently exhibiting at the Santa Monica Public Library copies of historical photographs from his collection of sites in Santa Monica, Venice and Main Street, Los Angeles, paired with color photographs of identical scenes as they are today. This exhibit will be on display until September 22.

Lastly, Westerners are saddened by the loss of three cherished members: *Harry C. James, Lloyd Mitchell, and Louis Heintz*. Your compadres in the Corral will miss you greatly. *Vaya con Dios*.

### **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: *Richard House*, La Canada; *Howard Karno*, Santa Monica; *Michael McNeill*, Arcadia, and *George Wallace* of Los Angeles.



### **DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .**

*Melvin Ricks' Alaska Bibliography: An Introductory Guide to Alaskan Historical Literature*, by *Stephen and Betty Haycox*. Binford & Morts. 2536 S.E. 11th St. Portland, Oregon 97202. 270pp., 1977, \$20.00.

For over a half century, *Melvin Ricks* gathered historical material on Alaska — the last American frontier. The result of his research has been published under the auspices of the Alaska Historical Commission. *Ricks* died of a heart attack in 1964 before the completion of this vast work, so *Stephen and Betty Haycox* continued his effort and this bibliography is the end result.

Presented here are most of the historical events and personalities that played a part in Alaskan history and literature. Unlike most bibliographies, this book includes not

only books, but articles and governmental documents and publications. Anyone planning a research project on Alaska will find this a gold mine of information.

— Art Brush



*Great American Indians: Profiles in Life and Leadership* by Frederick J. Dockstader. Van Nostrand Reinhold. New York, 1978. \$16.95.

Dr. Dockstader, an educator, author and museum curator, is a recognized authority on the American Indian. As such, he is uniquely suited to write this hefty and richly detailed reference book. Seldom has such a mass of biographical and cultural data concerning Native Americana been collected in one volume. 300 life histories of Indian leaders from all regions and tribes are presented. Persons of general familiarity such as Tecumseh or Sitting Bull are included, but Dockstader stresses lesser-known individuals of more recent times — doctors, educators, artists and politicians.

Attention is also given to art objects — paintings, clay, wood, beadwork — and cultural traditions as well. This volume is organized in such a cognizant fashion that the reader is encouraged to read from beginning to end, despite the book's encyclopedic proportions. Western Americana enthusiasts will want to keep this comprehensive reference tool on a handy shelf; it's the type of book one reaches for often.

— Jeff Nathan



*Cattle Brands of Baja California Sur, 1809-1885*, compiled and edited by W. Michael Mathes. 78 pp., illustrations. Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, 1978. \$18.00.

As a subscriber to the Baja California Travels Series, it was incumbent upon me to possess this slight little volume. Thank goodness it was a review copy, for its content does not justify its outrageous price.

The book commences with an interesting though remarkably compressed "Historical Survey of Livestock Raising in Baja California Sur 1535-1853," which runs to only twelve pages, ten of text and two of notes. This is then translated word for word

into Spanish. The remaining pages merely reproduce the designs of 738 cattle brands and list the names of their owners alphabetically, the district in which they ran their cattle, and the dates the brands were granted. Four more pages, of notes, and that's it.

At first I thought the Spanish translation of Mathes' introduction was purely for the sake of egregious padding. However, the title page does indicate that the book was published by Dawson's for the *Archivo Histórico de Baja California Sur Pablo L. Martinez, La Paz*, so presumably the bilingual format is justified on this basis.

Even so, the eighteen dollar price tag is sure to lift the hide off both cattle owners and Baja aficionados, whether north or south of the border.

— Tony Lehman



*Dodge City: The Most Western Town of All* by Odie B. Faulk. Oxford, New York. 1978. \$9.95.

Faulk, a noted historian of Western Americana, has produced a lively account of the "Queen of the Cowntowns". Founded amidst a vast expanse of Kansas grassland, Dodge City first served as a way-station for soldiers and buffalo hunters. But the town gained its notoriety when the Texas cattle drives moved west. As a major shipping point, Dodge flourished as the most wide-open city on the frontier.

Whiskey, prostitution and gambling abounded as the cowboys unleashed their pent-up energies from three months on the dusty trail. This environment also produced such colorful characters as Wyatt Earp, Luke Short and the Masterson brothers. As Faulk explains, the ordinary townspeople condoned the wild behavior, as they acknowledged their economic dependence upon the cattle trade. This era was short-lived, however, as the farmers' frontier advanced and a quarantine was placed on diseased Texas longhorns.

By 1885, Dodge City was exporting wheat, rather than beef as the town itself settled into a small-town mediocrity. Yet Dodge City's notorious reputation stuck and some of its more enterprising citizens recognized

the value of a tourist trade. Aided by film and television, Dodge City's "wicked image" exists to this day. This is exciting reading from start to finish, and comes highly recommended to history buffs. Heavily illustrated with notes and an index.

— Jeff Nathan



*The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West*, edited by Howard R. Lamar. Crowell. New York, 1978. \$24.95.

This massive tome fills 1,306 double-column pages with concise entries followed by extensive bibliographic sources and augmentative cross-references. Lamar, a distinguished professor of history at Yale University, acknowledges the "many real and imaginary Wests that have helped shape American history, literature and culture."

The essays on the American Indian, explorers and pioneers, lawmen and gun-fighters are excellent, but Lamar also includes valuable sections on women settlers, blacks in the West, western fiction and folklore. A few omissions cause trouble, such as Lamar's rather arbitrary treatment of California and the Far West. The editor's choice of historians deemed worthy enough for biographical entry is likewise open to question.

Parkman, Turner and Billington are mentioned, along with many other scholars, yet there is no entry for Downes, Horan, Peckham or Washburn, to name a few among the missing. Still, this illustrated encyclopedia is the first of its kind, and should prove indispensable to students of the American West.

— Jeff Nathan



*The Mexican War in Baja California: The Memorandum of Captain Henry W. Halleck Concerning His Expeditions in Lower California, 1846-1848*, introduced and edited by Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. 208 pp., illustrations, map in endpocket. Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, 1977. \$24.00.

This volume represents the fourth contri-

bution made by the genial, prolific, and scholarly Doyce Nunis to the Baja California Travels Series, and it is one of the best.

The heart of the book consists of Captain Halleck's surviving notes and diaries chronicling his personal role in American naval and military operations in Baja California during the year 1847. Halleck apparently planned to write a book on his Mexican War adventures, but for unknown reasons that publication never materialized. Nonetheless, his memorandum, fragmentary as it is, remains an historical document of considerable importance.

There are, of course, detailed versions of the armed skirmishes in which Halleck was a participant. But equally valuable are his impressions of the towns, the ranchos, the harbors, and the Baja Californios themselves, many of them hopelessly torn between an allegiance to their native Mexico (which had largely ignored them) and a longing to be absorbed into the United States, with its concomitant civil and economic benefits.

To assist the reader through the lacunae-filled Halleck narrative, Editor Nunis has thoughtfully and skillfully provided an abundance of "Endnotes" and "Documentary Appendices." These offer additional data by supplying biographies of the principal naval and military participants in the conflict, a list of the U.S. Naval vessels involved, official reports on the primary battles, and information on the career of Halleck prior and subsequent to the war.

For this reviewer, however, the highlight of the book is the brilliant introductory essay which presents a comprehensive overview of the entire war as it was fought in Baja California. Beginning with Commodore Stockton's proclamation of August 17, 1846, when he declared both Upper and Lower California to be henceforth part of the United States, and carrying the story through such major episodes as the Battle of Mulegé, the attack on La Paz, and the siege of San José del Cabo, down to the ultimate cessation of hostilities, Doyce Nunis' introduction is a model of informativeness, clarity, and readability.

— Tony Lehman