LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL

The Branding Iron

J. GOODMAN

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# Fallen Angels in the Far West

*by Earl F. Nation, M.D.*

Men have always migrated westward in the United States. The frontier at one time was the Western Reserve, next the Mississippi, then the Rocky Mountains and, finally, the far West, beyond the Rockies.

The forerunners in the westward movement were men, perhaps for obvious reasons. First came the scouts, the adventurers, the trappers, the mountain men. Explorers and men bent on making a quick fortune off of the natural resources before returning home to the East came after. Settlers with their families came only after the trails were well worn and the country reasonably hospitable, even though still uncivilized.

Those first men were generally rough and ready but subject to loneliness as well as to the other drives which God gave them. They often satisfied loneliness, and some other drives, by alliances with Indian women, some maiden and some otherwise, until the arrival of the wagons made such alliances unrespectable.

When men began to arrive in greater numbers, and to congregate, new problems and a new market were created. For every market there soon are suppliers. Hardships and handicaps will be overcome by enterprising merchants. The more sought after the commodity the more diligent their efforts: the great American profit motive; the spur for Yankee ingenuity . The Western frontier was no exception. Nature abhors a vacuum. No vacuum was ever more nearly complete than the West without women. Women were drawn or were brought in response to the need. Little was written about these early women, however. More was written about their absence. Walter Colton, alcalde of Monterey, expressed the sentiment in the following breathless prose: "There is no land less relieved by the smiles and smoothing caress of women. If Eden with its ambrosial fruits and guiltless joys was still sad till the voice of woman mingles with its melodies, California, with all her treasured hills and streams, must be cheerless till she feels the presence of the same enchantress."

The first women were a lively lot. Some were bawdy, some were not, it has been said. They came with promises and expectations of riches and a good life and often ended in prostitution as an alternative to starvation or unwanted marriage. Nell Kimball, a famous San Francisco madam whose memoirs were only recently edited and published wrote: "I don't say that whoring is the best way of life, but it's sure better than going blind in a sweatshop sewing, or 20 hours work as a kitchen drudge or housemaid with the old man and the sons always laying for you in the hallways." She also wrote that "a

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THE BRANDING IRON solicits aritcles of 1,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.





# THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

APRIL

Ed Harnagel presented a profile of Lafayette Bunnell, known as the discoverer of Yosemite Valley. Bunnell came to Mariposa in 1849 and in 1851 joined the Mariposa Battalion in its campaign against several Indian tribes. After the surrender of the Yosemite Indians, part of the battalion went up the Mariposa Trail and had its first sight of the famous valley, at what is now Inspiration Point. James D. Savage, the leader of the battalion, was unimpressed, but Bunnell became enamored of the valley's attractions. He named Yosemite Falls, Mirror Lake, Nevada Falls, Half Dome, and other scenic spots.

Bunnell returned back east, served in the Union Army's medical corps during the Civil War, and never returned to California. The rest of his life was spent more prosaically than his earlier career. In 1880 he wrote *Discovery of the Yosemite,* the first book on the valley and one of the few primary sources on the Mariposa Indians and the Yosemite discovery. Although a forgotten figure for many years, Bunnell was rescued from obscurity by Dr. Howard Kelley of Johns Hopkins. Two places in Yosemite are named for Bunnell. Dr. Harnagel, who has done extensive research into Bunnell's life and career, illustrated his presentation with color slides of the Yosemite Valley.

MAY

At the time of his death Ray Billington was working on a paper for presentation to the Corral. Martin Ridge, Senior Research

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good whore has to want to be a whore or she's no credit to the place." The proprietor of another house wrote: "There's no in between. A whore is either worth a dollar or twenty dollars." Nell Kimball wrote also " . . . there was never any real shortage of willing girls who wanted to be whores."

Many of the women, bawdy or not, proved to have a civilizing, soothing influence when thrust into turbulent frontier settings. Lucius Beebe has said: "The rougher the frontier and the newer the outpost of civilization, the more exalted the estate of the pioneer madam." A woman writing of the time said: ". . . Every miner seemed to consider himself her sworn guardian, policeman and protector, and the slightest dishonorable word, action or look of any miner or other person, would have been met with a rebuke he would remember as long as he lived, if, perchance, he survived the chastisement." Another wrote, "A white woman is treated everywhere on the Pacific slope, not as man's equal and companion, but as a strange and costly creature, which by virtue of its rarity is freed from the restraints and penalties of ordinary law."

The men, on the other hand, had taken some of the characteristics of the western coyote. They were apt to be lean and scheming. Their hands were calloused paws and their eyes hard and slitted. The western prostitute slowly began the process of softening their eyes and or putting gloves upon their hands. As Miller has said: "She brought culture to the culture-starved, polite conversation to the voiceless, and pity to the pitiless. She became the heart of the heartless frontier." One of the old mountain men wrote; "Many's the miner who'd never wash his face or comb his hair if it wasn't for thinking of the sportin' girls he might see in the saloons."

These soiled doves, whom lonely men have always tended to idolize and glamorize, were generally a stupid lot, according to Nell Kimball. She wrote, "I wouldn't say they had much schooling. A lot were knot-heads, chowder-brains, who had to take off their shoes to add up anything over ten. But I've seen educated whores too — these intelligent women were usually very unhappy."

One San Francisco prostitute who was known for her erudition had the appealing name of Rotary Rosy. She repaid a group of early-day University of California students who read poetry to her with her favors without compensation. She even tried to enroll at the University of California. Failing, she later committed suicide.

The less stupid often rose to be madams. Their names usually belied their elevated status. In one group which Miguel Otero, former governor of New Mexico, wrote about, they carried such names as Sadie, Big Hattie, Carless Ida, Lazy Liz and Nervous Jessie. Many were said to be "foul of speech and murderous in their passions." By the time they reached the remote Klondike they were written of as "experienced, hard, bold-faced, strident harpies with morals looser than ashes." Even so, Vardis Fisher says, the lonely frontiersman was apt to view them through eyes misted with thoughts of mother, sister and Mary.

Relatively little was written about these early women and their activities by contemporary writers or diarists. A few interesting diary entries and letters home relating to these girls and what they afforded the men of the West survive. The early Mexican and Spanish Catholic religious zeal discouraged professional prostitution. This morality, protestant as well as Catholic, prevented much written recogniton of these all too obvious activities in the far west. However, the reluctance of contemporaries to write about her did not keep the madam from being as much a part of the frontier community as the sheriff, the person, the Wells Fargo agent and the Doc.

Her personal character was as various as that of humanity everywhere. Evidences are found in the L.A. Times in articles by Charles Hillinger about two early day Wyoming madams. On Feb. 25, 1973 he wrote about "Mother Featherlegs," of Jay Em, Wyoming whose name derived from her appearance in her ruffled pantalettes. A monument erected to her memory states, "She looked like a feather-legged chicken in a high wind." The ladies of her day turned up their noses at her but she is now remembered as a pillar of the church. The community recently raised

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money to erect a stone church building in her memory.

On March 26, 1973, Hillinger wrote of Dell Burke who has run the Yellow Hotel, a sporting house, in Lusk, Wyoming for over 54 years. He stated that : "Over the years, Dell Burke has helped scores of people down on their luck. She has always been a good touch for any fund drive.

'She had this place in the palm of her hand for years,' confided one civic leader. 'She loaned the town money during the depression, singlehandedly floated a water-sewer-and-light bond issue, bailed us out when we were about to go under.'."

Dell Burke herself was quoted by Hillinger as follows:

"I wouldn't trade my life for anything. I'm glad of it. I've made a lot of money . Traveled the world. For me it's been a good life. I've met some of the best Governors; Senators; oh, have I known people — have I known some hypocrites."

She added with disgust: "Everything is sex now . You see much more on T.V. and in the movies than you see in my place."

The early records that remain make possible the construction of a story and of a picture of individuals and traffic in women that may be of interest to those who are concerned with the history of the West and with people. The moral issues should play no part in the story unless one wishes to make his own deductions. These women were largely amoral. The same cannot be said for those who took advantage of them. The disillusioned Nell Kimball wrote: "There is nothing noble about a whore or a madam or a pimp or the people we deal with — the landlords, the police or public officials."

With the arrival of the American soldiers in the West, information about prostitution becomes more abundant. With the soldiers come hordes of camp followers, mostly Mexican. These women were known as "Yankedos." The stories of vengeance later wrought on them by the Mexican soldiers rival anything from the middle ages.

San Francisco, which was the focal point of California history after this time, also became the focal point of the traffic in women. In the spring of 1849 there were only 15 women in Yerba Buena. For the women, this was good. They were apt to be treated as queens. However, with the great influx of men brought by the gold rush the vacuum began to build. During the first six months of 1850 two-thousand women arrived in San Francisco, most of them destined for prostitution. In January of that year there were fewer than eight women for each 100 men in California. In the mining areas there were only 2 women to 100 men. This disparity was rapidly remedied.

Many French and German girls were imported to San Francisco. Boatloads also were brought from Mexico, Chile and Peru. The backgrounds of these girls are not known. By and large most must have come from areas of poverty. Just what their usual expectations were also is unknown but interesting to speculate about. Some of the contracts survive and from these the expectations of the mem importing the women are all too apparent. Among other onerous provisions, some of them required that for every day of work lost because of illness, one to two weeks was added to the period of servitude, which was usually eight years. Because of the nature of the beast this meant four or more days lost, and weeks added, every month, obviously a never ending process.

The women were naturally of various ages, and in different condition hence varied in desirability. This was reflected in their prices, working conditions and success. The Chilean girls often worked six to a tent, while one French prostitute was said by Bancroft to have banked $50,000 in one year. Some of hers must have come from gambling. Some worked along the Barbary Coast as waiter girls, usually romantically spoken of as "pretty waiter girls." One writer, less blinded by their femininity, said they were "not pretty and not girls." These women worked for wages of $15 to $265 a week and got a commission on the liquor they sold, plus one-half of the proceeds from their prostitution while on duty. They were said to be fortunate to keep $50 a week. One saloon advertised that five free drinks would be given to the customer finding underwear on their pretty waiter girls, an obvious invitation to inspect

the merchandise.

Some of the girls also worked as entertainers in the saloons. The names applied to them seem to categorize their talent. One typical entertainer was widely known as "The Waddling Duck." The title described both her dance and her quacking voice. Two others were known as the "Dancing Heifer" and the "Galloping Cow."

There were distinct social strata among the girls who plied the oldest profession in San Francisco. At the bottom of the ladder perhaps were the Chinese girls who were brought over by the boatload. They were the most victimized. These girls were as young as twelve. The *San Francisco Chronicle* reported the importation of a cargo of Chinese girls as if they were a stock market commodity. In 1869 one report read as follows: "The particularly fine portion of the cargo, the fresh and pretty females who come from the interior, are used to fill special orders from wealthy merchants and prosperous tradesmen. A very considerable portion are sent into the interior under charge of special agents, in answer to demands from the well-to-do miners and successful vegetable producers. Another lot of the general importation offered to the Chinese public are examined critically by those desiring to purchase and are sold to the trade or to individuals at rates ranging from $500 down to $200 per head according to their youth, beauty and attractiveness. The refuse, consisting of 'boat girls' and those who came from seaboard towns, where contact with the white sailors reduces even the low standards of Chinese morals, is sold to the proprietors of the select brothels." It will be noted that this was 1869, several years after the slaves were freed.

The residents of San Francisco's most monstrous houses of prostitution were on almost the same level with the Chinese girls. These establishments were commonly known as "Cow Yards." One was on three floors, with 150 cribs. Mexican women at twenty-five cents on the first floor, American girls at fifty cents on the second floor and French girls at seventy-five cents on the third floor. The Nymphia, at Pacific Street near Stockton, was one of the more notorious cow yards. Another, and the last to go, was known as the Municipal Brothel or Crib.

The girls generally paid $5 a day for crib rental. They were often required to remain naked, or nearly so, in their rooms and to entertain all comers. The customers were permitted, indeed expected, to remove their hats, although little more. Nell Kimball wrote that one prostitute said that removal of the hat was to show that the man had some respect for the whore. Oil cloth was provided to protect the bed from tarred boots. The Chinese girls offered a sliding scale of rates for "lookee, touchee or doee," the prices being, ten, twenty-five and fifty cents.

A step or two up the ladder perhaps from the crib girls were the short-skirted dance hall girls. They, in turn, looked up to the "Parlor Ladies." These residents of houses who worked with a madam were the envy of all others, with their long dresses and fancy jewelry. Nell Kimball wrote that "a finely dressed whore could make Mrs. Astor's pet horse look like a gray mouse." The average life expectancy in this category was said to be about ten or twelve years. After that they descended the ladder as crib girls or street walkers, many ending in suicide, by the age of forty. Landanum, tincture of opium, was the favorite agent.

It was from among the parlor girls that a few rose to be mistresses of their own households through marriage to clients. Some became quite prominent after marriage, although others cyncially referred to marriage as legalized prostitution. Mattie Silks, the famous Denver madam, once stated defiantly, ". . . my girls made good wives. They understood men and how to treat them and they were faithful to their husbands."Cockeyed Liz," another Colorado madam, was quoted as saying that, "a parlor house is where girls go to look for a husband and the husbands go to look for a girl."

Nell Kimball wrote: "You can sometimes domesticate a whore, but never housebreak a madam." She stated that out of about 200 girls who had worked for her "only two . . really made a good life for themselves on the other side of my double oak doors." One of these was Mollie. She was determined to escape and married a client "who was in shipping lumber, green houses and fruit

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**Lilly Hitchcock**

groves." Nell Kimball says, "She did fine in society; served tea without lifting her pinkie, had a raft of kids. Her husband was a political power behind the dummies who got into California public office. In time what is the real hoi polloi in Pasadena was led by my Mollie." Stephen Longstreet, who edited these memoirs, removed the names before publication. He says: "Today Mollie's grandchildren are the top society leaders of the coast, grand patrons of art museums, music centers, public events, charity foundations."

A kindred, well known story relates to Lilly Hitchcock, daughter of a prominent army doctor, who moved in San Francisco's high society. Lilly was more an "amateur" prostitute or a delinquent. She was the darling of the firehouse. She was said to have been engaged twenty times before she was twenty years old. She went on to marry Howard Coit. When, after a wild and tempestuous life, she died in her eighties in her suite at the Palace Hotel she left $100,000 for a tower which one contemporary wrote: "dominates San Francisco like a phallic mockery of Lily's city." In Columbus Square one will still find a statue erected by Lily to her true love, the fire laddies of her youth.

There was true elegance in some parlors and strict propriety was often enforced. Such signs as, "no vulgarity allowed in this establishment," were seen. Others promised refund of money if disease resulted. Some also displayed signs saying, "satisfaction guaranteed." It was customary to give the dissatisfied customer a rain check in the form of a metal disc rather than his money back, however. The metal disc had a carpenter's screw attached and the wording "Good for one." Another fancy motto in needle point that was said to grace the walls of some parlors was, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." A contemporary observed that, "in all houses the men were welcome and so was their money. The girls were necessary to separate the two." Another saying was that, "the girls were necessary to mine the miners."

Back to the justification for the designation, "Fallen Angels." The legends of the early west are replete with stories of the beneficient acts and humanitarian deeds of harlots and madams. Someone even wrote that, "men were their vocation and humanity their avocation." There is considerable documentation of the latter, although it is obviously the exception. Not all harlots had hearts of gold. Nevertheless, some were considered quite respectable in their communities. Few citizens of Dodge City were said to be more

**Mattie Silks**

respectable than Dora Hand, known as "Queen of the Fairy Bell." One old timer recalled: "The only thing anyone could hold against Dora was her after-dark profession, and by Godfrey, I allow she elevated that considerably." Those noble humanitarians, "Mother Featherlegs" and Dell Burke, have already been referred to.

Many of the prostitutes became famous in the west, usually as madams. Julia Bulette, of Virginia City, was the most legendary of the girls of the line who rose to be a madam and the story of her exploits and sorry demise has been much written about. In fact, it long since became impossible to distinguish fact from legend. There is no doubt that she started as a crib girl, that she became the toast of the town because of her beauty, personality and humanitarian deeds, that she was the mascot of the fire-fighting brigade in the world's richest mining center and that she was brutally strangled to death. According to *Enterprise*, Virginia City's authoritative newspaper, "She was taken to Flowery Hill Cemetery to the east of the city, where in her lonely grave her good and bad traits alike lie buried with her." Her despicable murderer was apprehended over a year later and in a famous trial in which he was defended by Charles A . DeLong, later the first U.S. minister to Japan, was convicted and "hanged for 13 minutes until dead."

The most famous of all madams perhaps was Mattie Silks, of Denver, who at 19 was probably the youngest madam and she proudly proclaimed that she had never been anything but a madam. She operated a house at the same location for 42 years. She once told a reporter, "I considered myself then and do now — a business woman. I operated the best houses in town and I had as many clients the most important men in the West." She participated in the first pistol duel between women recorded in the area. Neither participant, both madams, was injured but a male second to one of them, standing nearby, was struck in the neck by one of the bullets. Mattie died in 1929 at the age of 83. The name recorded on her headstone is Martha A. Ready, the name of the last of her several husbands .

There were plenty of infamous western

**Julia Bulette**

harlots whose names are well-known. Notable among them are Belle Starr, Calamity Jane, Big Nose Kate and even Verona Baldwin, Lucky Baldwin's alleged English cousin, who shot him in the arm, a much publicized and sordid affair. She became a beautiful and prominent madam in Denver after her release from an asylum to which Baldwin was said to have had her committed after she shot him, as she said, "for defiling me and casting me aside, for ruining me in mind and body" (after a servant said he caught her in the bed of a physician-guest of Baldwin at Rancho Santa Anita or as it was otherwise known, "Baldwin's Harem"). Another infamous one was known as Cattle Kate, because she would take cows in trade. She was the first woman hanged in Wyoming. Another was Iodoform Kate, of San Francisco, famous for her Jewish red-heads, a much sought after commodity at that time.

And what about women and the oldest profession in the City of the Angels? Between the founding of the Spanish pueblo in 1781 and 1836 little is known about this matter.

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The Indian village, concentrated in 1836 at the Commercial and Alameda Street area and later across the river on the heights, was said to be the center of such activities. In 1836 the census of Los Angeles showed 250 non-Indian women as residents. Of these, fifteen were classified "M.V.," which signified "Mala Vida" (bad life). Margarita Laval, age 22, was the first one so listed.

The arrival in Los Angeles of Commodore Stockton and Major John C. Fremont in August, 1846 with their troops, was the beginning of a change. The garrison of fifty men left behind spent a large part of their leisure time carousing in Pueblito, the Indian village recently banished to the heights across the river. This scandal, and citizen protest, led to the razing of the village in 1847.

The mustering out of the soldiers in 1848 led to further difficulties. Dr. John S. Griffin wrote in March, 1849: "The Pueblo has changed — It is now thronged with soldiers, quartermaster's men, Sonorians, etc., the most vicious and idle set you ever beheld. Gambling, drinking, and whoring are the only occupations." The gold rush and its aftermath sent many gamblers and outlaws to Los Angeles. By 1853 there were said to be 400 gamblers in the Pueblo.

Thus, another vacuum was created. San Francisco, now oversupplied, sent a shipload of prostitutes to fill the vacuum. W. W. Robinson has observed that hitherto prostitution had been a native daughter affair in Los Angeles. The new arrivals established themselves in a large house on upper Main Street. Their gala housewarming to which all prominent sporting men were invited was somewhat cooled by a raid by mounted bandidos who robbed both men and women and rode off into the night shouting cheery "Buenos noches." It took more than this to cook the frontier ardor, however.

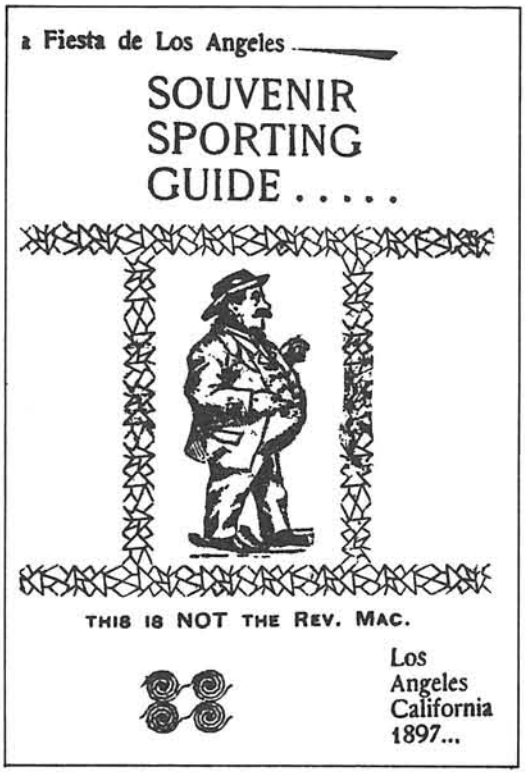
As the city grew the profession obviously grew with it. The houses and cribs were to become clustered about the center of the city in the Plaza district. Some of them still stand, the small brick rooms being used for other purposes than their designers intended.

The Bawds so cluttered up the central district by 1874 that the City Council proscribed them from the center of the city, namely from Broadway (Fort Street) to Los Angeles Street between First and Short Streets. These limits later were pushed farther away by ordinance. The profession was still recognized and condoned, however. Alameda Street for a long while was the center of the brothels and lying along the Southern Pacific tracks, as it did, became the first view of Los Angeles for arriving train passengers.

During the decades between 1890 and 1909 the sporting girls dominated a part of the social scene, particularly the race meets held at Agricultural (now Exposition) Park. P. L. Bonebrake has written (and other eminent local citizens still living have attested) that: "The madams of all the sporting houses engaged the public hacks for the entire meet. Each day in the afternoon they would drive out to the track, taking with them all the girls in their houses. They would all be dressed in their very best mutton sleeves, long black gloves and great picture hats with 2 or 3 long ostrich plumes in them . . . The girls kept the Negro waiter on a high trot bringing them drinks. They did a lot of betting." After the races Figueroa from Jefferson to Washington was left to the ladies of the night. Here Mr. Bonebrake wrote that he rode his saddle horse among them as they raced down Figueroa, with the girls standing in the box of the hacks, whooping, yelling, calling one another names and making bets on who would win. The young men in their buggies, as many as 50 of them, mingled with the hacks of the bawds, he wrote.

Pearl Morton ran the plushest parlor house in L.A. She took over the upper floors of the Murietta building when the Superior Court vacated them to move into the red sandstone courthouse when it opened in 1891.

An annual celebration was the Fiesta de Los Angeles. For this occasion, in 1897, a souvenir Sporting Guide was printed. This consisted of advertisements of the charms of the various sporting houses and their habituees. In the preface the compiler stated that it was done "not for glory or renown, but for the sake of those strangers who visit our fair city, and incidentally for the few shekels we get out of the advertisements." One such advertised "The Octoroon, Madame Bolan-




ger, 438 N. Alameda Street" and stated:

"This house is of wide reputation and is composed of missies Minnie Wilson, Bessie Berlina, Edna Nanet, May Wilson and Madeline Moss some famous Southern beauties of the Octoroon type, who will give you more fun and good healthy amusement than you would find in a day's walk. They are a lively, good-looking set of girls who will create sport enough to last for a year to come." The other advertisements were of similar tenor.

The open and gaudy red light district, with its lines of cribs and fancy brothels, was wiped out by a reform mayor, George A. Alexander, in 1909. Part of the necessary proof of collusion between vice and previous administrations was dug up by a famous attorney-friend of Pearl Morton, the madam, Earl Rogers, who was said to be "equally at home in bar, brothel or church."

Of course the girls only scattered, many of them returning to San Francisco. Miss Morton was among these and recouped her losses in short order. However, San Francisco was only a few years behind Los Angeles in reform. The "Red Light Abatement Act" there led to the abolition of open prostitution in 1917. One-thousand-seventy-three women were said to have been put out of work. Such a statistic leaves much open to proof, however. The girls again scattered, many to other quarters and some to Nevada.

It has been said that "reform marched west wearing a poke bonnet'; also that the influx of wives and sisters diluted the influence of the professionals. In Denver reform had been begun long before it was completed in 1915. It was begun by requiring removal of the more blatant signs outside the brothels. These were frequently replaced by signs stating "men taken in and done for."

A cynical song writer of the last century wrote:

The miners came in '49
The whores in '51
And when they got together
They produced a native son.

The blind poet, Milton once wrote:

"Only those may be called great who have given comfort and happiness to mankind."

These comforters were no Angels, of course, even though they did bring some happiness, along with some heartache and venereal disease to lonely men. But who is to throw the first stone? The men who trafficked in women deserve it but surely not the girls of the line.

Vardis Fisher has written: "Alas, none of us knows how many whores and bandits are in our family lines, nor should care."

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# Corral Chips

C.M. *Roger Baty* is researching the stories of famous Indian, cowboy, and military horses. He would appreciate help in locating bibliographic references to war horses of the West, as well as anecdotal material. He can be contacted at the Armacost Library, University of Redlands, Redlands 92373 . . .

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## Monthly Roundup...

Associate at the Huntington Library, read Ray's last work-in-progress, entitled "Europe View *sic* the Gold Rush." The paper, a first draft, reminded everyone of Ray's enthusiasm for the West in the broadest possible definition. In this case, Europe's view of the gold rush came at a time of political upheaval. The gold rush proved an irresistible attraction for Europeans seeking a panacea for their problems. Emigration to California did not, however, occur immediately. The great distance from Europe to California, combined with aristocratic propaganda designed to persuade the working class from departing, helped separate dream from actuality for most Europeans.

Nevertheless, Europeans were intensely interested in obtaining information about the gold fields. Knowledge came from hastily assembled guidebooks packed with misinformation, some of them written by authors who never set foot in America. Stories abounded of tremendous discoveries of gold nuggets weighing up to 24 pounds, literally waiting to be picked up with but little effort. Yet despite the wild stories, European newspapers also warned of the dangers and perils, and Europeans were advised that the pathway to the gold fields contained many pitfalls.

## Corral Chips...

C.M. Msgr. *Francis J. Weber's* latest publication, *The Old Plaza Church,* is issued as part of the Los Angeles Bicentennial observances . . . C.M. *Gene Bear* hosts the first annual Last Frontier Art Festival, a three-day celebration in Sunland-Tujunga to raise funds for the Muscular Dystrophy campaign . . . *Herschel C. Logan* is the author of *The American Hand Press,* published by the Curt Zoller Press of Whittier and published by Grant Dahlstrom's Castle Press. The book, which traces the development of the hand press from the early wooden ones down to the all metal hand presses at the turn of the century, is selected by the Rounce & Coffin Club as one of the 50 best California books published in 1980 . . . *Abe Hoffman's* book *Vision or Villainy: Origins of the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Water Controversy* is published by Texas A & M University Press . . .

*Dutch Holland,* C.M. *Don Bufkin,* and C.M. *Father Barry Hagan* attend the 15th Annual conference of CAMP (Council on Abandoned Military Posts), in San Francisco, April 22-25. Father Hagan, whose research is on the forts of the Bozeman Trail, is installed as CAMP's new president . . . *Dwight Cushman* is named president of the new San Fernando Valley Genealogical Society . . . Among those attending the Jedediah Smith annual breakfast, held in conjunction with the annual Conference of California Historical Societies, at the University of the Pacific on April 25, are A.M. *William J. Burkhart* (who is president of the Conference), *Raymund F. Wood,* and C.M. *Troy F. Tuggle.* Ray also attends the April meeting of the San Fernando Valley Historical Society . . .

A.M. *Bob Hattem* is Area Chair of the Los Angeles meeting of "Los Californios," an historical-genealogical group whose ancestors were among the founders of California. They come from all over the state to honor Los Angeles upon its 200th birthday . . . C.M. *Norman Deitchman* is profiled in the March 23, 1981 issue of *Rockwell News,* published by Rockwell International, in recognition of his western paintings . . . *Doyce Nunis* is elected a Fellow of the California Historical Society for 1981. He has also been appointed program chairman for the American Catholic Historical Association meeting in Los Angeles in December 1981, and to the local arrangements committee for the American Historical Association, which will be meeting in Los Angeles at the same time . . .

C.M. Ed Crigler reports that the John G. Neihardt Corral, named for the author of the classic work *Black Elk Speaks,* holds its annual June picnic at the estate of Sheriff Jim Denninghoff, at Columbia, Missouri, featuring buffalo meat as the main course . . . *Robert A. Weinstein* completes work on "Photographs from the History of Los

*(Continued on Page Fifteen)*

# SOME GRIZZLY CHARACTERS OF THE OLD SAN GABRIELS

By John W. Robinson

James Walker painting "Roping a Bear". Grizzlys were stalked and lassoed in the Arroyo Seco and Big Tujunga Canyon by Vaqueros and dragged to the bull ring in Los Angeles.

It seems tragic that the grizzly bear, emblem of California, an animal which once roamed the state in great numbers, is now totally extinct in the Golden State. The wanton elimination of the great beast took place in the relatively short span of fifty years—essentially from 1850 to 1900. A few, hiding out in isolated mountain recesses, lingered on into the 1920's, but these too were relentlessly hunted down and destroyed.

The "Achilles heel," so to speak, of the California grizzly was that he was not compatible with civilization. Unafraid of man, demanding his territorial rights, he refused to give ground or to adapt to new ways of life. The California Department of Fish and Game put it succinctly: "The grizzly was not afforded protection and as the land developed, if there was a conflict with settlers, the grizzly was killed. It would not, or could not, recede from the encroachment of civilization."

Let's go back a century, to a time when the magnificent grizzly was monarch of the mountains and foothills. No place in California was more infested with the ornery behemoth than the Southern California mountains. The San Gabriels, in particular, were literally overrun with them. Grizzlies roamed throughout the range, from the forested high country down into the chaparral-clad foothills. According to Tracy Storer and Lloyd Tevis in their definitive book, *California Grizzly* (U. of Cal. Press, 1955), the beasts lived chiefly on grasses, clover, berries, acorns and roots, but were also fond of beef, veal, venison and pork. Because of these latter tastes, developed during the Spanish and Mexican rancho era, grizzlies were a constant menace to lowland cattle ranches and a hazard to travellers. Estimates of the number of domestic livestock killed by grizzlies during the rancho period range from 300 to 600 animals, mostly in foothill ranchos such as Tujunga, San Pascual, Santa Anita and Azusa. Fear of the grizzly kept most of the Spaniards out of the mountains, and the Gabrielino Indians were

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mortally afraid of them.

One group of Spanish-speaking Californians who were not afraid of the grizzly were the *vaqueros*, those hardy Mexican cowhands who tended the immense rancho cattle herds. Absolutely fearless, skillful with horse and lariat, the vaqueros would stalk and lasso the wild beasts in Big Tujunga Canyon and the Arroyo Seco. The enraged bears were then dragged into the bull ring in *El Pueblo de Los Angeles* to participate in brutal bear-bull contests, popular during the early decades of the 19th century.

With the coming of the gringos in the 1840's, the mountains were no longer "tierra incognita." The lair of the grizzly was invaded by swarms of hunters, woodcutters, prospectors, bandits and squatters. Confrontations between man and beast were common, with the bear not always coming out on the short end of the struggle. In 1854 Isaac Slover, San Bernardino Valley pioneer, was mauled and killed by an angry grizzly near the present site of Wrightwood, on the north slope of the San Gabriels. A lone prospector was severely mauled by a grizzly in San Gabriel Canyon in 1859; he eventually died from the wounds. Usually, however, the hunters and prospectors, travelling in groups and heavily armed (no man would think of entering the San Gabriels without a gun before the turn of the century), emerged victorious. By the early 1880's most of the grizzlies in the San Gabriels had been slaughtered. Those that remained lived mostly in the isolated back country around Chilao, Buckhorn, Devil and Bear canyons, and Old Baldy.

Although few in number, these last survivors gave a good account of themselves. Their last stand, roughly from 1886 to 1902, was savagely contested. Local newspapers often contained hair-raising accounts of battles between man and bear. Following are some of the more harrowing stories of the grizzly's final, losing struggle to maintain his existence, as reported in the contemporary press.

Charles Tom Vincent, a trapper who lived hermit-style in Vincent Gulch from the 1870's until after the turn of the century, was a crack shot. He usually dropped his prey, be it bear, deer, mountain lion or big horn sheep, with one well-aimed bullet. But Vincent had one experience with three grizzlies at once that he never forgot. As reported in the *Los Angeles Times* of October 6, 1888, Vincent and another hunter named DeLancey were tracking big horn sheep on the north slope of Baldy when they suddenly encountered three angry bruins in the brush. The first grizzly charged DeLancey and was only a few feet from the frightened hunter when Vincent managed to send a 50-calibre slug through the beast's head and neck, dropping it in its tracks. Immediately afterwards two other grizzlies charged, one toward DeLancey and the other at Vincent. Vincent was able to down one of the bears with a slug through the breast just before it reached DeLancey. Upon turning around, the last grizzly jumped on Vincent, knocking him down. As man and beast grappled on the ground, Vincent pulled out his knife and plunged the blade into the bear's neck, just as DeLancey jammed his rifle against the bear's head and fired. The grizzly dropped dead atop Vincent, who was badly scratched, but not seriously injured. Afterwards, the hunters skinned the bears and carried the three hides, complete with claws and heads, to Vincent's cabin, where they hung as trophies for many years.

In the West Fork of the San Gabriel, where Valley Forge Creek joins the main stream, early-day forest rangers Jess Sevier and Bill Bacon had another close encounter with a grizzly. To catch a bear that had been raiding hunters' camps, Sevier and Bacon placed a number of steel traps in the canyon. For several days nothing happened. Then, one afternoon, as they were checking their traps, a severe commotion informed them that they had caught a grizzly. When the enraged beast caught sight of the two rangers, she jerked free of the trap and charged—first toward one, then the other. Altogether, she took nine slugs before being felled, only a few feet from Ranger Bacon. Her carcass reportedly weighed upwards of 1,300 pounds.

In 1892 Walter Richardson of Pasadena experienced a close call with a mammoth grizzly in Big Tujunga Canyon. Following fresh bear tracks up the canyon, Richardson decided to hide in the brush and hope for the

bear's return. His story follows: "I hid about 30 yards away where I could see through the brush and boulders. I did not have long to wait. Soon a big grizzly stood on a little sand spit and began to chew on what was once a burro. I took careful aim and could hear the impact of the bullet as it tore through the bear's shoulder. He was mortally wounded but let out a great roar and made a rush in my direction with the grey hair standing up on his back. I had another cartridge in the chamber of the rifle by the time he had covered half the distance to me and put another bullet through his head for safety. He was a large male grizzly and had a good pelt." Richardson took pains to preserve the skull and pelt of the animal, and years later, presented them to the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in Berkeley. Today, they comprise the most perfect specimens of the California Grizzly in existence.

Henry Markham, later governor of California, had a frightening encounter with a huge grizzly near Mount Lowe in 1882. Markham and three companions from Pasadena were climing a hunters' trail from the Giddings Ranch when suddenly, a hundred yards above them on a rocky promontory, the largest beast any of them had ever seen appeared and emitted a ferocious growl. Needless to say, Markham and his friends beat a hasty retreat down the mountainside. During Mount Lowe Railway years, this spot high on Sunset Ridge was known as Grizzly Point.

The back country between Chilao, Mount Gleason and Buckhorn was long a hangout of several gargantuan grizzlies. Chilao itself is supposedly named for a member of Tiburcio Vasquez's bandido gang who knifed a bear at that spot and earned the nickname "Chileeyo" (chile pepper), roughly translated as "Hot Stuff," for his deed. The accuracy of this tale cannot be verified, but it remains one of the colorful legends of the San Gabriel back country.

During the 1880's two unusually large and destructive grizzlies stalked the wilderness between Chilao and Mount Pacifico. The first of these behemoths, known as Clubfoot because of a twisted forepaw, had been killing cattle and terrifying hunters wherever he went. He defied numerous efforts to track him down. Back country pioneer Louie Newcomb told how Clubfoot finally met his doom: "One day a Mexican woodcutter, who had been working a ravine alone, came running excitedly up to a large group of fellow workers, shouting that he had killed Clubfoot with his axe. They refused to believe him, jesting among themselves over the story; but on his insistence that they come and see, all followed him to the spot where, just as he claimed, Clubfoot lay dead of slashes from his axe."

The other grizzly, a giant of a beast known as Monarch, had been terrorizing back country herders and hunters for a number of years. The story of Monarch's capture in 1889 and subsequent removal to the San Francisco Zoo comes in several versions, but goes generally as follows: The *San Francisco Examiner* sent one of its young reporters, Allen Kelly, south to capture a grizzly alive. Allen and his party of hired hunters spent several weeks in the mountains of northern Ventura County, but failed to trap a beast. Then a group of Los Angeles hunters heard of Kelly's efforts and organized a "little syndicate" for the sole purpose of capturing a grizzly and selling it to Kelly and the *Examiner* at an exorbitant price. These enterprising sportsmen knew about Monarch, and now determined to take him alive. They constructed a stout log pen bear trap in a canyon northeast of Mount Gleason, where Monarch had recently been seen, and used a young pig as bait. They had not long to wait.

The old bear trap in Bear Trap Canyon northeast of Mt. Gleason. This log pen was reportedly built in 1889 to capture the fierce grizzly "Monarch". Historian Will Thrall located it.

Kelly, in his *Bears I Have Met—And Others* (1903), described the capture: "When Monarch found himself caught in the syndicate trap on Mount Gleason, he made furious efforts to escape. He bit and tore at the logs, hurled his great bulk against the sides, and tried to enlarge every chink that admitted light. It required unremitting attention with a sharpened stick to prevent him from breaking out." For eight days, the grizzly raged inside his wooden prison, refusing the food thrown to him. Finally he calmed down—exhausted—and was transported in large wooden crate to the railroad siding at Acton, transferred to a steel cage, and shipped to San Francisco by flatcar, where he remained a feature attraction of the city zoo until his death in 1911.

Hunters, like fishermen, have a knack for exaggeration, or "expansion" of the facts. The San Gabriels have their share of bear yarns that stretch the imagination as they entertain listeners. Perhaps the best storyteller who ever set foot in these mountains was old "Dad" Dougherty, San Gabriel Canyon pioneer and proprietor of the once famous Squirrel Inn where Coldbrook Campground now stands. "I was hunting one evening down on Sycamore Flats," said Dougherty, "when all of a sudden a huge bear showed up in front of me. I tried to shoot him, but he was approaching too fast so I scrambled up a tree. I was still up that tree when night came on. That pesky bear, after circling the tree and growling for a while, started to climb up toward me. The only thing I had was my knife, so I just let him have it. I heard him groan, so I guessed I got him. A little later he came growling back up the tree at me—so I stabbed him again, and he groaned again and fell down out of the tree. I thought that would finish him sure, but after a while here he came again. Well, I stabbed that danged bear seven different times during that awful night! I never saw such a hard bear to convince. When daylight came, I was still sittin' up in that tree waitin' for the bear to come back for more. I looked down, and danged if there weren't seven dead bears around the trunk of the tree. I thought I was cuttin' up one bear—and by cracky, if I ain't up and stabbed seven!"

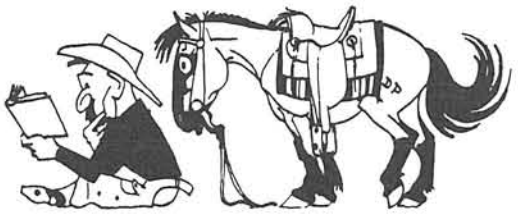
Rancher Cornelius Johnson standing over small female grizzly shot in Big Tujunga Canyon on October 28, 1916.

Long considered the last grizzly in Southern California was a small female beast shot and killed in the Big Tujunga by rancher Cornelius Johnson on October 28, 1916. However, this claim is questioned by Storer and Tevis, authors of *California Grizzly*. In the course of their research, they came across the fact that a small female grizzly, matching the description of the one killed by Johnson, had escaped from the Griffith Park Zoo a short time before. Storer and Tevis believe the bear shot in Big Tujunga was this fugitive from Griffith Park.

If we discount the 1916 Big Tujunga grizzly, the last documented wild grizzly killed in Southern California was a small female, known as "Little Black Bear," trapped and killed in Holy Jim Canyon in the Santa Ana Mountains in 1908. Its pelt now is preserved in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. According to Storer and Tevis, the final grizzly kill in the state of California occurred in the western foothills of Sequoia National Park, Tulare County, in 1924.

Sadly, the grandest animal to ever roam the California landscape is gone forever. The grizzly gone, the condor going, the big horn sheep and tule elk endangered—how long until we "civilize" ourselves to extinction?

Angeles, 1860-1940," on display at the Merced Theatre in El Pueblo Park and as a traveling exhibit. The permanent exhibit, which opened on March 4, has earned generous praise from the more than 17,000 visitors who have entered their comments in the guest books. Corral members are urged to visit this outstanding exhibit . . .



# DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

## A Gallery of Recent Books On Western Gunfighters

By Jeff Nathan

"The Lawmen" (Crown, $15.95) is the final volume in James D. Horan's "Authentic Wild West" trilogy. Like its predecessors, "The Gunfighters" and "The Outlaws", this book is researched and written with uncommon vigor and reliability.

Horan has studied the Old West for several decades, and his expertise is evident throughout the book, as he sifts among legends and myths to give the reader an authoritative, sharp-edged look at seven of the West's most noted lawmen.

The familiar figures include Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Bill Tilghman and "Bear River" Tom Smith, the popular New Yorker who temporarily tamed riotous Abilene, Kansas with his fists and a keen sense of humor. Many readers will be surprised to learn of Theodore Roosevelt's exploits on the frontier, but it is all documented here, and includes a striking series of photographs of "Deputy Sheriff" Roosevelt and the rustlers he helped capture. Many of these pictures are part of Horan's personal collection and are shown for the first time in "The Lawmen".

Charles A. Siringo, "the cowboy detective", and William Wallace, the brave but unpopular pursuer of the James-Younger gang are likewise discussed, though the sections devoted to them are unfortunately mere sketches. Horan's most poignant chapter deals with Wyatt Earp, perhaps the West's most celebrated lawman. The author finds Earp's reputation has little basis in fact; it was self-manufactured, he says, and was perpetuated by Stuart Lake's fanciful biography of Earp. There are other versions of Earp's career, and some will disagree with Horan's appraisal. Regardless, his book is an absolute must for students of Western Americana.

Frank Richard Prassel, a specialist in law enforcement and political science, further addresses "the stereotype of the badge-packing, gun-wielding marshal" in "The Western Peace Officer" (University of Oklahoma Press, $7.95). Prassel insists this popular image is heavily exaggerated; most peace officers were no better or worse than the community they served, and their duties were largely routine.

Certainly there was a "variety of villainy" in the West. This great expanse of open land usually attracted the more adventuresome and reckless members of society, people who found it difficult to accept restraint or compromise. Indeed, Prassel writes of one frustrated Texas judge who warned, "If the governor don't help us, I am going to bushwhacking." However, the author provides statistics which show the greatest amount of crime occurred in eastern cities. The ordinary pioneers desired a peaceful existence and often hired known killers, such as Ben Thompson and Dallas Stoudenmire to police their towns. Prassel also considers the limited power and conflict of interest most Western lawmen encountered. Maps, photographs and notes are included.

In the introduction to "Great Gunfighters of the Kansas Cowtowns, 1867-1886" (University of Nebraska Press, $4.50), authors Nyle H. Miller and Joseph W. Snell state the intent of their book is to present a clear view of the actual events and individuals "to determine their true roles in the development of the West." They have succeeded admirably

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with an essential reference work culled from various primary sources which exhibit the gunfighters as seen through the eyes of their contemporaries. There is no need for embellishment here, as Miller and Snell focus upon the typical rowdiness of trail-worn cowboys who besieged the towns of Abilene, Dodge City, Newton and Witchita. The names of Earp, Hickok and Masterson are generally praised by the settlers—much to the chagrin of revisionists. Attractive pen and ink drawings enhance the volume.

Alford E. Turner has done a masterful job in editing "The Earps Talk" (Creative Publishing Co./The Early West, P.O. Box 9292, College Station, Tx 77840, $15.50), a colorful collection based on court testimony and interviews with the Earp brothers. Turner, who is considered the foremost authority on the Earps, draws upon a vast supply of books, papers, photographs, tapes and official records to support his conclusions. The interviews with Wyatt Earp are highly suspect, for his testimony is full of boasts, inaccuracies and lapses of memory. In attempting to restore some reality to the situation, Turner reminds the readers that the Earps were primarily businessmen, who were only briefly involved in law enforcement. James H. Earle's line drawings and portraits bolster this handsome work.

The Earp Saga can be further explored in Frank Waters' tart account, "The Earp Brothers of Tombstone" (University of Nebraska Press, $3.75). Waters insists the clannish Earps were littlemore than glorified gamblers and saloonkeepers. His version is tempered by Josephine Earp's "I Married Wyatt Earp" (University of Arizona Press, $10.50). Her reverential memoir has been astutely edited by Glenn G. Boyer, a recognized Earp scholar. William B. Shillingberg's "Wyatt Earp & the Buntline Special Myth" (Blaine Publishing, P.O. Box 40846, University Station, Tucson, AZ 85717, $4.50) investigates another hoax in the Earp story.

Robert K. DeArment's "Bat Masterson: The Man and the Legend" (University of Oklahoma Press, $14.95) is an energetic narrative which should serve as the standard biography of Wyatt Earp's plucky, loyal friend. DeArment's lively text reveals a pleasant and resourceful man who epitomized the courageous frontier lawman.

Earp's nemesis, Clay Allison, is the subject of Chuck Parsons' "Shadows Along The Pecos" (West of the Pecos Museum. P.O. Box 1784, Pecos, TX 79772, $3.00). Allison, the "gentleman shootist", was as tough a man as ever existed on the frontier, and he receives long overdue attention in Parsons' lucid, compact book, which is complemented with rare photographs and illustrations, supplied by curator and historian, Barney Hubbs.

Four books from the prolific pen of Carl W. Breihan include "Outlaws of the Old West" (Signet, $1.75), "Great Gunfighters of the West" (Signet, $1.50), "The Day Jesse James Was Killed" (Signet, $1.75) and "The Man Who Shot Jesse James" (Barnes, $12.00). Breihan is particularly adept in his treatment of the James gang. The books can be ordered from the author: C.W. Breihan, 4939 Mattis Road, St. Louis, MO 63128.

Other recent additions to the lore of the Old West: George E. Virgines' absorbing "Famous Guns and Gunners" (Leather Stocking Books/Pine Mountain Press, Box 19746, West Allis, WI 53219, $12.95), a comprehensive overview of violence on the frontier. "Heritage of An Outlaw" (Schoonmaker Publishers, Box 182, Hobart, OK 73651, $22.50) is an engrossing chronicle of bank robber Frank Nash, by Clyde C. Callahan and Byron B. Jones. J.R.S. Pitts' "Life And Confessions of James Copeland" (University Press of Mississippi, $12.50) follows the career of a notorious, harsh outlaw leader, who wrecked havoc upon the Southwest prior to the Civil War. Edward Corle's "Billy The Kid" (University of New Mexico Press, $5.95) is a spirited novel, deemed as dependable as most histories of the Kid. Lulu Parker Betenson's "Butch Cassidy, My Brother" (Brigham Young University Press, $9.95) is a persuasive version of Cassidy's return to America, after his "supposed death" in Bolivia. Photos and documents are provided. Finally, Timothy F. Wenzl's "Discovering Dodge City's Landmarks" (T.F. Wenzl/Spearville News, 1206 Sixth St., Dodge City, KS 67801, $9.50) is an informative, nostalgic look at the city's historical remnants. Wenzl's brisk text is aided by a generous selection of maps and photographs.