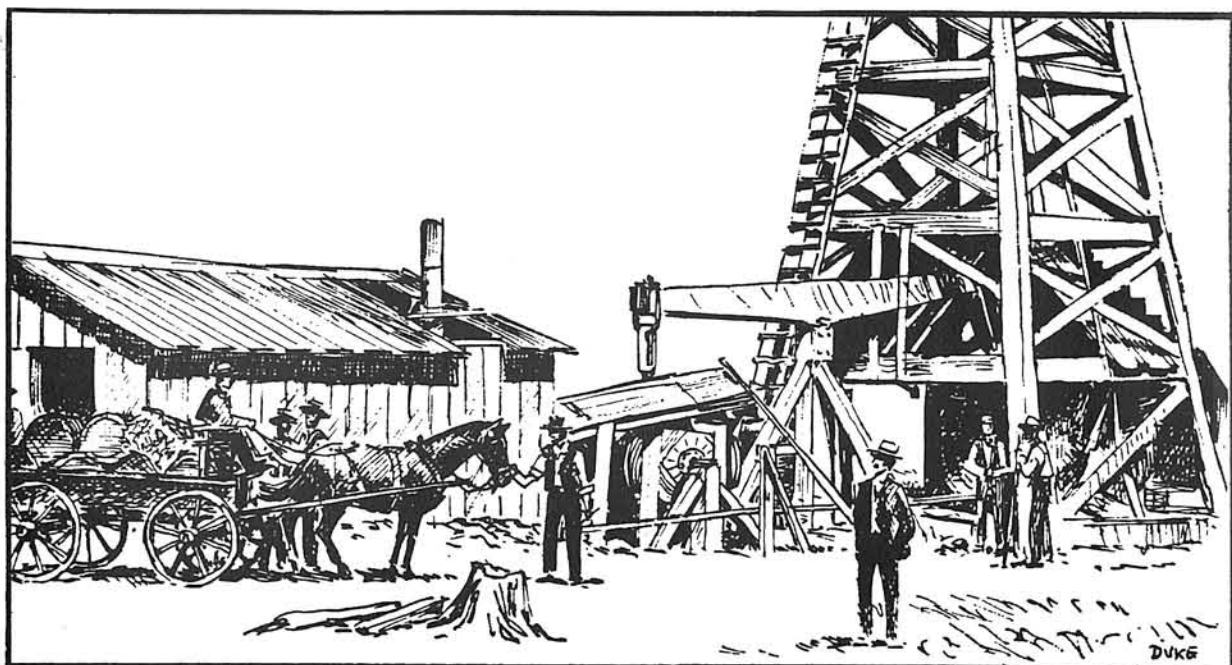




SUMMER 1988

LOS ANGELES CORRAL

NUMBER 172



## Signal Hill's Black Gold

*by Ray Zeman*

Before dawn on June 23, 1921, a wild gusher of crude oil blew out at Hill Street and Temple Avenue on a Long Beach hill named for its early role in history — signaling.

Skyrocketing over a wooden derrick's 114-foot crown block, this geyser started a second run of fortune hunters to California.

But this time the setting was Signal Hill instead of the American River and the Mother Lode.

The new prize was not just gold. It was black gold, priced at \$1.50 a barrel but destined to soar

much higher in the boom of the Automobile Age.

In 1921 this wildcat discovery well, Alamitos No. 1, tapped an obscure mound atop more than a billion barrels of oil, the richest oil field per acre in history.

Within two years, 272 wells were spurting 68 million barrels annually from Signal Hill. In the first 50 years, more than 2,400 Signal Hill wells produced 859 million barrels of oil and more than 1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The original eruption from Alamitos No. 1

*(continued on Page Three)*

# The Branding Iron

THE WESTERNERS  
LOS ANGELES CORRAL  
*Published Quarterly in  
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THE BRANDING IRON solicits articles of 2,500 words or less, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions from members and friends welcomed.

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Los Angeles Corral



## THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP



Frank Newton Photography

Corral Member Phil Kavinick spoke to the group about "Early Women Artists of the West."

## FEBRUARY 1988 MEETING

"Women Artists of the Early American West" was the topic of the slide lecture presented by member Phil Kavinick. He explained that women artists are the least-known and appreciated of those who painted and illustrated the American West before the turn of the century. While the female contingent was not large in number, they did turn out some very beautiful, spectacular scenic views and panoramas. Included in the presentation were a number of slide examples of female art. Lacking were the action scenes of cowboys, Indians, trail drives, and the type of scene we see as most representative of the West. Kavinick has spent many years collecting and tracking down the story of each female artist he illustrated with slides. In his research he has also gathered a comprehensive history of all Western artists and illustrators.

(continued on Page Twenty-Two)

raged out of control until 4:00 A.M. June 25, when Shell Oil crewmen diverted the flow into storage tanks, with 500 spectators cheering the results.

Alamitos No. 1 was heralding a new history for Signal Hill and the city of Long Beach which surrounded it.

It spawned a thousand stories — of millions won by a few, of family savings lost by many, of a great harbor and of thousands of new homes below the hill that marked the end to the romantic days of the ranchos.

Today, instead of a forest of oil derricks, Signal Hill has only a fraction of them still pumping lustily away amid a nondescript collection of abandoned wells and deteriorated tanks.

As land is cleared of equipment, the hill may still fulfill the dreams of developers who, before the oil bonanza, envisioned it as a site for beautiful homes with spectacular panoramic views.

Signal Hill's lore became part of American history in 1542, when Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed near the beach two miles below and named the present San Pedro Bay "*Bahia de los Fumos*" (*Bay of Smokes*).

Pubug-na Indians, living in stick-and-mud huts near the hill, had set fires to drive rabbits into small areas for easy capture.

Legend also says these Indians, long before, had lighted similar fires on Signal Hill to contact tribes on Santa Catalina Island. And white men later reputedly used the 365-foot elevation above sea level to signal smugglers and buccaneers.

The first recorded owner of Signal Hill was Don Manuel Nieto, a faithful soldier, who received a 300,000-acre grant in 1784 when Governor Pedro Fages began to distribute land in the name of the King of Spain.

The Nieto grant covered everything from the foothills to the ocean between the Los Angeles and Santa Ana rivers, overlapping holdings of the San Gabriel Mission.

When Nieto died in 1804 his six ranchos and enormous herds of cattle and horses had made him the wealthiest man in California.

A son, Don Juan Jose Nieto, succeeded to Rancho Los Alamitos (*the Little Cottonwoods*) and a daughter, Dona Manuela Nieto, inherited Rancho Los Cerritos (*The Little Hills*).

In 1834 Don Jose Nieto sold Rancho Los Alamitos — comprising 28,000 acres of his

father's vast holdings — to Governor Jose Figueroa for \$500.

Figueroa died a year later and Abel Stearns, a Massachusetts Yankee who had acquired Mexican citizenship, bought the rancho in 1842 for \$5,500 in hides and tallow.

Stearns later bought other lands and eventually held more than 20,000 acres, ranging from Los Angeles to San Bernardino. However, the great drought of 1862-64 wiped out most of his herds and he lost Rancho Los Alamitos in the foreclosure of a \$20,000 mortgage.

Meanwhile, another Massachusetts Yankee, John Temple, who also had acquired Mexican citizenship, married the daughter of Dona Manuela Nieto and bought the interests of the neighboring 27,000-acre Rancho Los Cerritos for \$3,025 in 1843, from his wife's brothers and sisters.

A line drawn on what would now be Alamitos Avenue divided Rancho Los Cerritos on the west from Rancho Los Alamitos on the east.

Every year the fastest horses bearing the colors of these ranchos would vie in a race from Signal Hill to the ocean. They would round a pole in the area of the later Pacific Coast Club and Villa Riviera and return.

El Becerro, a magnificent bay owned by Temple, once won the most famous of these races when the stake was 1,000 head of cattle.

Another story handed down through the years by Preston Hotchkis, president of the Bixby Ranch Company, and his wife, Mrs. Katharine Bixby Hotchkis, is of a senorita whose hand was sought by two vaqueros.

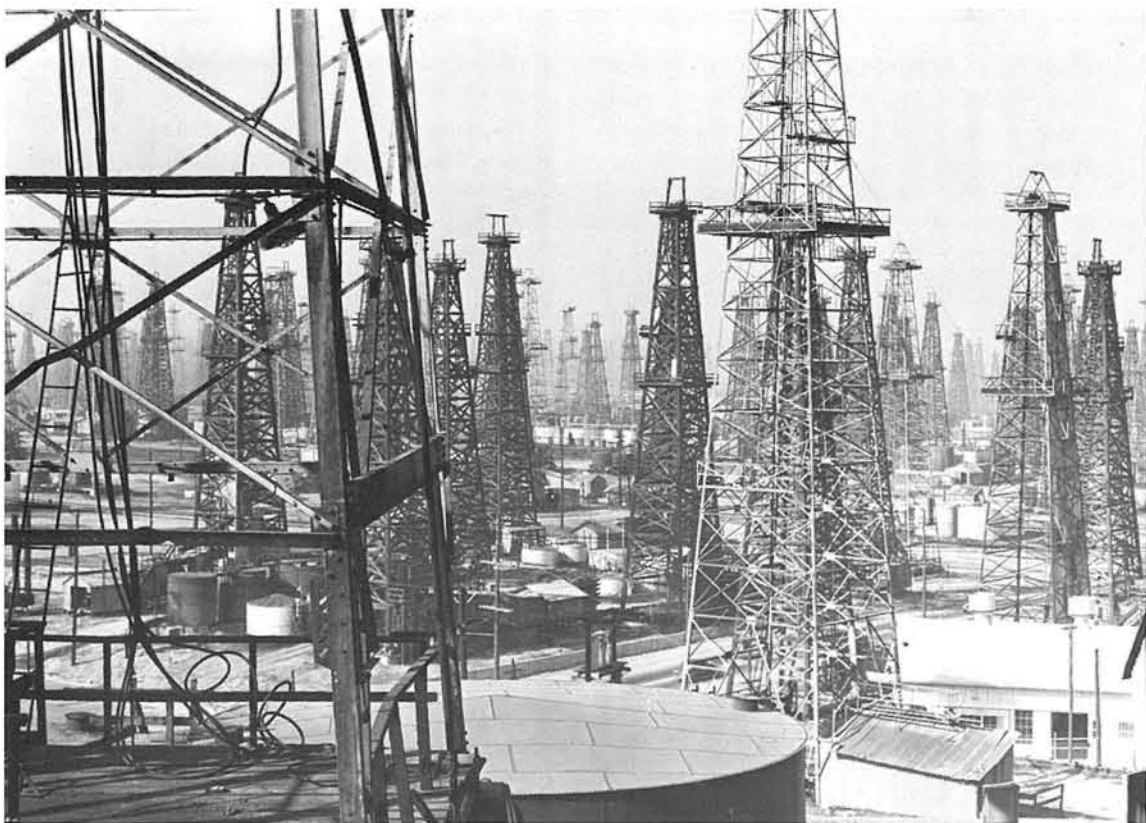
Undecided as to which one to wed, she asked them to race on horseback between Rancho Los Cerritos and Rancho Los Alamitos.

"The girl married the winner," Hotchkis said.

During the 1862-64 drought, 50,000 cattle died on Rancho Los Alamitos. Temple was mortgaging his holdings and by 1878 all of what is now Signal Hill and Long Beach had passed into the hands of the Bixby family and a banking associate, I.W. Hellman.

At one time they also owned half of what is now the huge Irvine Ranch in Orange County and the greater part of Rancho Los Palos Verdes.

The movement of the Bixby clan from Maine to California had begun in 1851, when Lewellyn Bixby and his brother Amasa boarded a side-wheeler in New York, crossed the Isthmus of



By the time Signal Hill was incorporated as a city in 1924, the hill had become a forest of giant wooden oil derricks and metal storage tanks. — Ernest Marquez Collection.

Panama and visited cousins who were seeking gold at the Volcano diggings near Sacramento.

In 1852 Lewellyn Bixby went home with the cousins, Benjamin Flint and Dr. Thomas Flint, but a few months later the trio drove 2,000 head of sheep from Illinois to Los Angeles County and then on to San Jose.

They came south in 1866, purchasing Rancho Los Cerritos from Temple for \$20,000, or about 74 cents an acre. Other Bixbys and Hellman bought Rancho Los Alamitos a dozen years later for \$125,000.

The Bixbys were interested primarily in sheep raising but in 1880 they gave an option on 4,000 acres to William E. Willmore, a former English schoolteacher.

Willmore, admiring the majestic view from the hill to the sea, began advertising throughout the nation what he called Willmore City. He offered small plots at \$12.50 to \$20 an acre.

Despite his zeal, by 1884 there were only 12 houses in the area below the hill and when Willmore left for Arizona the community was renamed Long Beach.



The only known likeness of William Erwin Willmore, father of "Willmore City" in this sketch by Alfred S. Harkness.



In Arizona, Willmore suffered sunstroke. When he returned to Long Beach years later he learned the city he had founded had prospered in a new land boom. But he was penniless and became an inmate of the county poor farm.

He died in 1901 and was buried in the municipal cemetery.

Across the street from the cemetery, still pumping, are the oil wells which brought fortune to others on fabulous Signal Hill.

In 1916-17, Union Oil Co. drilled the first Signal Hill well (Bixby No. 1) to 3,449 feet at Wardlow Road and Long Beach Boulevard but abandoned it.

In 1921, Shell Oil decided to gamble. It spent \$60,000 to lease 240 acres on the southeast flank of the hill and spudded in Alamitos No. 1 on March 23.

Many were skeptical. But D.H. Thornburg, a Shell geologist who remembered seeing many sea shells and tilted seabeds on the hill when he played there as a boy, had a hunch that the five large homes and the cucumber and blackberry truck farms might be on the crest of an oil-bearing geologic anticline.

On May 2, a coring sample from a depth of 2,765 feet revealed oil sand. Shell promptly appropriated \$50,000 to lease more acreage. On May 23, in another test, 70 feet of oil stood in the hole.

On June 23, after exactly three months of drilling, the old cable tools were piercing rock at 3,114 feet when the wildcat blew in before dawn. A crown of 500 swelled to 15,000 after sunrise, all astonished by the gusher.

When officially placed "on stream" after being brought under control June 25th, it flowed at 590 barrels a day but production later bulged to 1,200.

"My mother got oil all over her brand new hat," recalls Llewellyn Bixby III, president of the Alamitos Land Co., on whose property Alamitos No. 1 was drilled.

Speculators and promoters engaged in a frenzied competition for signatures of Signal Hill land owners on mineral leases.

Andrew Pala valued his pink mansion near the crest of the hill at \$15,000. By midnight on the day of the strike he was turning down \$150,000 for it.

Other bidders, instead of offering the usual one-eighth royalty in a wildcat area or one-sixth



Over the years, Signal Hill had sporadic oil well fires. — Ernest Marquez Collection.

in a proved field, were waving legal documents providing 20, 25 and 33 percent.

Pala's next-door neighbor, Louis C. Denni, superintendent of the Bixby Land Co. since 1884, drove four blocks from his home to the discovery well.

"My dad and I got there in a Model T Ford," said Joseph Denni. "Oil was shooting up over the top of the derrick and we were afraid it would ignite from fires in the boilers. It was dangerous."

The elder Denni held out until January before leasing his property to the United Oil Company for a 50 percent royalty, believed to be the highest in history at that time, United turned over the lease to Richfield, which tore down Denni's mansion in a panic in order to begin drilling.

Denni's nearby carriage house was moved across the street and survived for some years as the nucleus of the Hill Top Cafe.

Promoters' free busses brought prospective investors from Pershing Square in Los Angeles to free lunches in circus tents at Signal Hill, where glib stories were told of fortunes to be made in oil.

Many bought perhaps one 500,000th of a one-sixth royalty interest in an oil well still to be drilled. Some profited.

Trading extended to cover mineral rights in one-foot-square parcels of land.

In one area nicknamed the Encyclopedia Tract, easterners had gotten actual deeds to lots not much larger than postage stamps. This was in connection with a "Land in California" gimmick to sell sets of encyclopedias.

Some of the fly-by-night promoters during the hectic 1920's, trapped in shady dealings, wound



By the 1930's, the City of Signal Hill had developed into a metropolitan city planted among oil derricks. By this time many of the derricks had been removed as may be seen on the hill in the background. — Ernest Marquez Collection.

up in San Quentin.

The most colorful of the promoters was C.C. Julian, a onetime pipeline laborer who became a genius in arousing confidence of Middle Western farmers who, after World War I, flocked to Southern California with their savings.

Estimates of the losses of small investors to this dapper promoter during his meteoric career range from \$100 million and upward.

Julian moved to Oklahoma after his Southern California bubble burst, jumped a \$25,000 bond in a \$3.5 million federal mail fraud case, fled to Shanghai and committed suicide there in 1934.

Long Beach sought to annex the two-square-mile Signal Hill area soon after the discovery of oil. Enormous tax revenues from the petroleum deposits were looming.

But Signal Hill residents shrewdly rejected the bigger city's advances and they incorporated as a city in 1924.

They elected the first woman mayor in California, Mrs. Jessie Elwin Nelson. She and a later mayor, Mrs. Nellie Cambellack, tried to clean up gambling joints that were preying on well-paid oil workers.

Meanwhile, major oil companies and many independent operators were expanding the field.

In 1922, A.T. Jergins and Charles M. Cotton formed the Jergins Trust, later incorporated as the Jergins Oil Co. By 1944 they had paid the city of Long Beach \$9,706,848 in royalties on a Water Department lease north of the cemetery. They sold out in 1950 in a \$30 million transaction.

Samuel Mosher, a lemon grower who lived miles away, originally knew nothing about petroleum production techniques. Months later, after Alamitos No. 1 blew in, he drove to Signal Hill, noticed many wells were wasting the natural gas which flew up the pipe with the crude oil.

Mosher acquired an absorption plant to handle such gas and to extract the highly volatile natural gasoline it contains.

This led naturally to drilling. Incorporating as Signal Oil & Gas Co., he drilled not only in Signal Hill, but at Huntington Beach, then in Mexico, Venezuela and finally in Kuwait he had fabulous strikes.

Over the years, Signal Hill has had sporadic oil well fires and some tragic refinery blasts, such as the one which killed nine Richfield employees

June 2, 1933, and another in which two Hancock Oil workers died May 22, 1958.

For safety, steel instead of wood is now used in the derricks and most of these high rigs have been replaced by squatty pumpers as production ebbs.

Below ground level, Signal Hill remains a cobweb of steel pipes. Some of the wells were drilled "every which way" in the early hysteria to strike profitable pools.

Since 1956, Long Beach Model T Club's scores of members show off their restored Ford Tin Lizzies in their annual Signal Hill Climb. This is a one-tenth mile race up the steep grade at Obispo Avenue and Hill Street about a half mile east of the discovery well.

Alamitos No. 1, now known legally as Barto/Signal Hill Petroleum, Inc., East Unit No. 149, has produced 750,000 barrels of crude oil since that exciting day in 1921.

It was shut down in late 1987 for "repairs and maintenance" but could easily produce 35 barrels daily if crude oil prices rose sufficiently to cover costs of pumping.

Alamitos No. 1's life, and that of 300 sister wells still producing atop Signal Hill, depends upon an international cartel, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. And OPEC ministers, beset by internal squabbling, dealt harrowing blows to prices and production quotas in December 1987.

While oil companies continue waterflooding the field for more complete recovery of remaining

oil, realty developers file multimillion-dollar suits to permit construction of hundreds of condominiums and luxury homes on the crown of the hill and the slopes below.

The high-rise structures have sweeping, unrivaled vistas. But building standards, zoning and density restrictions hamper the developers. They want all unsightly tanks and derricks removed.

The hill's city officials and oil men long ago began an annual La Fiesta de Oro Negro to commemorate the oil discovery. The all-day fiestas have involved Mexican dancers, a pit barbecue, plenty of enchiladas, tamales and tacos, square dancing and even old-time fiddlers' contests.

Petroleum pioneers and city officials have erected two large monuments hailing Alamitos No. 1 for development of one of the most productive oil fields in the world and for helping establish California as a major oil producing state.

But what of the Indians of Pubug-na?

Where are the coyotes, the rabbits, the yellow violets, the clams in the mud, the traders from Catalina and the men from the mountains with deer and acorns? Why aren't the meadowlarks singing above?

"Of the village of Pubug-na, there is nothing left," wrote one historian, "save a pile of empty clam shells to mark the place where Indians feasted, in the days when hill, and plain, and beach were theirs alone."



## Corral Chips

Members of the Historical Society of Southern California cross the Bounding Main to spend the day on Santa Cruz Island. Among the intrepid adventurers were *Don Pflueger, Jerry Selmer, John Selmer, Henry Welcome; A.M. Randy Joseph; C.M. Davie Gillies* and their families and friends.

Always unbelievably active, *Doyce Nunis* is elected a trustee of the California Historical Society and appointed co-chair of the Library Committee. He is editing the 1987 Lakeside Classic for R.R. Donnelley & Sons, Chicago, his third such classic. Doyce also presents the Annual History of Medicine lecture to the Eisen-

hower Medical Center, Rancho Mirage, speaking on "Medicine in Hispanic California," and in October he delivers the Tenth Annual Geiger Memorial Lecture at Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library, entitled "Maynard J. Geiger, O.F.M.: Priest, Archivist, Scholar — A Personal Memorial and Tribute," the concluding lecture in the Santa Barbara Mission Bicentennial Lecture Series.

*Msgr. Francis J. Weber* publishes another miniature book, this one entitled *Angels Flight, A Note in the Transportation History of Los Angeles*. The 19-page book, measuring 2½ x 2½, was printed by C.M. *Richard Hoffman* and issued in a limited edition of 200 copies and is available at Dawsons Book Shop.

*Abe Hoffman* authors *An Oklahoma Tragedy: The Shooting of the Mexican Students, 1931*, published by Texas Western Press for its Southwestern Studies series.

*Bob Stragnell*, our roving Arizona representative, is named the Deputy Sheriff of the Prescott Corral. He is currently researching the history of the individuals for whom the early streets of Prescott were named.

In March at the Annual Academic Convocation at USC, *Doyce Nunis* receives the USC Associates "Award of Excellence" in teaching. This was the second such award for him, having previously won it in 1976. In April he presents the 43rd Dock Lecture to the Los Angeles County Medical Association, speaking on "Medicine in Spanish California."

C.M. *Arda Haenszel*, who spent her early days in Searchlight, Nevada, where her father was physician for the Santa Fe Railroad and also the town doctor, pens a valuable and interesting book titled — appropriately enough — *Searchlight Reminiscences*. Interested readers can order the volume at \$10, which includes tax and shipping, from Friends of the Mojave Road, P.O. Box 307, Norco, California 91760.

The University of California at Davis receives a generous benefaction from C.M. *Michael Harrison* to augment the Library's Conservation and Preservation Department, named for his late wife, Margaret B. Harrison.

On June 2, *Glen Dawson* is to be feted at a

dinner meeting of the Historical Society of Southern California for being designated as the initial Fellow of the Society.

C.M. *Richard Dillon* is the dinner speaker for a symposium on the Modoc War, where he enthalls the audience with a talk: "Conflict Without Counterpart," his own insightful view on this notable war.

*Cowboy Country*, C.M. *Bob Powers'* homage to the cowboy and rancher both historically and in today's world, appears under the Arthur H. Clark Company imprint.

On hand for the California Mission Studies Conference, organized in part by *Ken Pauley*, we noted Sheriff *Bob Clark*, Deputy Sheriff *Bill Lorenz*, Ernie Marquez, Jerry Selmer, John Selmer, and C.M. *Lou Bourdet*. *Msgr. Francis J. Weber* was one of the speakers during the event, choosing "Caskets, Cadavers and Tombstones" as the macabre title, for his banquet address no less. *Bon appetit* audience!

*Iron Eyes Cody* receives the White Buffalo award for his unstinting work on behalf of the American Indian Free Clinic.

*Norman Neuerburg* must have tired tonsils these days given the frenetic activity and frequency of his speaking engagements: "Ancient Rime in Early California" for a Santa Clara University California Mission Studies conference; a talk on the design of the J. Paul Getty Museum for a touring group from the Historical Society of Southern California; "Books and Libraries in Early California" for the Zamorano Club; "Roman Furniture from Herculaneum" for a H.S.S.C. trek to Santa Barbara; a bicentennial lecture at La Purisima Mission discussing "The Architecture of the Two Missions of La Purisima;" several talks to archaeology classes at work at both Mission San Antonio and Soledad; and a host of other addresses too overwhelming to chronicle further. Hail to thee with such an abundant store of knowledge and such indefatigable vocal chords!

Finally, C.M. *Alex Kerr* journeys to England to research the beginning of glass ball shooting, meeting with Geoffry Boothroyd, the top expert on the history of shotgun shooting in the British Isles and also editor of *Shooting Times*.





# Booze Running in the San Gabriel Valley During Prohibition

*by Richard J. Arnold*

It was Sunday, February 7, 1926, and a cold breeze passed through the open sides of the patrol car as officer Robert Bence of the San Gabriel Police Department drove along the deserted streets of San Gabriel. The Dodge touring car had its disadvantages on cool winter nights as Bence well knew.

Pulling to the side of the road, Bence stepped to the curb to use the call box, located at the corner of Mission Drive and Roses Road in the northwest section of the city. It was just past 8:00 P.M. as he reported to the desk sergeant that all was well. This had been a quiet Sunday like most others he could recall since joining the department 12 months earlier.

Continuing to patrol south on Mission Drive toward Las Tunas Drive, Bence was passed by a Ford touring car, traveling northbound. He noticed that the car contained four men, three Mexicans and a Caucasian. Bence had a hunch that it was a booze car.

\* \* \*

At precisely one minute past midnight on the 17th of January 1920, the Volstead Act went into effect and the prohibition era began. The act had been passed by Congress over President Wilson's veto on October 28, 1919. A feverish scurry soon began across the country to lay in enough booze for a long dry spell.

Enforcement of the Volstead Act was in the hands of a Prohibition Commissioner, working under the Treasury Department in Washington D.C. Reporting to the commissioner were a number of superintendents, each of whom was in charge of several states.

Before six months of prohibition had elapsed, it had become apparent that the federal government had bitten off more than it could chew, as liquor was easy to come by if you had money or could get a prescription from a doctor.

Most states, including California, were either unable or unwilling to spend the necessary funds to properly enforce prohibition. Because of the

lax enforcement in California, President Coolidge issued an executive order in 1926 empowering the employment of state, county, and municipal officers as federal prohibition agents.

Two principal pipelines were responsible for bringing contraband liquor into thirsty California.

Booze-running along the coast, rivaled the excitement of the daring days of pirates. Loaded ships would leave a Canadian port, with a Mexican destination on their registers, but usually only the ship's papers would reach the listed port.

Prospective buyers were notified by radio as the ship proceeded southward along the coast and speed boats would meet the ships approximately 30 miles offshore. The boats would take the cases to a point just outside the breakers where they would be transferred onto smaller boats, then taken ashore. A gang of men would quickly unload the boats, as armed escorts, with shotguns, stood closely by. Once on shore, the illegal liquor was loaded onto trucks and then taken to warehouses within the City of Los Angeles. Speed and secrecy were essential in order to avoid the liquid cargo from being hijacked before reaching its destination.

Common locations for seaside transfer operations of this type were along the coast on Oxnard, Del Mar, Seal Beach, Laguna, Santa Barbara and Long Beach.

Backyard stills were also a major source of supply for liquor. A commercial still buried among the groves of orange trees represented an initial investment of about \$500 and could produce from 50 to 100 dollars of liquor daily. A bottle of moonshine could sell for at least \$5.00 per gallon on the open market. Small time operators in fast cars then transported the product direct to the customers.

Federal agents were almost helpless to stem the flow of liquor and their task was immense. During 1926, there were only 50 federal officers in Southern California, within an area of approxi-

mately 198,000 square miles, to watch over the drinking conduct of 2,350,000 persons. They were called upon to patrol 539 miles of coastline and approximately 500 miles of Mexican border.

\* \* \*

Bence, whirling his big Dodge around, slipped off the pavement as he pushed on the accelerator pedal. By this time the Ford was well up Mission Drive and only a single red taillight was visible. Although he stepped on the accelerator, the Dodge was not gaining much ground on the Ford. As Bence was about to give up hope of catching the car, he came upon motor-officer Elmer Griffin, and he quickly called out to Griffin that he should try to stop the speeding car as it probably was a booze car.

"Go after it," Bence told him, "It's got too much speed for me, but I'm sure you can make the grade."

Griffin quickly turned his Excelsior motorcycle around and took chase, catching and stopping the Ford as it turned right onto Duane Street. As Bence arrived, Griffin had already dismounted and was racking his motorcycle against the curb. The occupants sat quietly as the two officers made their slow approach along the sides of the vehicle.

Behind the wheel of the Ford, with both hands on the steering wheel, was Herreta (first name unknown). He appeared to be a Mexican in his mid-twenties. Seated next to him on his right was a juvenile by the name of Louis Delorme. In the back was Charles Fitzgerald, the Caucasian, an older looking man, seemingly in his late forties. At his right was Antonio Rojo, also in his twenties. All four men appeared to be very startled as the officers stood on either side of the car.

The four men were quickly ordered out of the car and were personally searched by both officers. All four men were well dressed and they acted as though they were perfectly sober.

After the search, Bence walked towards the Ford, and taking a quick glance through the window into the back seat, was not at all surprised at what caught his eyes.

"What have you in the car, a moving saloon?" asked Bence. "Just groceries," answered one of the Mexicans.

While Griffin kept a keen eye on the four men, Bence proceeded to make a thorough search of

the car. Inside he found 150 pints and half-pints of unlabeled whiskey. The bottles were discovered underneath the rear seat, neatly wrapped in paper, and covered with blankets. Satisfied with his substantial find, Bence returned each bottle to its respective position beneath the back seat.

After informing the four that they were under arrest, Bence ordered the men back inside the Ford. Herreta was instructed to drive to the San Gabriel jail, a mere mile away.

Pulling slowly away from the curb, the booze car circled west over Adelyn and then south onto Mission Drive, with both officers standing firmly on the running boards. Griffin placed himself on the right side and Bence took the left. While their eyes were focused on the occupants in the car, their hands were clutching the wooden grips of their revolvers. Both were prepared for any emergency which might arise.

As the Ford made its way along Mission en route to the San Gabriel jail, the pepper trees which lined the road were casting a dark path for the whiskey runners and the only light came from the headlights and a bright moon which flashed through the trees. As the two officers looked down the road toward the jail, they would occasionally cast a glimpse at their charges. It was completely unexpected when Charles Fitzgerald (the Caucasian in the group) placed a .38 revolver on the window sill of the right passenger door and pressed the revolver firmly against the stomach of the unsuspecting officer Griffin.

Within a matter of seconds, a series of explosions filled the once quiet night. The blinding fireball, from the direction of the revolver, lit up the interior of the Ford as it continued down the street at an undisturbed pace.

Tumbling to the pavement, Griffin screamed out in horror, "THEY GOT ME, MY GOD I'M SHOT!"

The gunfire continued as Antonio Rojo, seated alongside Fitzgerald, pointed another revolver out the left window and fired a round toward Bence.

Bence did not completely comprehend what had happened until he also fell off of the running board to the ground, about 15 yards down the road. Sprawled on the ground, Bence now realized that he had also been shot.

After continuing a short distance, the booze car came to an abrupt stop and the right rear

passenger door flew open. Rojo climbed from the car and began running east towards the Buttress house that fronted Las Tunas Drive and shortly Fitzgerald followed.

Griffin, on his hands and knees, fired three shots towards the fleeing men. One round struck Rojo in the left shoulder, the bullet going clear through his body.

Bence, able to get to his feet, began running south on Mission Drive, emptying his revolver at both the booze runners and their car. Fitzgerald was struck in the left hip by one of the passing bullets from officer Bence's gun.

Neither Fitzgerald or Rojo were fazed by their injuries and continued running. They quickly disappeared in the backyard of a nearby house and then into the orange groves which encompassed a large portion of the neighborhood.

The booze car, swaying from side to side, almost hit the curb as it rounded the corner onto Las Tunas Drive. Within a matter of seconds, the car disappeared from sight as it entered the city limits of Alhambra.

The night was now very still. The only sounds Bence could hear as he ran back in the direction of his fallen fellow officer, were those of Griffin crying in pain.

Griffin was still laying in the middle of the road, exactly where he had landed after falling from the running board of the Ford. He could no longer hold himself up and fell face down onto the pavement. His revolver remained clinched in his right hand, the hammer cocked and ready to fire.

Bence slipped his right hand under Griffin's Sam Browne belt and pulled him to the side of the road. His own left arm hung limp, having been penetrated by one of Rojo's bullets. Blood now began to seep through the sleeve of his uniform as beads of sweat dripped from his forehead.

Griffin's injuries had now become apparent as he lay on his back against the gutter. A large hole the size of a gun barrel had been burned through his Sam Browne belt when Fitzgerald fired his .38 revolver from point blank range.

Officer Joe Lopez, at the nearby police station, heard the gunfire. He immediately drove in the direction of the sound where he found the mortally wounded officer laying alongside the road. With the help of spectators who had gathered to watch, Griffin was lifted into the back of Lopez's

patrol car and driven to the Alhambra Hospital.

Within minutes of his arrival at the hospital, officer Elmer Griffin was dead. The bullet had penetrated Griffin's stomach, going clear through his body, striking his spinal cord and paralyzing him. The doctors could not explain how Griffin was able to fire the three shots at the criminals with such an injury.

Officer Bence received treatment for his gunshot wound at Dr. M.G. Bennett's office in El Monte. Returning to his home on Prospect Avenue in San Gabriel, Bence informed his wife of the nights' ordeal.

Within half an hour of the initial gunfire, the countryside had become saturated with officers from throughout the county. They were searching for the four booze runners, now wanted for the murder of officer Griffin and the shooting of officer Bence. Their vigorous search through the remainder of the evening as well as the following day was unsuccessful. All four men had escaped out of the San Gabriel Valley undetected.

The two occupants of the booze car, Herreta and Delorme stayed with the car and returned to Los Angeles. Herreta dropped Delorme off at 900 East Pico Avenue, a boarding house where Rojo had been living. Upon leaving the Pico address, Herreta then abandoned the Ford at the corner of Aliso and Alameda streets in Los Angeles. The car that was used by the four men had been reported stolen by its owner, on the same day the shooting occurred in San Gabriel.

After making their desperate escape into the orange groves, Fitzgerald and Rojo made separate returns to Los Angeles on the Pacific Electric.

The Pacific Electric's Alhambra-San Gabriel-Temple City interurban line connected these communities with downtown Los Angeles and operated along Alhambra's Main Street until it reached San Gabriel. It then followed along Las Tunas Drive with a loop down to the famous San Gabriel Mission.

On Monday, February 8th, the investigation into the murder of officer Griffin began under the direction of Captain William J. Bright, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Homicide Squad. San Gabriel City Marshal, Arthur E. Manzer had requested the assistance from the sheriff's department and had pledged the fullest support from all members of his department.

San Gabriel officers were quick to locate

valuable evidence which would later link the booze runners to the shooting death of officer Griffin. A blood stained overcoat with a bullet hole in the lower portion of the back and fresh shoe prints were found in the orange groves where the men were last seen.

It was through officer Bence's persistence that Charles Fitzgerald was identified as the killer of Griffin. Bence was looking through the department's rogues gallery (wanted posters), when he spotted a photograph of Fitzgerald, who was wanted for an escape from the Los Angeles City Jail. Bence notified Captain Bright of his identification of the suspect, and the manhunt began.

Just before midnight on Friday, February 26th, Fitzgerald, the first suspect in the shooting was captured. The homicide squad, led by Captain Bright, had been watching the boarding house at 333 South Fourth Street in Los Angeles, in which the neighbors living there had reportedly seen a man matching Fitzgerald's description.

The deputies, confirming that Fitzgerald did in fact reside at this location, then made preparations for his capture. With the building surrounded, the deputies broke down the front door of Fitzgerald's room and stormed inside. Fitzgerald, armed with a .38 revolver, was in the process of jumping out a window, but was quickly overpowered and disarmed by the deputies and taken to the county jail.

Officer Bence was summoned to the county jail where, without hesitation, he was able to pick Charles Fitzgerald from a police lineup, as the man who shot officer Griffin.

Upon being identified, Fitzgerald turned nonchalantly to Bence and stated, "You cannot truthfully say that you saw me shoot the officer, it was dark."

Captain Bright and his men did not hesitate in questioning Fitzgerald about his involvement in the shooting death of the San Gabriel officer, and at the first session he evaded all questions by stating, "That's for you to find out."

He later admitted having been a passenger in the suspect's car at San Gabriel on the night of February 7th. He denied, however, having fired either the shot that killed Griffin or those that wounded officer Bence.

Regarded as one of the most dangerous criminals in Los Angeles history, Fitzgerald was housed in a felony jail cell from which escape was deemed impossible. This was the Los An-

geles County Jail located on the top floors of the recently constructed Hall of Justice building in downtown Los Angeles.

On Saturday evening, February 27th, Antonio Rojo and Louis Delorme appeared at the same boarding house on Fourth Street, unaware that Fitzgerald had been arrested the night before. Quite to their surprise, deputies Hackett and Mendoza of the homicide squad were waiting inside Fitzgerald's room for their arrival. With no avenues of escape possible, the two men were easily taken into custody.

The skill and persistence of Hackett and Mendoza had given them the reputation of being the best in their field.

A note which had been written by Fitzgerald apparently guided Rojo and Delorme into the net of the homicide squad. The deputies found the note in Rojo's shirt pocket which stated, "Come to this address right away if you want to see me, as I intend to skip away on Monday morning."

Louis Delorme, after being interrogated most of the evening by Sheriff Traeger and Captain Bright, was the first to confess his involvement in the shooting of the two officers. In the confession, Delorme detailed the events of the evening and implicated Fitzgerald as having shot officer Griffin and Rojo as having shot officer Bence.

Rojo at first denied any involvement in the shooting but after being shown a written confession by Delorme, he turned to Bright and stated, "That's all true." He then gave a written statement completely detailing the evening of February 7, 1926.

As a result of the confession, Charles Fitzgerald and Antonio Rojo were formally charged with the murder of Elmer Griffin and the wounding of Robert Bence. Louis Delorme was charged as an accomplice. The fourth man involved in the incident, Herreta, was still at large and presumed to have fled to Mexico.

The preliminary hearing began on March 4, 1926, in Division 1 of the Los Angeles Municipal Court, before Judge Ballard. During the hearings, which lasted for two days, evidence was presented linking Fitzgerald to the death of Griffin and implicated Rojo and Delorme as accomplices in the death of Griffin and the wounding of officer Bence.

Surprising testimony came from an Ortella Beldam of East Pico Street, Los Angeles, whom



Rojo had been living with. Beldam told the court that Fitzgerald came to see her and Rojo the day after the shooting in San Gabriel. Pointing to a newspaper in his hand, Fitzgerald laughingly boasted to her that he had shot Griffin.

"I knew damn well that I killed him," Fitzgerald stated. "But now I know for sure. I pointed pretty low near his heart and now I see by the papers that I sure got him."

The three suspects sat silently in the crowded courtroom which was heavily guarded by sheriff's deputies. At the conclusion of the hearings, all three were held to answer on the charges of murder. Each pleaded not guilty to the charges and were taken to the county jail where they would now await trial.

It was about 7:45 A.M. on the 16th of March, when county jail turnkey E.W. Daniels directed two trustees to collect the dishes after breakfast. The trustee inside the cell passed out only one food tray to the trustee on the outside, so Daniels stuck his head into the cell to see why only one tray was passed. Then suddenly one of the prisoners, Jimmie Thompson, also in the cell, leaped on top of Daniels, pinning his arms behind his back. Fitzgerald, also in the cell, proceeded to hit Daniels over the head with a brass window lever he had torn from one of the ventilating windows, knocking him unconscious. Daniels was quickly bound and gagged and thrown into the cell where he lay for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Six prisoners, including Fitzgerald, then opened an outer door with one of Daniels's keys and made their way through the corridors to the tenth floor. Fitzgerald then shattered a window with a wooden sawhorse which had been left behind by a workman, allowing them access to the outer ornamental ledge of the building.

After climbing through the window, the six men crawled west along the narrow ledge to another window that was opposite the fire escape. After shattering the window, the men climbed inside and headed toward the fire escape.

They ran down the stairs of the fire escape until they reached the second floor exit. Jumping from a window to an alcove, the six prisoners fled through the main entrance on to Temple Street where two of them were immediately captured after struggling with two deputies and a newspaperman who were standing near the entrance.

The four remaining prisoners climbed a wall

on the Temple Street side of the courthouse and fled in different directions.

Fitzgerald remained a free man for only two days when he was once again captured on Sunday, March 18th by an observant sheriff's deputy.

Deputy Norris G. Stensland accidentally came upon the prisoner while walking in front of a drugstore at the corner of Fifth Street and Gladys Avenue and Fitzgerald was apparently just walking to a restaurant near his former residence on Fourth Street.

Stensland, recognizing him, drew his revolver and backed him into a corner. Pulling his handcuffs from his back pocket, he quickly snapped them on Fitzgerald's right wrist. The prisoner, taking advantage of this, quickly attempted to draw a gun from his waist, but was quickly overpowered by both the deputy and a man who came forward from a crowd that had gathered.

Within minutes of his capture, additional sheriff's deputies and Los Angeles Police officers arrived to render their assistance. Fitzgerald was once again driven to the county jail to await his trial.

On May 4, 1926, Charles Fitzgerald and Antonio Rojo made a final court appearance in Division 23 of the Los Angeles Superior Court before Judge Victor R. Mc Lucas. Both men pleaded guilty to a charge of first degree murder in connection with the slaying. The change from their previous pleas was made at the advice of their attorney.

Prior to their sentencing, Deputy District Attorney for the County of Los Angeles, Asa Keys, was constrained to accept the guilty pleas of both Fitzgerald and Rojo. If the case were presented to a jury, they would be unable to get any greater verdict than that of guilty of murder in the first degree with a recommendation of life imprisonment.

"I don't believe, under the evidence that we have, that we would have been able to hang both of them as we would like to do so, but we couldn't do so under this evidence," Dennison stated.

With Fitzgerald and Rojo standing together, Judge Mc Lucas fixed the sentence as murder in the first degree. He then directed that both be placed in the custody of the warden of the California State Prison at Folsom, and there be confined for the period of their natural lives.

Judge Mc Lucas then made an order transfer-



The Los Angeles Times poked fun at the escape of Fitzgerald from the new Los Angeles County Jail.



Mission Drive looking north from Las Tunas as it looked in 1926 when Griffin was shot. Orange groves and tall Sycamores lined the road.



Charles Fitzgerald was 40 when he was sent to Folsom Prison for the murder of Motorcycle Officer Elmer Griffin.



Antonio Rojo spent 23 years behind the walls of Folsom Prison for his part in the murder of Officer Griffin.

ring the final disposition of Louis Delorme to the juvenile court.

Prior to the trial, Fitzgerald and Rojo, while being driven to the scene of the crime by Marshal Manzer and sheriff's investigators, described how he and the others were able to escape after the shooting.

The residential neighborhoods of San Gabriel were all too familiar to Fitzgerald during the month of November, just prior to the shooting. All three men, Rojo, Herreta and himself, would make booze runs from Los Angeles to El Monte during evening hours, and Fitzgerald, dropping off in San Gabriel, would burglarize several houses, then continue on to Los Angeles on the Pacific Electric red cars. On these runs, Fitzgerald would always wear an overcoat and cap, the same as the coat that had been located in the orange grove after the shooting.

A man matching Fitzgerald's description had been reported to the San Gabriel Police Department on several occasions, however, he always managed to evade capture.

Fitzgerald, when describing to the deputies how he had shot Griffin, stated that both he and Rojo were wearing revolvers on belts and holsters. His was one which he had taken from a Huntington Park officer back in January, and Rojo frequently carried a gun. Neither gun was detected when the four were searched by the San Gabriel officers.

Prisons had become a way of life for Charles Fitzgerald and Antonio Rojo, since both could be considered professional criminals, as had been well documented by their past records.

On the 8th day of October, 1917, Rojo was convicted of grand larceny in the state of Washington. He would spend just over a year in prison before being paroled in 1918. Three years later, on the 25th day of November, 1921, he was convicted of robbery in the state of Montana. For this crime, Rojo was paroled in October 1924. It was while serving time in prison at Deer Lodge, Montana, that Rojo met his future partner in crime, J.A. Nelton, (alias Charles Fitzgerald).

Antonio Rojo, a native of Mexico, was 24 years old when he entered the gates of the granite walled Folsom Prison, to serve sentence for his part in the murder of Griffin and the shooting of Bence.

He first requested parole on August 30, 1940, however, it was denied. He continued to request

parole every year thereafter, but was denied two additional times.

Rojo, at 41 years of age, received parole on November 29, 1943, having served 23 years of his sentence. He was paroled into the custody of the United States Immigration authorities and deported to Mexico. When he signed his "ticket of leave," Rojo understood that if he returned to the United States during his parole period, such a return would constitute a violation of parole.

On February 15, 1974, Rojo's case records were removed from the active parole files. Since there was no contact made during a period of seven years and no arrests noted, the file was closed. It was presumed that Rojo had died.

At the age of 22, Charles Fitzgerald was convicted of first degree burglary in the state of California and became a resident of San Quentin. Fitzgerald was paroled on January 26, 1911. Ten months later, under the name of J.A. Nelton, he was convicted of second degree murder of a deputy sheriff in the state of Montana.

Sentenced to the state prison at Deer Lodge, Montana, for the term of 100 years at hard labor, Nelton again was paroled on November 6, 1924.

Charles Fitzgerald was 40 years of age when he was sentenced to Folsom Prison in 1926 for the murder of Elmer Griffin. Convicts at that time wore striped clothing and had to work smashing up granite boulders with sledge hammers.

Seven months after his arrival at Folsom, Fitzgerald was involved in what prison officials believe was a plot to break out of the facility. On December 13, 1926, while conducting a periodical search of the cells, guards found a paper in Fitzgerald's handwriting. The note, written in cryptic read, "Two men lay in, take screws when screws come in cage."

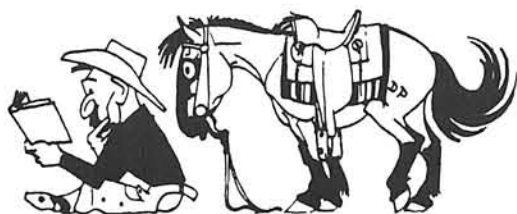
Prison guards determined that in using the term "screws," the prisoners were referring to the guards. As a result of the aborted prison break, both Fitzgerald and his "yard buddy," a convict serving from five years to life for robbery, were sent to solitary confinement for a spell.

Since 1933, Fitzgerald routinely came up for parole and routinely had been turned down.

On December 10, 1971, after serving 40 years behind bars at Folsom, Charles Fitzgerald was granted parole. "Old Fitz" as he was called by both prison guards and convicts, had spent most of the last 16 years housed in Folsom's honor



Motorcycle Officer Elmer H. Griffin and a girlfriend, shortly before he was gunned down by "booze runners," in 1926.



## DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL ...

Fagan, Brian M. *THE GREAT JOURNEY: The Peopling of Ancient America*. New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1987. 288 pp. Maps, illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$19.95. Available from Thames and Hudson, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110

The Neanderthal civilization has been popularized by the recent novels of Jean Auel and it is comforting to have a readable, erudite and interesting volume providing authoritative information as has been produced by Brian Fagan.

The nearly fifty letters assembled here are all addressed to Baird at the Smithsonian and date from this sojourn at the remote tip of the Baja peninsula. On one level Xántus's epistles to Washington, D.C., can be read as a revealing self-portrait of a complex, contradictory human

housing block, working as a barber.

It was shortly after 9:00 A.M. when a gray prison sedan deposited Fitzgerald outside the iron gates of Folsom Prison. Climbing out of the sedan, Fitzgerald was surrounded by news reporters. At 85, Fitzgerald had been the oldest inmate in California's correctional system.

Dressed in a clear raincoat and a lightweight jacket, Fitzgerald clutched a brown paper sack containing his personal belongings.

"I'm supposed to have killed that cop," Fitzgerald stated, "But they didn't know if I killed him or not. I had to cop out and plead guilty. The Los Angeles District Attorney said I wouldn't spend more than ten years in prison. I should have been out of here 30 years ago," stated Fitzgerald.

Charles Fitzgerald died in a Sacramento convalescent hospital on October 30, 1976.

Herreta, whom authorities believed fled to Mexico after the shooting, was never located by law enforcement officers.

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being; fervent and dedicated naturalist making new scientific discoveries; devoted son in his oft-repeated concern for his mother; egregious liar in making claims to far-flung explorations he never undertook and to achievements he invented; self-seeking opportunist in the persistently ingratiating tone he adopts mawkishly self-pitying sufferer in his unending chronicle of the hardships he undergoes; super-sensitive, petulant, and paranoid public servant in the constant conflict with most of his superiors.

On another level, however, these letters are extraordinary documents, not only illuminating a man who added nearly 300 new species of plants and animals to science despite his innate shortcomings, but also shedding light — as the editor cogently and articulately points out — on a period of history, "a halcyon time after the Mexican War and before the Civil War when refugees fled to the United States from strife in their own countries and found haven here; when military men went looking for a railroad route to the Pacific; when camels trod our desert; when there were Professors of Natural History; when there were the leisure, the interest, and the money to look to the natural history of the United States in an organized way and one man's vision,



Baird's, brought new species into the National Museum of Natural History almost faster than they could be named. Xántus's letters reflect, in short, the burgeoning energies and expansive ideas of the United States in the mid-nineteenth century."

Xántus's subsequent career was beset by the same nemeses that plagued him earlier. He traveled to Washington, D.C., where Baird obtained enough loans to send him back to Hungary; there he wrote and published *Utazás Kalifornia Dé Részeiben [Travels in Southern California]*, a book that is essentially a plagiarization of government survey reports; he came back to the U.S. and was sent as a consul to Manzanillo, Mexico, until being sacked for his abysmal performance; he returned to his homeland once more to be appointed Director of the Zoological Garden in Pesth in 1866; married in 1873 and had one son before this union was dissolved and he remarried; and then spent the remaining years of his life working at the Natural History Museum in Budapest until dying in 1894 of pneumonia at age 69, "eternally dogged by a sense that he deserved better and was ill-used by a vindictive world that never understood him."

Drawing on his experience as a researcher, teacher and author this excellent book provides a carefully analyzed evaluation of the claims and counterclaims relative to the early settlers of the Americas. Without evidencing personal prejudice, Fagan realistically evaluates the evidence of wanderers crossing the region of the Bering Strait between 35,000 and 15,000 years ago. Analysis of the data presented suggest that the earlier dates are untenable and that the migration to Beringia occurred 15,500, plus or minus 130 years ago. Evidence of earlier immigrants is skillfully and succinctly refuted, although, never completely denied as much archaeological evidence, potentially submerged by the elevation of water levels after the subsidence of the glaciers, is unobtainable.

The general structure of the book starting with "Ideas" followed by "Ancestry" and then "The Crossing" presents in an orderly fashion the general current knowledge and conflicting beliefs with which this study is involved. The latter part of the book deals with the expansion of the invaders from Alaska and the Yukon Territory through the Ice Free Corridor between the Cordillerian and Laurentide ice sheets to colonize

North and South America.

A careful review of the complex archaeological information surrounding the Clovis people, their forebears and their distinctive stone spearpoints is presented in a detailed yet readable analytic fashion.

The final section dealing with "The Great Diversity," perhaps tries to cover more specific information than the average reader is prepared to assimilate. One might wish that the book were longer with more than a stimulating brief exposition about some of the controversy relative to Central and South American findings. However, it is recognized that the addition of as detailed exploration of this arena, as is presented in the early part of the book, could detract from the principal thrust, which involves the attempt to age-document, from the available information, the incursion of man into the Americas.

This book is a valuable and readable addition to the library of anyone interested in competent analysis of the evidence surrounding this subject.

Robert Stragnell, M.D.

Hoffman, Abraham. THE SHOOTING OF THE MEXICAN STUDENTS, 1931. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1987. 75 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. Cloth, \$10.00; paper, \$5.00. Available from Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, Texas 79968-0633

This small book about a relatively minor incident raises many questions and should cause many to reconsider some views or ideas. From the title, one immediately assumes that the book is a rehash of police brutality to a small band of Mexicans in the Great Plains region; it is that, but it also illustrates the fact that tragedy affects both the victim and the perpetrator.

The facts of the case are relatively simple. Three Mexican nationals left St. Benedict's College in Atchison, Kansas, to return home for the summer. The students had the usual baggage in their new car plus a number of newly purchased fire arms. For some reason, the students decided to drive straight through. Was this eagerness to arrive home as soon as possible or doubt that they would be welcome in a hotel or tourist cabin? In Ardmore, Oklahoma, after passing a service station, the car stopped and one youth went to the side of the road to relieve himself. At this time a car containing two deputy

sheriffs, dressed in civilian clothing (not until the 1970s did Carter County require deputies to be uniformed), stopped and one deputy approached the youth stating that he was a police officer and displaying his badge. Deputy Crosby reprimanded the young man for his actions and then following police procedures approached the vehicle to question the driver. Then in seconds, two youths were killed by the police in what was apparently an unfortunate misunderstanding. Except for the number of shots fired and whether or not the deputy adequately identified himself, the surviving youth, Salvador Cortes Rubio, and the officers agreed upon the basic facts of what occurred.

It seemed to be a rather routine shooting for the time and place, but then things changed. The governor of Oklahoma, William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, started making erroneous statements about the shooting. When it was discovered that one of the youths was the nephew of the president of Mexico, Murray arranged an elaborate funeral and made overtures of appeasement to Mexico by promising that justice would be done.

Soon the two officers were brought to trial for murder. The trial maneuvers were complex, but by November the two officers had been tried and acquitted. Later Congress paid an indemnity to the families, but neither officer was convicted of anything except homicide in the line of duty.

A simple question, but so many questions. Why were the young men transporting so many weapons? One finds it difficult to accept the theory the author posited that they were taking them home to sell. Why did Carter County fail to uniform its peace officers? Even in daylight an officer in civilian dress is hard to distinguish as a police officer. Was the boys' English sufficient to clearly understand everything? The confusion over the number of shots could easily be explained by not fully understanding the question. Why did the governor attack the officers? In that region during the 1930s, it would not have been prudent politics to challenge the police over shooting a migrant. Why was one officer later reinstated to the Carter County Sheriff Department while the other was not? Would the story have been the same if one of the dead youths had not been the nephew of the president of Mexico, or would it have just been entered in the books as a routine line of duty shooting — unfortunate, but routine?

A small book, but one that anyone interested in justice, police routine, minority rights or human nature could read and ponder.

Robert W. Blew

Zwinger, Ann. *THE LETTERS OF JOHN XANTUS TO SPENCER FULLERTON BAIRD FROM SAN FRANCISCO AND CABO SAN LUCAS, 1859-1861*. Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1986. 422 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$69.00.

It is with regret that we see Dawson's Baja California Travel Series drawing to an end with the next volume, Number 48 in the planned fifty publications. The distinguished series, after all, has been a boon to Baja buffs, professional historians, and just ordinary readers curious about the peninsula to the south which has played such a vital and intimate role in our own state's history. And what a colorful panoply it presents: explorers, missionaries, pearl hunters, Indians, military men, whalers, filibusterers, castaways, and even John Xántus — the lonely tidal observer for the U.S. Coast survey and zealous collector of flora and fauna for the Smithsonian Institution.

John Xántus is a fascinating figure with a host of personal imperfections. Because of a seemingly irresistible penchant to embellish his own autobiography — indeed, he borders, as we shall see, on being a congenital fabricator — it is difficult to ascertain the verifiable details of his life. He was born in Hungary, read for the law, and passed the bar in 1847. Apparently he fought as an enlisted man for Hungary during the Hungarian War of Independence against Austria in 1848-1849 and, after being captured, imprisoned, and impressed into service several times by the Austrians, fled to the United States in 1851.

In order to enlist in the U.S. Army, Xántus became a naturalized citizen and was sent to Fort Riley in Kansas Territory where, fortuitously, he met Dr. William Hammond, an Army surgeon who was also an amateur ornithologist and who took the time to teach the young man how to prepare specimens as well as other elements of his avocation. Xántus's mentor also happened to be a friend of and collector for Spencer Baird, Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. The two men then succeeded in recruiting Xántus as a natural history col-

lector for the Smithsonian and arranged to have him posted to Fort Tejon, California, where for nearly two embattled years (Xántus could not get along with his medical supervisor, probably because of his own irascible, arrogant temperament) he nonetheless managed to enrich considerably the Smithsonian's holdings through regular shipments east of the California plants and animals that he enthusiastically gathered.

This anthology of letters is very skillfully edited by Ann Zwinger who has penned a marvelously readable introduction on the unusual life and career of her flamboyant and flawed subject. As the fruit of her research, she also supplies detailed and informative footnotes conveniently placed at the end of each letter which they elucidate. Reproduced, too, are some of Xántus's own drawings of birds as well as botanical illustrations by the editor herself which provide attractive and appropriate ornaments throughout the text. Lacking, however, is a photograph of Xántus, which any reader would reasonably crave. Why not provide, for example, a copy of the camera portrait he posed for back in Hungary dressed in the uniform of a Captain in the United States Navy? Such a photograph would be both desirable and fitting, inasmuch as Xántus was never even in the U.S. Navy!

Tony Lehman

THE NOTORIOUS I.C. WOODS OF THE ADAMS EXPRESS, by Albert Shumate. Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1986. 144 pp. Illustrations, appendix, index. Cloth, \$16.50.

In this biography we learn all that can be learned about Isaiah Churchill Woods (1825-1880), a native of Maine who arrived in San Francisco from Hawaii in 1848 to earn a share of the recently discovered gold. Albert Shumate chronicles for us Woods' subsequent life as a series of failed attempts at entrepreneurial success. Kevin Starr, in a gracious forward, claims "Woods demonstrated an element of vision that raised his business efforts beyond the commonplace no matter how mixed or even disastrous were the concrete results of his ventures" (p. 15). This reader finds less to praise in Woods than he does in the painstaking research of Dr. Shumate, a physician who has served as

president of the California Historical Society, and authored several previous books, most notably *The California of George Gordon* . . . (1976).

It was Woods' behavior while a partner in Adams & Co., "a leading banking institution and the largest express company on the Pacific Coast (p. 45) when it collapsed in the Panic of 1855 that led the San Francisco newspapers to refer to him as 'the notorious' I.C. Woods." Shumate acknowledges evidence of shady, but not illegal, dealings and deplores Woods' decamping before the accounts of Adams & Co. were settled and creditors satisfied.

Woods later emerged as superintendent of the first transcontinental stage line, and as an executive in a company that planned to carry passengers across the isthmus of Nicaragua; both enterprises failed. He served as an aide to General John C. Fremont at the outbreak of the Civil War before the latter was removed from command and he headed a company with a patented process for preserving wood products — a process that turned out not to work. Finally he became foreman on a ranch near San Jose where grapes were grown and wine was made. Woods died "before the success [or failure] of this venture could be determined" (p. 23).

Shumate has patiently pieced together a wealth of details on the circumstances of these ventures and makes a strong case for his claim that Woods "was not a primary cause of their failures." Perhaps it is appropriate to emphasize "his optimism and energy" rather than his rascality and greed. Certainly those who chronicled the exploits of men like I.C. Woods did not let the facts restrain their condemnations as the words of two songs published in the 1850's and reproduced in the appendix attest.

The Clarks are to be congratulated on maintaining their high standards of book making and meticulous editing. Footnotes and illustrations enhance the text. I.C. Woods would be flattered.

L. Craig Cunningham

BUCKSKINS, BULLETS, AND BUSINESS: *A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, by Sarah J. Blackstone. Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986. 157 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. Cloth, \$27.95.

In the title for this book the emphasis should be on the word BUSINESS. This is a book about business — a special category of business, a show business that fits into the circus classification. To explain the subtitle it must be said that anyone who expects this to be a book about William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody's exploits in the trans-Mississippi west will be disappointed. This is a history of a wild west show that toured America and Europe, before and after the turn of the century, with the name of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*. In the later years of its existence the name was expanded to *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders*. The name change represented the show's format change. In addition to cowboys, cowgirls, Indians the show began to present Cossacks, Gauchos, Mexicans, and military groups — English, French, German cavalry units — as performers. And still later the show moved further from just presenting western theme performances by occasionally adding a bicycle act, an Arabian acrobats act, and other non-western acts.

The book does contain a tremendous amount of information. Who were the management people, who were the stars, who were the service people, what were they paid? What did it cost to feed and house 700 people and 500 horses, what did they eat? How much canvas was needed for tents, how many tent stakes? How did they move so many people and animals and so much equipment on a tight performance schedule? And there is much, much more. Historians looking for information about Cody's show have a real mother lode in this book.

But readers must also dig through a great deal of repetition that even overrides an attempt at categorizing information by chapters and sections. The book would have benefited very much from some strong editing. Eleven black and white, wide angle, long range photographs of the show in action, at some unidentified location, do

nothing to reduce the impression that the book's obvious weak feature is editing.

Considering that it is labeled as a *history* of a wild west show, there is a strange intrusion, near the end of the book, of a chapter devoted to an analysis of the different acts and performances, and the relationship of animals to performers, performers to guns and costumes, performers to audience. A case of a Freudian discovering the American frontier?

Siegfried G. Demke

Fletcher, Thomas C. PAIUTE, PROSPECTOR, PIONEER: *The Bodie-Mono Lake Area in the Nineteenth Century*. Lee Vining: Artemisia Press, 1987. 123 pp. Maps, illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography. Available from Artemisia Press, P.O. Box 119, Lee Vining, CA 93541.

Originally written as a U.C. Berkeley Master's thesis, this book provides an informative examination of the early settlement and mining boom-and-bust era of the Mono Basin region of California. Previous treatments of this subject have mainly been undocumented or impressionistic studies, or recollections by pioneers and descendants relying on inherited tradition rather than hard research. Thomas C. Fletcher utilizes contemporary newspapers and documents to present a coherent narrative that is packed with detail on when mining camps were established, where exactly they were located, and which companies invested the funds for what was at best a highly speculative venture — the search for the rich lodes that supposedly underlay the tantalizing placer deposits. Fletcher has made excellent use of his sources, though the absence of Roger McGrath's *Gunfighters, Highwaymen, and Vigilantes*, a major study of Bodie, is noticeable.

Fletcher divides the book into four chapters — background, early explorations, early settlement, and boom and bust. He argues persuasively that the first written description of Mono Lake comes not from the famous diary of Zenas Leonard on the Joseph R. Walker expedition of 1833 but from Lt. Tredwell Moore on an Indian campaign in 1852. Following an initial gold discovery and the creation of several abortive mining camps in the late 1850's, the Mono Basin exploded in 1877 with the mushrooming of Bodie and discoveries



in and around the region. During the boom period, the basin was divided into four mining districts, each of which enjoyed its own brief fling at prosperity, only to decline as the gold deposits played out. This last chapter occupies more than half of the book. Fletcher clearly establishes the economic ties between Bodie, the major settlement of the area, and other settlements such as Lundy, Wasson, and Bennetville, along with the efforts of settlers who provided agricultural products for hungry miners, and mills that met the incessant demand for wood. By 1890 the boom was all but over; miners left in droves for more golden pastures, companies went bankrupt, and farmers and stockmen slowly realized how badly the region had been overgrazed by cattle and sheep.

It is this last point which requires attention as to the distinction between facts and interpretation of the facts. Fletcher argues that his study focuses "upon the earlier, isolated period when the people who exploited the basin's resources lived there and used them there, returning in substantial measure the fruits of their labors to the basin itself." But how substantial was this return? He also writes, "The settlers collected gull eggs by the thousands from the islands, cut pinyon trees for fuel, grazed their stock on the wild grasses, killed or scared the deer and antelope, and preyed heavily on the waterfowl." (pp. 40-41.) Destruction of the pinyon pine forests resulted in the Kuzedika Indians' loss of a primary food supply and the end of their way of life, a tragedy for which the settlers at the time expressed no sympathy. Fletcher also documents how overgrazing led to erosion, soil degradation, and other adverse environmental consequences.

Given this impact on the Mono Basin's environment by the 19th-century settlers, Fletcher's postscript to his story, in which he compresses the controversy between the City of Los Angeles and the Mono Basin residents into less than a two-page summary, seems almost a *non sequitur* for what has gone before. Blaming Los Angeles for the 20th century problems of the Mono Basin hardly excuses what the 19th century pioneers did. Fletcher observes, "For all practical purposes, the city had displaced [the residents] from their lands as surely as the settlers had earlier displaced the Kuzedika," but the equation is not that neat. Following the bust of the mining boom, the Mono Basin experienced economic stagna-

tion; the 1920 census found less than 1,500 people in the entire county — a situation for which the City of Los Angeles can hardly be blamed.

The gratuitous shot at Los Angeles notwithstanding, this is a valuable book that offers a well-researched study of an area that has all too few of them. The book was published by Artemisia Press, established by David and Sally Gaines of the Mono Lake Committee; the press has also made available other important studies of the region, including a reprinting of Israel C. Russell's landmark *Quaternary History of the Mono Valley*. Tragically, David Gaines was killed in an automobile accident shortly after Fletcher's book was published. These publications testify to Gaines' commitment and dedication to the region he loved.

Abraham Hoffman

Ellington, Charles G. THE TRIAL OF U.S. GRANT: *The Pacific Coast Years, 1852-1854*. Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1987. 248 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Available from Arthur H. Clark Company, P.O. Box 230, Glendale, CA 91209. Cloth, \$27.50.

This book takes on a new perspective to the life of U.S. Grant. Too often what we thought was the true character of a man was distorted with time. History makes heroes such as with John C. Fremont and it makes reputations also, such as the case with the drinking U.S. Grant was perceived to have done to excess. The author takes on this reputation degrading U.S. Grant and makes a very convincing case. He shows by in depth research the reasons for the unjust and dark reputation cast upon Grant. But this book is more than a clearing of Grant's reputation, it is also the story of his years on the Pacific Coast. It is the story of his rough travels across the Isthmus of Panama which is what his so-called trial was all about.

U.S. Grant's tour of duty on the Pacific Coast in Oregon, Washington and California was a difficult time for him, as described in letters to his wife. His loneliness and ill health at times, drove him to give up his commission as an Army officer and return to his family and farming.

Grant's strong-willed character, which carried him through the rough Civil War years, surfaced while he was stationed on the West Coast at

places like Fort Humboldt as the author shows. His return to the Pacific Coast after the years of his presidency show the warm hero's welcome he received in the states of Nevada and California and his intention to live out his last years on the Pacific Coast.

What we thought was that Grant was jailed at the Benicia Arsenal for public drunkenness and court martialled. What we know now is that the trial was a hearing into Grant's part in the crossing of the Isthmus of Panama.

*The Trial of U.S. Grant* should be one of the most talked about volumes of the Frontier Military Series of which it is number fourteen, and well it should be as it has all the good features of research and new information which are rarely included in history written today. This book will add nothing but credit to the publisher for giving us an enjoyable, readable and interesting volume.

Richard Olson

## Monthly Roundup continued...



Corral Member Tom Andrews enlightened the Corral on the history of early Gold Rush Guidebooks.

### MARCH 1988 MEETING

Thomas Andrews, our longtime Corral member and presently the Big Chief of the Southern California Historical Society, spoke to the group about the story of guidebooks to the California Gold region. His presentation entitled "West from Salt Lake: The Mormon Guidebooks and the California Gold Rush, 1849-1851" explained the complete story of the guides. He discussed the Ira J. Willis Guide of 1849, the Brigham H. Young and John Eager Guide of the 1850 period and the Cain and Brower Guide of 1851. All of these guides played an important role in the early years of the California Gold Rush. He

explained that many of them were handwritten, poorly compiled, and often led the travelers on a wild goose chase. They sold for big bucks in the east and mid-west and some of the least-known guides were prepared by men who had never traveled the trails they wrote about.



Corresponding Member Larry Burgess saluted the citrus industry in Southern California.

### APRIL 1988 MEETING

Corresponding Member Larry Burgess, director of the Smiley Library in Redlands, spoke on the history of the citrus industry in California. On the surface a pleasant romance, the largely unwritten history of the citrus industry is actually one of cut-throat competition, packing-house wars, lawsuits, and conflict over water rights. Women comprised 70 percent of the packinghouse work force; cheap labor enabled the industry to thrive. From 1895 to 1926 the typical wage rose only from \$2.75 per day to \$3.95.

Some interesting aspects of the citrus industry included the rise of citrus box labels as expensive works of lithographic art, a development that has sent collectors to ferreting out obscure packinghouses in search of labels. The labels helped create a mythical image of California based on its citrus success. After World War II, however, the Inland Valley region's citrus industry faded with the tremendous demand for suburban land.

Burgess showed the brief film "Pure Gold," a delightful 1920's promotional film for Pure Gold oranges, produced for the Mutual Orange Distributors. The film showed scenes of women working prodigiously at packing oranges; orange shipments moving by train, ship, and airplane; orange shows; home and commercial juice extractors; and, above all, customers enjoying their ration of "sunshine and health."



# PAUL BAILEY

*by Robert Clark*

Former Sheriff and honorary member Paul Bailey passed away on October 26, 1987. A memorial service was held in Claremont, with many Corral members, family and friends in attendance. Paul was much loved, a friend to all and a true supporter of the Westerners and Western history.

Born and raised as a Mormon in Utah, Paul left home at age 13 for reasons he never revealed. Nevertheless, he evidenced the self-sufficiency which was to mark his life by finishing school and attending the University of Utah. He met his future wife, Evelyn, while working as an orderly in Salt Lake City. But realizing that his new love could not be his while working with a mop, Paul emigrated to Los Angeles to seek his fortune.

Riding the rods of the Union Pacific to Los Angeles, Paul arrived here flat broke. To keep body and soul together he became a runner for a Greek restaurateur who also bootlegged. While making one of his deliveries, Paul felt he was being followed and ducked into a doorway, finding himself in the rear of a typesetting shop. Through this bit of serendipity, Paul made the transition from bootleg runner to transporting lead type from the typesetter to job printers in Los Angeles. He began to learn the printing trade, from linotype composition to presswork. He soon was making journeyman wages, and shortly thereafter, he and Evelyn were reunited when she came to Los Angeles to complete her nursing studies. They were soon married.

In 1937, seeking extra income to help supple-

ment his full union printer wages, he wrote his first novel, *Type High*. This was followed by *For This My Glory*, which proved to be very successful. Sons, David and Lynn, were born just before the onset of World War II, during which time Paul served at Lockheed in the PR department. At the conclusion of the war, Paul purchased the *Eagle Rock Advertiser*, a small community weekly paper which had declined and needed new energy and revitalization. While building the newspaper's advertising and subscription base, he still continued writing, and subsequently founded Westernlore Press, which continues today under the direction of his son Lynn.

Westernlore Press published fine Western Americana, and also printed books for other local publishers. Many of its titles have gone through numerous editions. The productive energy of Paul and Evelyn gave lovers of the West topnotch titles with fine design and printing. Together with Paul's own writings and other historical publications, his overall contribution to Western history has been tremendous. A listing of Paul's publications and writings is available in Ron Miller's *Paul Bailey and the Westernlore Press* (Morongo Valley: Sagebrush Press, 1984).

Upon Paul's retirement, Westernlore Press passed on to Paul's son, Lynn, who continues to carry its prestigious back list as well as new titles. Westernlore survived numerous difficulties faced by small specialty publishers, including a disastrous bindery fire in 1973 that nearly destroyed Paul's business and several local firms whose stock was stored there.

Paul's membership and leadership in many of our most prestigious organizations is well-remembered. He was one of the earliest members of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners, serving as Sheriff in 1950. He aided in the founding of the Western History Association and the Southern California Book Publishers Association. He was President of the Western Writers of America, an Honorary Director of the Death Valley '49ers, and X-Noble Grand Humbug of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus, a member of the Zamorano Club, and a founding member of the Greater Los Angeles Press Club.

Paul was a very special Westerner, with pluck and energy. He not only created good things with his talents, but he was also a very devoted husband and father. We will miss him. Vaya con Dios.



# Tombstone

by Ray Zeman

Apparently almost anything can happen to a Southern California pioneer — after he's dead.

This is the story of a tombstone.

It's the story of how a slab of Italian marble which once decorated the grave of one of early California's wealthiest and most picturesque characters became a printer's stone.

This was revealed in 1944 when 92-year-old Harry Iles, publisher of the *Southwest Builder and Contractor Magazine*, for the first time in decades turned the stone upside down in his shop at 2nd and Hill streets.

On one side, it had long undergone a daily beating from inky steel chases and type slugs; on the other side, this inscription:

"To the Memory of Juan Bandini  
Native of Arica, Peru  
Born Oct. 4, 1800."

A century and a half ago Don Juan Lorenzo Bruno Bandini owned ranches scattered between Los Angeles and San Bernardino and southward to San Juan Capistrano — countless thousands of acres.

A descendant of Spanish aristocracy, he came to San Diego in the early 1820s and soon launched a career in politics.

California histories are punctuated with passages of his work as a member of the Territorial Assembly, how he tried to make Los Angeles the capital of Alta California in 1827, how he was a leader in the insurrection against Governor Victoria and two years later went to Mexico City as a member of Congress.

His social career paralleled his political battles against oppressive laws and corrupt administrators.

Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado made him

administrator of San Gabriel Mission in 1838-40 and began granting him ranchos — Jurupa (the original name of Riverside) in 1838, Rincon and Cajon de Muscupiaibe in 1839 and other lands extending to San Juan Capistrano in 1841. In 1848 Don Juan became Alcalde (Mayor) of San Diego.

Upon his death in 1859 he was buried in the old Calvary Cemetery on North Broadway. This cemetery was condemned in 1896 and his remains were moved to a more ornate memorial in the newer Calvary Cemetery on Whittier Boulevard.

Somehow Don Juan's original tombstone had been broken. The upper portion, a solid piece 33x50 inches, was acquired by a marble dealer on East 9th Street.

Publisher Iles recalled his woes of 1898-99. "I was hunting marble for a printer's stone but dealers had nothing, only light pieces an inch thick. These wouldn't stand the pounding.

"Finally I ran across this tombstone, priced at \$9. It was just right — about two inches thick."

Iles moved the stone into his own shop. In 1910 this was just north of the old Times Building at 1st and Broadway. When the Times was dynamited and 21 men were killed at that time, the tremendous explosion shattered everything and fire gutted Iles' nearby shop.

Don Juan's marble memorial was an ironic survivor. There it lay — a tombstone among the dead.

Iles' shop was moved subsequently to 2nd and Hill streets.

There in 1944 he recited an epitaph for the tombstone itself:

"Like the people of its day, this stone is rugged. It looks good for a century more."