LOS ANGELES WESTERNERS CORRAL
The Branding Iron

DECEMBER 1983 LOS ANGELES CORRAL NUMBER 153

Painting by Andy Dagosta

Sourdough: Yeast of the American West

by Donald Duke

Mention the word *Sourdough*, and the first thing that comes to mind is a crusty old-timer from Alaska or the Yukon Territory of Canada during the gold rush days. A gourmet minded Westerner might recall that extra special sourdough bread he had at a San Francisco bistro. A scientist among us would say *Sourdough* is a leaven consisting of dough in which both alcoholic and lactic fermentation is active. If Ray Allen Billington were still with us his response would be that *Sourdough* was the yeast of the American West. Naturally all of these descriptions are correct.

A sourdough starter in a crock pot has been in the Duke family for at least four generations. My great grandmother carried the original sourdough west as she made the adventure from North Carolina. At that time it was carried in a little leather sack around

The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS
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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

OCTOBER

Corral Member Willis Blenkinsop traced the growth of the California oil business, illustrating his presentation with slides of historical pictures. Oil for lighting and heating dates back some 6,000 years; Noah is said to have calked his ark with oil tar. For the United States, the oil industry began with E. L. Drake's successful drilling of an oil well in Pennsylvania in 1859. Even as Rockefeller made his fortune in the East, speculators considered the possibilities of oil deposits in California, Oklahoma, Texas, and other locales.

Southern California's era of oil prosperity began in 1892 with the discovery of oil by E. L. Doheny near downtown Los Angeles. Soon the residential area west of downtown was dotted with oil wells. Other discoveries

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Photograph - Frank Q. Newton

Willis Blenkinsop, Tom McNeill and Deputy Sheriff Bill Warren.

the neck. My grandmother used to cook with it on the Duke cattle spread on the western slope of Colorado. My father spent his teenage summers helping as second cook with the range men up in the Grand Mesa region of Colorado while my grandfather and his crew of cowboys rounded up the herd after eating summer grass.

During the time my father helped with the trail drive cooking, sourdough was a standard piece of equipment on the chuck wagon. It was contained in a crock-like bowl and used mainly in baking. The man in charge of the cook wagon was a man they called "Cookie." This friendly name fooled no one. Most wagon cooks (just like this one out of Hotchkiss, Colorado) were hair-triggered and ill tempered men with nasty dispositions. My dad used to say, "Only a fool argued with a skunk, a mule, or Cookie." Most reasonable men figured the wagon cook had a cause to be cranky since he got up before the sun to fix enough grub to fill the bellies of 15 to 20 complainin' cowboys. It rained quite a bit in the Grand Mesa section of Colorado and the wood for the campfire was often wet. Many times he never retired until all the men were in and had a good supper. I am sure my father's task was cleanup, however, he did learn ranch cooking and was a first rate cook until he died. He also had to do the fishing to get enough Brook Trout for a meal. This sounds like fun, but not so when you have to do it and then clean the insides of some 50 trout. I always wondered why my father never wanted to take me camping or fishing!

Grandpa Duke was a great story teller. He often spoke about the Denver & Rio Grande Railway narrow-gauge trains which thrilled me no end. He also explained that cowboys travel on their stomach and a good cook wagon was the quickest way to improve the morale of an outfit. When the grub's good there was no need bothering to call "Come an' get it." One whiff was enough to draw a crowd of hungry cowhands to the wagon to pick up their tin plates.

During my growing years my father often would make sourdough pancakes. He prepared the mix the night before and then let it work and bubble up. In the morning he added the finishing touches to the stuff before I got up. Once the griddle was good and hot I would be called for some of the best cakes you ever tasted. At the time little attention was paid to what sourdough was or what ingredients went into the bowl. This writer was only interested in the consumption end.

While attending Colorado College I signed up for a class conducted by Dr. Harvey L. Carter entitled "The Westward Movement." Our class text was authored by our former Sheriff and fellow Westerner Ray Allen Billington and was one of the very early editions of his famous book *Westward Expansion.* The Billington tome was used for basic reading, but Carter's lectures were all fresh material loaded with personal experiences. One lecture I remember well covered the journey west aboard a "Prairie Schooner." He explained the hardships encountered on these trips, what people carried, what they wore, how they slept, the handling of the animals, and livestock. During the question and answer period I made the unpardonable sin of asking what they ate. Old Carter pulled on his little goatee and answered, "Why don't you dig that up and tell us at the next session." Fortunately Christmas vacation intervened and I thought I had lots of time to find the right answer.

Once back in Southern California I asked my grandparents for assistance and got lots of material. My grandmother said, "Don't forget to tell about the sourdough!" I attempted to find the story of sourdough and how it came to America, but there is little literature on the subject. It has taken me some 20 years to gather together this little bit of information on what should be an ordinary subject.

I learned that sourdough is nearly as old as time itself. The first record of its use dates back to the Egyptians who used it as a leavening of breadstuffs and in the brewing of a liquid which we know as a sort of beer. Approximately some 4,000 years before the coming of Christ, an Egyptian baker happened to find a bit of flour left in an open bowl and it sat outside overnight exposed to

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the elements. The material became wet from an early dew and fermentation had taken place. Later the stuff began to bubble and was working lively. We don't know what happened when the baker saw this fermented mix, but he did bake it. He became the first man to raise bread from the customary flatbread. This discovery was to affect man, politics, and religion down through the ages.

It is believed that sourdough was brought to Europe at the end of the Crusades. Sourdough came to America with the landing of the pilgrims at Plymouth Rock and has since worked its way west aboard wagon trains, carried by settlers and in the packs of Argonauts. The legendary sourdough pot on the back of grandma's wood stove, or on the shelf of the chuck wagon became commonplace.

Most wagon cooks used sourdough for the bulk of their baking needs and cooked on a pot rack — two vertical irons with a crossbar. Small pots hung from the hooks suspended from the crossbar; Dutch ovens which were great for making bread were put directly over the coals. Before chuck wagons and fresh sourdough bread, a cowboy made do with beans, coffee, salt and hard biscuits carried in his saddlebag. The chuck wagon soon became a home in the middle of nowhere. It was a place a man could get warm by the fire, swap a story or two, or fill his belly with fresh sourdough bread, biscuits, or flapjacks.

Pioneer women gained reputations as competent cooks as the wagon trains moved west. The best cooks could do almost anything with a Dutch oven including frying venison, roasting a chicken, broiling a squirrel, and baking corn bread or "corn dodgers" as they were called. Regular bread, as opposed to sourdough bread, was baked near the open hearth by spreading the dough over a "johnny-cake" board. The board with the dough was propped up to face the fire, and then turned until the heat produced a nicely browned loaf. For years I just could not figure out how these women used sourdough and were able to get the mix to rise before use in baking. Thanks to fellow Westerner Martin Ridge, our faithful member on the staff of the Huntington Library, I was able to learn how it was done from an old Mormon Diary of the late Lydia Arnold Titus. She related in her diary on a trip west that, "When we camped I made rising and set it on the warm ground. It would be up about midnight. I'd get up and put it to sponge and in the morning the first thing I would mix the dough and put it in the reflector oven. With good hot coals the bread or cakes for a hearty breakfast were ready by the time the men rounded up all the teams." Lydia's observations on the baking of sourdough for breakfast illustrates the fact that women had a much harder time than we can imagine. Women tackled the arduous job of meal preparation by developing a trail-craft, the ingenuity of which rivaled the woods-craft or plains-craft of their male counterparts.

Sourdough also furnished the men of the American West with an amusement and escape, and contributed a word to our spoken language that has become a common slang word. This word is "Hooch." Hooch was a noxious brew made from the liquor that comes to the top of a batch of sourdough and allowed to complete its fermentation. Today few know how the name evolved. I have no idea what this brew tastes like, but from my reading I understand it is slightly less volatile than high test gasoline. The stuff was also known as "Beewack," but no matter what you wish to call it, this elixir packed the power and wallop of a mule.

With modern day food chemistry came cultured and manufactured yeasts. Even Charles Atlas took yeast to build himself up from a 97 pound weakling, that is if you remember those "Kick the Sand in the Face" ads which ran in the magazines during the late 1930's. Ultimately sourdough, the yeast of the American West, fell victim, as so often happens in the advance of modern technology. Yet today those with some taste buds are beginning to find out once again how truly good sourdough can be. A goodly amount of this impetus has come from the San Francisco style sourdough French bread. Maybe it's the spiraling inflation that's triggering an interest once again in sourdough, the "Yeast of the American West."

The recipes came from Grandma Duke and were passed on down to my father who

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reduced the quantities to three or four serving size, rather than the amount for an army of cowboys and trail drivers. Possibly in breaking down the recipe it no longer tastes the same. In any case these dishes taste good to me and I am the only person who needs to be pleased in this case. If you don't have a starter I shall tell you how to make one.

Powdered sourdough starters are available in kitchen shops and from many mail order sources. But for those who wish to start their own, here is a simple recipe for a starter.

Sourdough Starter

1 cake or package of active dry yeast
1 teaspoon brown sugar
2 cups of warm potato water (water in which potatoes have been cooked)
2½ cups unbleached flour
2 cups of lukewarm water

Combine yeast, brown sugar and potato water and place in a ceramic bowl. Cover slightly with a cheesecloth and let stand at room temperature out of drafts for at least 48 hours. You may wish to stir it down occasionally.

After 48 hours, add flour and lukewarm water and then mix well. Cover lightly and let stand 8 hours. After this period you will have a basic sourdough starter. Refrigerate or use part for recipes. Remember to put back into your starter crock what you take out to make something before you start in a basic recipe. I will remind you later.

NOTE: Always keep the sourdough starter and recipes you are making in a ceramic crock or glass container. Metal ruins the starter. Always refrigerate the starter when not in use. Freeze it if you will not be using it for several months. A sourdough starter should always have a sour, yeasty smell to it. It is best to take it from the ice box at least once a month, let stand open overnight to grow and be active. Otherwise it will eventually dry out.

Sourdough Pancakes

1 cup sourdough starter
2 cups warm water
2½ cups unbleached flour
2 teaspoons of brown sugar
1 teaspoon of baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons oil
1¼ cup evaporated milk
2 eggs

The night before using, mix starter with water, flour and brown sugar in a ceramic bowl. Cover lightly. After an overnight period, remove one cup of the starter and return it to your starter pot. To the remaining batter, add baking powder, salt, etc.

In a separate bowl, beat together the oil, milk and eggs. Add to batter and stir just enough to mix. Drop by tablespoons onto a hot greased griddle and turn once. The cakes will become very large, however, when removed from the griddle they will fall very flat. I warn you in advance so you will not think you have done something wrong.

Sourdough Waffles

Follow the same recipe for pancakes but increase the oil to ¼ cup.

Sourdough Biscuits

1 cup of white or wheat flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup solid shortening or lard
1 cup of sourdough starter

Mix flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in shortening to make a coarse mixture, then stir in starter and mix well. Knead dough lightly on a floured surface and roll until about one-half inch thick. Cut into small rounds and bake at 450 degrees about 10 minutes. Makes 16 to 20 great biscuits.

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It has often been said that "A cowboy is an appetite ridin' a horse." I am quite sure that cowboys, like everyone else, became tired of the same meals while out on the range a month or more. My father tried to put some variety in his dishes. Here is a good one for sourdough steak. You might try it on the backyard barbecue.

Sourdough Steak

1-inch thick round steak (about 3 pounds)
1 cup of all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons onion salt
2 teaspoons black pepper
1 cup of sourdough starter
¾ cup of shortening or lard

Since round steak tends to be tough, you might wish to use some tenderizer on it. In the old days they used a knife and pounded the steak to about ½-inch thick. You probably have a pounding hammer in the kitchen drawer which will do fine. Cut the steak into serving pieces. Combine the flour and all the seasonings. Dip the pounded steak in your sourdough starter, then into the flour mixture. Fry in a 1-inch layer of shortening or lard in a heavy iron skillet. Makes 6-8 servings. You will enjoy it when the wagon cook calls, "Chuck's on, come an' get it."

Train-drivin' cowboys often worked 18 hours a day, seven days a week. That's when everything went right. If the cattle stampeded at the end of the day, nobody rested until the last onery critter was rounded up. One of the treats was some good sourdough bread. Here is a recipe my father cooked up with Rocky Mountain wild onions. Since we are not going to Colorado and look for onions, onion soup mix will do just fine.

Wild Onion Sourdough Bread

1½ ounce package of Lipton onion soup mix
¾ cup of hot water
1 package of dry yeast
2 tablespoons of sugar
1 egg
2 recipes of dry baking mix
1 cup sourdough starter

Add soup mix to ¾ cup of hot water; let stand until lukewarm. In a separate container, soften yeast and sugar with 2 tablespoons warm water. Beat soup mixture and yeast together with the egg, 1 cup of dry baking mix and sourdough starter. Stir in remaining dry baking mix to make a stiff dough. Place on a floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic. Place in a well greased ceramic bowl, turning it so the greased top is up. Cover and let rise for at least 2 hours. Shape into a round loaf. Place in greased pan, cover, and let rise another 45 minutes. Bake in 375 degree oven for 35 minutes. Makes one loaf.

Before the cook left the ranch on a drive or a roundup, he would make a dry baking mix. This made storage easier in the cook wagon.

Dry Baking Mix

2 cups of all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup of shortening or lard

The shortening was added or cut into the dry mixture to resemble a fine meal just before use.

A Political Token, A Feud, and Montana's "Capital Fight"

by Ted N. Weissbuch

This is a brief account of the reasons for the pictured political token accompanying this article. It is a story about the end of an era of pioneering and frontier settlements, and the beginning of a period of bribery, corruption, and political warfare between feuding interests, all of which have been credited with being responsible for the passage of a United States Constitutional Amendment. It is the story of an era which Theodore Roosevelt said would probably never be duplicated in the history of the world. It is the story, known to many numismatists, of the Montana gold, silver, and copper strikes. But above all, the token recalls a story of the disputes which existed in the political life of Montana, and it is particularly concerned with a feud, part of which was fought over the location of Montana's capital. These "capital fights" were relatively common in the West as new states were allowed to enter the Union. It was common practice for interest groups to attempt influencing public opinion concerning the location of the state capitals.

When the Montana Territorial Assembly convened one of its most important tasks was to elect a United States Senator. The heated contest was between two wealthy mining magnates, Democrats Wm. A. Clark and Marcus Daly. Closely tied in with this political battle was selection of the site for the state capital. The two political adversaries were "copper-kings;" but, they feuded not only over control of the copper mining industry, but state politics as well. It should be remembered that Montana is called the "Treasure State," or "Bonanza State," and while the state motto is "Oro y Plata" (gold and silver), it was copper which gave the state its wealth. From the opening of Montana's copper mines until 1905, it has been estimated that Montana supplied the world with one-third of its copper. Both of these men had shown the foresight to recognize the potential wealth which could be accumulated in Montana.

Marcus Daly, a poor, uneducated Irish immigrant, had drifted to California during the gold rush. From there, he worked his way back to the Comstock lode country in Nevada. Failing to make his strike or find his fortune, he went on to Montana. It was here that he discovered and developed the Butte Hill copper strike. His untold wealth allowed him to indulge in his favorite hobby, race horses, and he raised many of the famous turf favorites of the period on a ranch six miles in length. Daly introduced irrigation on the ranch, spending over $200,000 on a single irrigation ditch. But for all his wealth and luxuries, he did not forget the miners. Daly treated them well, and it is to his honor that none of his mine employees ever found it

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necessary to strike while he lived.

William A. Clark, on the other hand, was well educated and came from a fairly wealthy Pennsylvania family of Irish ancestry. While still a young man, Clark studied law and taught school in Missouri. He knew several foreign languages and was especially fond of French. He considered himself a patron of the arts. Clark had also drifted out to Montana on the heels of the gold excitement. He worked as a clerk in a Deer Lodge, Montana, banking house and later became a partner in a Butte bank. Seeking "culture" with the millions he acquired in mining and banking, Clark traveled extensively and kept residences in Paris and New York, as well as in Butte. Along with Daly, he became active in Montana politics. Their early acquaintance was friendly, but it did not last long. Ridiculing Daly's lack of education, Clark made many remarks about his fellow Democrat. Incensed, Daly supported Clark's opponent for the Congressional nomination in the territorial Democratic convention of 1888. From this moment, there would be no truce between the two men.

The Territory of Montana had held its first Legislative Assembly in 1864 at Bannack, the first settlement of any size. The second assembly met at Virginia City, Montana, not to be confused with Virginia City, Nevada, home of the Comstock silver lode. For ten years Virginia City continued to serve as Montana's capital; however, on January 3, 1876, the ninth legislature met at Helena and in accordance with a popular vote, moved the capital permanently to that city. But opposition to Helena as the permanent location of the state capital was so strong that it was decided to include in the constitution which was to be drafted a provision for a referendum on the question.

The Constitution of Montana Territory was voted on and approved on October 1, 1889. In the following month, on November 8, after approval of the United States Congress, President Benjamin Harrison declared that Montana had been admitted to the Union as the forty-first state. Much longer than the Federal Constitution, the Montana constitution's tenth article provided that at a general election to be held in 1892 the permanent location of the state capital was to be decided; and thereafter, the location was not to be changed except by a two-thirds vote of all qualified voters of the state. In case no city received a majority of all votes cast on the question, the choice between the two cities receiving the highest number of votes was to be made at the next general election to be in 1894.

Practically every city in Montana, including Helena, Butte, Boulder, Missoula, Deer Lodge, Great Falls, Livingston, Anaconda, and Bozeman carried on heated campaigns for the honor. Bozeman is the county seat of Gallatin County and is located in the southwestern part of the state. The county is shaped, geographically, much like Egypt and contains a very fertile, productive valley, much like the Nile Valley. This accounts for the inscription on the token which refers to it as the "Egypt of America." Bozeman, however, did not have a chance, and Helena and Anaconda received the highest number of votes at the general election held in 1892. But neither city had a majority of votes cast and at the general election in 1894, Helena won the election by the close vote of 27,024 to 25,118. The two political opponents had played major roles in the contest.

Clark had favored Helena, and Daly favored the growing young copper town of Ananconda for the capitol site. Daly supported Ananconda by sending speakers all over the state to urge voters to select that city as the capital. Clark did the same in support of Helena. Montana was so large a region to canvas that the expense of travel alone came to a startling figure. Historian K. Ross Toole wrote that "One estimate placed the amount spent in the campaign at about $1,500,000." Another Montana historian, Christopher P. Connolly, wrote that "taking into consideration the vast sums of money Daly afterwards gave away in the form of mining leases to his supporters he must have spent, in round figures, over $2,500,000 in the contest. Clark and his friends must have spent over $400,000. The vote of the state did not exceed 50,000 in the capital election. The cost of each vote was, therefore, approximately $38.00."

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When the election results were announced, the citizens of Helena went wild. Citizens unhitched a team of horses from a carriage and hauled Clark through the streets. An effigy of Daly was also carted about on an improvised coffin. Needless to say these activities did little to ease the tension between the two Montana political and financial giants. While Clark won a victory in the 1894 selection of Helena as the state capital, the growing split in the party ranks had placed the Democrats in third place in membership in the state legislature. Instead of quieting down, the Clark-Daly feud grew in intensity over the next few years. Each man sought control of a newspaper and saw to it that attacks on the opposing faction did not cease. In 1899, Clark campaigned vigorously against Daly for a position in the United States Senate. This was in the period when senators were selected by state legislatures.

According to historian Roland R. Renne, president of Montana State College, Clark's political activities "shocked the state and the nation. According to the best sources available, tremendous sums were spent to 'purchase' votes of legislators, and while Clark received a majority of the votes, the United States Senate refused to seat him because of the scandal associated with his election. It is reported that the price of a vote ranged from $15,000 to $30,000 or more, and that debts of individual legislators were assumed and mortgages liquidated. It is also reported that all the various devices known to politics were used by both Daly and Clark factions in the contest."

Because of this "most bitter, corrupt, and temptestuous episode in Montana's political history . . . the scandals, briberies, political pressures, and confusion associated with the Clark-Daly feud undoubtedly contributed to the rising tide of sentiment leading to ratification in 1913 of the Seventeenth Amentment of the United States Constitution providing for election of U.S. Senators by popular vote." An abrupt end to the feud came when Marcus Daly died in 1900. The Montana legislature, when it met in 1901, elected Clark to serve a six-year term in Washington. Although some protest was made, the United States Senate finally seated Clark, and he served out the term, which ended in 1907.

And thus ends the story of this unpretentious one and one-half inch aluminum token, a numismatic memento which serves to remind us of our historical and political coming of age.

Ward G. DeWitt

Photograph - Frank Q. Newton

Dr. Ward G. DeWitt was born in San Jose, California on May 29, 1906. At an early age he came with his family to Los Angeles where he attended Los Angeles High School, U.C.L.A. and the California College of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons.

Ward joined his uncle in Los Angeles in the practice of eye, ear, nose and throat medicine. He moved to Long Beach in 1935 and opened his own office, retiring in June of this year.

Ward was a member of local, state and national medical groups. He was a member of Palos Verde Masonic Lodge and El Bekal Shrine.

Ward loved history and was proud to say that he was a third generation native son of California. With his wife Florence, "Florie" to her friends, they edited and published *Prarie Schooner Lady* in 1959, the diary of his great grand aunt Harriett Sherrill Ward written during her covered wagon journey from Wisconsin to Northern California.

I am pleased to say that I was considered Ward's friend for some thirty years. I valued his friendship, advice and, from many con-

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versations with him learned that he had four great interests. He was an active member of Westerners, a 41 year member of Kiwanis Club, the founder and a past President of the Historical Society of Long Beach and a founding member of the Queen Mary Club and its president for two years.

Ward used to take a lot of kidding from Westerners about the Queen Mary. One time, the day after Westerners, he called me on the phone. He said, "I wonder if they don't like me any more at Westerners?" I asked him what brought that idea to mind? He answered, "Not one person kidded me about Queen Mary."

You may not know that Ward was a musician. He played the Sousaphone in the U.C.L.A. band. He had a fine singing voice. Florie and Ward were asked to perform before many groups. Florie played the piano and organ. He played the guitar and together they would sing duets of pop and folk songs.

Those who did not know him well tended to think he was a stern brusk man. He was, in truth, a kind, generous, loving man — kind to all, generous in helping others and loving to his family and close friends. I never heard him speak a harsh or unkind word about anyone.

We shall miss seeing Ward sitting over there by the wall as he enjoyed his beloved Westerners. He passed away November 22nd. A memorial service was held at First United Methodist Church in Long Beach November 25th. His Palos Verde Masonic Lodge conducted the Masonic portion and his son, Ward, Jr. read a eulogy. Ward is survived by his wife Florence, his son Ward, Jr. who followed his father's footsteps and is practicing in Eureka, as well as two grandsons Ward and Michael.

Ward, may you have an easy ride down the long trail into the sunset.

This short talk was presented by Wade E. Kittell at the December 1983 meeting of the Los Angeles Corral.

John Hilton

by Glen Dawson

John W. Hilton, for many years a Corresponding Member of the Westerners died November 27, 1983 in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii, age 79.

John is best known as a desert painter, but he was also a gemologist, botanist, songster and raconteur. He wrote many magazine articles and two books, *Sonora Sketch Book* (1947), and *Hardly Any Fences, Baja California in 1933-1959* (1977). *Branding Iron* Number 98, September 1970 is devoted to Bill Bender's recollections of John Hilton on a trip they took to the Philippines and Viet Nam to paint for the Air Force Art Collection. Katherine Ainsworth wrote a biography of John Hilton, *The Man Who Captured Sunshine* (1978). Ed and Katherine Ainsworth were long time friends of John Hilton.

John Hilton as a boy had lived in China, he had a gem shop opposite the Valerie Jean Date Shop near Mecca, and one time lived in Alamos, Sonora, Mexico and for many years at Twentynine Palms. He retired to his home in Maui, Hawaii.

John Hilton was married three times (Eunice, Barbara and Jana). His daughter Kathi Hilton (Mrs. Boyce Gavin) is a talented artist in her own right.

John Hilton has many artist friends including Jimmy Swinnerton, Maynard Dixon, Orpha Klinker, Clyde Forsythe, Nicolai Fechin and Bill Bender. Hilton paintings are in many public and private collections. With his passing there are only two surviving painters of Ed Ainsworth's notable *Painters of the Desert*: R. Brownell McGrew and Westerner Bill Bender.

such as Signal Hill in Long Beach created forests of oil derricks in southern California.

The oil industry flavored its nomenclature with words describing the tools and technology of drilling; "gusher" and "wildcatting" are among the best known terms. The twentieth century has seen the development of improvements in machinery and safeguards in what must be acknowledged as hazardous work.

NOVEMBER

Tony Lehman

Corral Member Tony Lehman gave a presentation, illustrated with slides, on the career of Los Angeles artist Paul Landacre (1893-1963) who achieved national recognition as a wood engraver. Born in Ohio, young Landacre was a top athlete in school, but a major illness left him crippled. In 1916 he moved to California and began a career as a commercial artist, first in San Diego and then Los Angeles. Married in 1925, Landacre perfected his wood carving technique while his wife Margaret worked at Zeitlin's Book Shop. In 1932 the Landacres moved into a rustic home in Echo Park which became their center of art and family life.

Landacre's art focused on wood engraving, a delicate and painstaking process of illustration. He printed his own engravings to perfectionist standards. His subjects included California's coastline, mountains, and valleys. Landacre's talent won him recognition and awards. Later in his career he turned to book illustration, often working with Ward Ritchie and his press. Following his wife's death from cancer, Landacre found life without her too difficult to bear, and he committed suicide — a tragic end to a fine career and a life in which he had successfully overcome his handicap.

Hills and the Sea - Malibu Coast - Paul Landacre

DECEMBER

The last meeting of 1983 witnessed the traditional complimentary wine, recognition of Colette's services to the Corral, and installation of new Active, Associate, and Honorary members. Bill Warren was installed as Corral Sheriff for 1984. The Corral welcomed William Snider and Msgr. Francis Weber as new Associates, while Active status was conferred upon Tod Berens, Sig Demke, and Bill Lorenz. John Goodman received Honorary membership for his many contributions to the Corral.

Sixteen years ago a group of old-timers recalled the beginnings of the Los Angeles Corral. These reminiscences were reported in the March 1966 *Branding Iron.* At the December meeting most of those old-timers, now getting *really* grey around the edges,

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Photograph - Iron Eyes Cody

A French *Pinata* stuffed with tokens of appreciation is presented to Colette by Sheriff Bill Warren.

were on hand to update and embroider their memories.

Paul Galleher (1948 Sheriff) recalled the founding of the Los Angeles Corral at the home of Homer britzman in 1946. The first official meeting was held at the Redwood House on December 19, 1946. Of the founding members, Galleher and Glen Dawson continue as 37-year active veterans of Corral activities.

Paul Bailey (1950 Sheriff) was publishing the Eagle Rock *Advertiser* in 1947 when he met Homer Britzman; their common interest in publishing and Western history brought Bailey into the Corral as a "chosen" member.

Art Clark, Jr. (1953 Sheriff) described the early years of the Corral and the various places where the Corral met monthly. With no definite restaurant location, meetings were often held at members' homes. Ernie Hinton's movie ranch set or Ernie Sutton's home were the sites of many summer meetings. Many early Corral members were products of the old West, noted Clark, coming from ranching backgrounds or raised in small Western towns.

Don Meadows (1956 Sheriff) recalled the meetings at the Redwood House on First Street and how Corral members would challenge speakers on erroneous points or exaggerations. One memorable event occurred when Paul Bailey drove Don from the Ambassador Hotel to the Redwood House — in reverse!

Glen Dawson (1959 Sheriff) noted the wide variety of occupations held by Corral members. He surveyed the roster of Corral members and found that 47 Actives have written books, Associates have done six, and an undetermined number have been done by Corresponding Members. The holdings at the Huntington Library reveal the sum total of contributions number in the hundreds.

Henry Clifford (1960 Sheriff) related how his experiences as a Westerner have brought him many pleasant memories and stories. He recalled several of them, one of which, while extracting admiration and acclamation from the audience, is unfortunately unprintable.

Photograph - Iron Eyes Cody

Newly installed Sheriff Bill Warren receives badge and congratulations from Powell Greenland.

Sketch by John Hilton

Cannibalism in the Old West

by Don Franklin

During the first half of the 19th century, cannibalism was one of the concerns of the age. Along with witchcraft, cannibalism was an abhorrent phenomenon little understood and especially repugnant—the ultimate example of man's inhumanity to man, the consumption of the flesh of one human being by another. As Europeans and their American descendants poked their noses into far-off and savage places it was assumed that those places were inhabited by cannibals. Among the less informed of the public, cannibal became a synonym for primitive man anyplace, whether in Africa, the South Seas, or the American West. General Kearny's topographer on the way to California in 1846, Lt. W. H. Emory, supposed that even the Navajos were cannibals. The West also had its share of stories of cannibalism among the trappers, explorers and emigrants.

Although documentary evidence is scanty, it appears that cannibalism among Native Americans was primarily ceremonial. Maximilian, Prince of Wied, related that the only form of cannibalism practiced among the North American Indians, after they were known to the whites, was the custom of eating the heart or the flesh of a brave enemy, in order to acquire the victim's courage or other desirable qualities. Farnham describes a tribe of Indians near Galveston, Texas, whose "contact with whites appeared to have made them more sanguinary and ferocious, and increases their tendencies to cannibalism." Thomas Fitzpatrick wrote to Lt. J. W. Abert, 5 February 1846, relating that he thought that cannibalism was never a custom of the Rocky Mountain tribes. However, human sacrifices had been common in the past, and on these occasions the medicine men and braves of distinction would eat the victim more for ceremonial purposes than a relish for human flesh.

There were also tales of Indians who ate human flesh because they liked it. "Uncle Dick" Wootton relates that in the late 1930's a French Canadian named Le Bonte was killed by Pah-Utes whereupon they "cut off nearly all the flesh from his bones and carried it away to eat. We found the bones and buried them where we found them." He called them "miserable cannibals". There is another tale of a tribe of Texas Indians, the Tonkawas, who because of their ferocity and propensity for cannibalism discouraged Father Junipero Serra from continuing his missionary labors in that area. Fr. Serra then directed his efforts toward California, insuring his place in the history of the Golden State.

Cannibalism among the whites seems to be divided between acts of last resort by those who had been trapped by the elements for prolonged periods of time and those depraved souls who for reasons of their own chose to mutilate and consume their fellow homosapiens. The best known example of the former is the tragic experience of the Donner party. In 1846, while attempting to cross the Sierra Nevada, the party was trapped by heavy snows. Their plight has been memorialized by many authors, most notably George R. Stewart in *Ordeal by Hunger*. Complementing Stewart's flowing prose is "Overland in 1846", a compilation of diaries, letters and newspaper stories edited by Dale Morgan. There is no question, with this exhaustive documentation, that the deceased members of that portion of the Donner party provided sustenance for those who lived.

Not so well known today, but of equal contemporary impact, was the disasterous results of Fremont's 4th Expedition of 1848 and 1849. In the wake of the party's failure to make a winter crossing of the San Juan Mountains, there was a great deal of finger pointing and blame fixing. Members of the party, accused of cowardly desertion, counter charged by accusing others of cannibalism. No doubt they were very hungry and cannibalism was discussed. These alleged instances of cannibalism or intention thereof are difficult to prove. That isolated, perhaps

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secret and stealthy, acts of cannibalism took place would not be unreasonable among men more or less insane from hunger, especially in the light of several instances of testimony from first hand witnesses. Charles Taplin's report published in 1849 states "Fremont found Williams, Breckenridge and another (Creutzfelt), scarcely able to proceed from exhaustion. King had died, and his remains, which the party carried with them, had been more than half eaten up by his companions. A dire necessity had left them no choice, and it was done in self protection." In February 1849 Benjamin Kern in a letter to "Joe" stated that the party had been found by the Colonel and that one who had died was all eaten by others. Hafen says that this is "one of the definite statements of cannibalism."

George Bernard Shaw says, "the only real tragedy of life is the being, used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base." Surely cannibalism would appear to be this tragedy in its bluntest form. On the other hand though, the false accusation of cannibalism, for the base purpose of relieving the conscience of the accuser, might surpass it. In October 1812, on the return overland from Astoria, a Canadian in the company of Robert Stuart proposed that they draw lots (with Stuart excepted due to his leadership role) for one to die to save the others. Stuart finally had to threaten to shoot the man to get him off the subject. He fell on his knees, begged forgiveness and promised never again to suggest such a thought. Chittenden says, however, that a person named Cass was lost to the smart party and that there were allegations that he had been killed by his companions to allay the cravings of hunger. He states that there is no hard evidence of this and that the general good character of the four survivors precludes the possibility of believing it. We have seen in modern times, however, that good character does not stop cannibalism. In 1972 members of a Uruguayan rugby team, stranded in the Andes by a plane crash resorted to cannibalism in order to save themselves. They were of excellent character and now ten years later the survivors meet several times a year to commemorate the event with no stigma attached to them.

Others were tempted. Lewis H. Garrard relates in jest, "we then stopped and looked at each other with that hungry, ill satisfied stare which, had there been but *human* about, might by the timid have been mistaken for the glare of cannibalism." George F. Ruxton in his fictionalized account based on his actual experiences on the frontier, tells of La Bonte's return to the camp only to find his companion engaged in cooking a savory morsel. Inasmuch as they had not eaten for several days he asked what game had been "raised". When La Bonte approached the spot indicated by his companion, to his horror he saw the yet still quivering body of one of the Indian squaws with a large portion of the flesh butchered from it and part of which Forey was already greedily devouring. He said that the knife dropped from his hand and his heart rose to his throat!

J. Ross Browne informs us that in 1849 he traveled from San Francisco to San Luis Obispo. He stayed one night in an old adobe house converted to use as an inn in the Mission San Juan, 45 miles south of San Jose. The hostler and his wife had been part of a party who the past winter had suffered terribly in the mountains. The woman had subsisted for some time on the dead body of a child belonging to one of the party. It was said that the husband had held out to the last, and refused to participate in this horrible feast of human flesh.

We have found two examples of depraved white men who ate human flesh. Charles Gardner was known as "Big Phil" due to his huge physique and the fact that he originated in Philadelphia. There are a variety of stories about Gardner alleging a criminal nature and cannibalistic tendencies. One is that he ate an Indian guide during a storm, another that he ate his own squaw during an especially harsh winter. When asked about the taste of human flesh, he answered that the head, hands and feet, when thoroughly cooked, tasted good, not unlike pork. But the other portions of the body he did not like; it was to grisly and tough. Gardner operated in the Denver area between 1850 and 1876 when he is reported to have been killed. The story of the "Crow Killer", one John Johnson, based primarily on the unverified testimony

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of a character named Del Gue relates that Johnson, who hated the Crows because they killed his squaw wife, spent many years stalking, killing, and eating the livers of Crow Indians. While there may be some question as to the veracity of these claims there is no doubt that Johnson existed. He was buried in the Veterans' Cemetery in West Los Angeles only to be exhumed recently and moved back to a proper burial on the plains. A movie based on "Jeremiah Johnson" not only changed his name but had the Indians stalking Johnson and him killing and eating them in self defense. Such are the ways of Hollywood.

There is little doubt that contemporary social mores and religious beliefs inhibited many of those who may have been tempted by the exigency of their desperate situation. Those who succumbed did not enter it in their journal. The topic of cannibalism, to this day, remains an unsavory topic for genteel discussion and after dinner speakers.

Bibliographic Epilogue:

No claim is made herewith that this essay is the definitive treatment of this subject. There are surely other examples of cannibalism to be found in the literature of the Trans-Mississippi West. We have related those events which were found during reading done incidental to other Western subjects. For those interested in further reading on the subject we list the sources used in the preparation of this paper.

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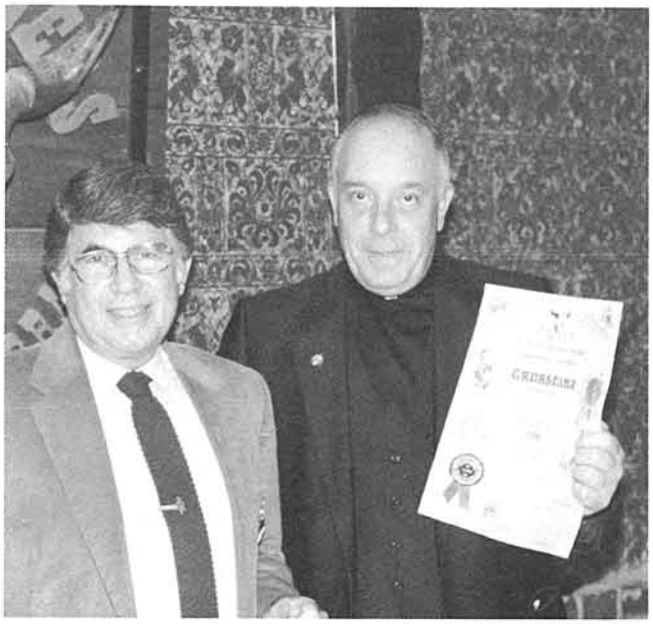
Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton

Auctioneer Hugh Tolford in action at the 1983 Rendezvous held in Alden Miller's spacious yard.

Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton

John Goodman receives Honorary Membership in the Los Angeles Corral for his many years of loyalty and service.

Photograph by - Frank Q. Newton



From left, Sheriff Powell Greenland and new Associate member Msgr. Francis Weber with his Grubstake.