WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL
The Branding Iron

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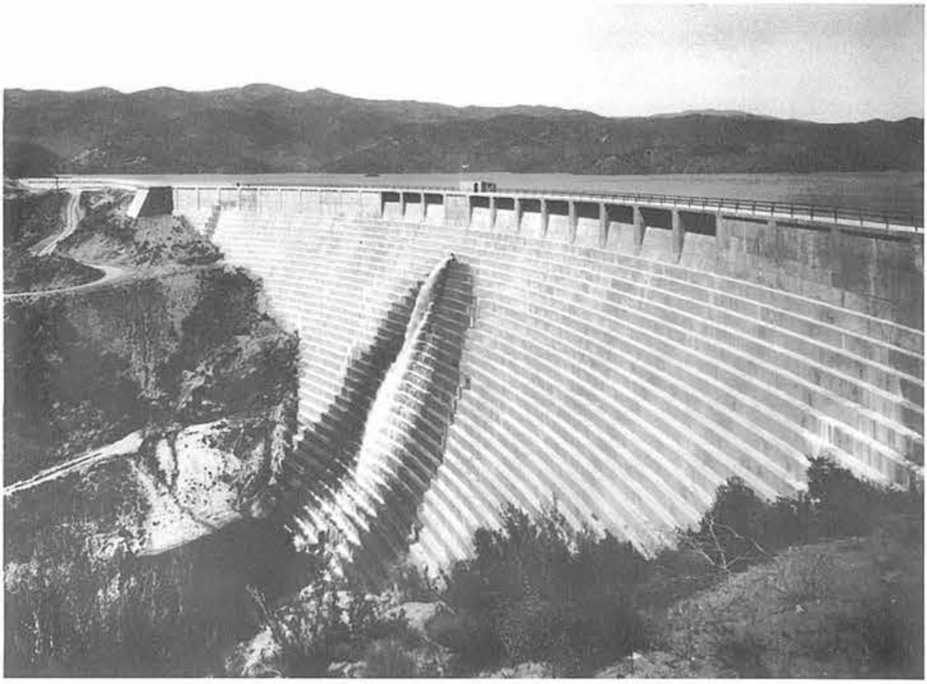

Dam site prior to collapse. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

The Night of the Flood: The Failure of the Saint Francis Dam

by Paul H. Rippens

The night of March 12, 1928, was still; the residents of the Santa Clara River Valley northwest of Los Angeles relaxed following another beautiful spring day. Rains had graced the region in previous days but this day had been dry with scattered clouds.

To the north of the town of Saugus, in San Francisquito Canyon, a disaster of epic proportions was about to occur. One that would claim over 450 lives, second only to the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906. The Saint Francis Dam, part of the Los Angeles Aqueduct system that supplies water for Los Angeles, was about to fail.

Rumors had spread in the canyons below the dam that the structure was unsafe and that it had several major leaks. This concern was also in the mind of dam keeper Tony Harnischfeger when he called Los

(*Continued on page 3*)

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THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

APRIL MEETING

Bill Warren, past sheriff and 1996-98 president of the California Map Society, enlightened the Corral on the life and explorations of Father Eusebio Francisco Kino. Noted as one of the great explorers of the Southwest and a founder of missions, his actions were not entirely by choice but at least partly due to a roll of the dice.

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton

April Meeting Speaker Bill Warren

Father Kino was born near Trent, Italy; he was the only son of the Chini family. He obtained his education in Austria and Germany where he specialized in astronomy and cartography. Recovering from an illness he gratefully adopted his middle name from that of St. Francis Xavier, the Jesuit far-east explorer.

(Continued on page 18)

Angeles on the morning of March 12 to advise William Mulholland, chief engineer of the city's water department, that another leak had occurred. Mulholland and his assistant Harvey Van Norman made the two hour trip to the dam and, following an inspection, proclaimed the dam to be perfectly safe. However, there were forces no one suspected that would cause the dam to collapse, releasing over 12 billion gallons of water on a destructive rampage through the canyons and valleys of Los Angeles and Ventura County. At 11:57:30 P.M., the dam could no longer hold back the tremendous pressure of the water and, as the east abutment began to fail, the water started its course towards the Pacific Ocean, 53.8 miles distant.

The events leading to the disaster began in 1900. Los Angeles was growing faster than anyone had imagined. The City of Angels was now home to 100,000 people, and water was becoming a major issue. The city could not continue to grow with the water being provided by the Los Angeles River. Fred Eaton, an engineer and former mayor (1898-1900), had explored the possibility of building an aqueduct from Owens Valley, some 250 miles north of Los Angeles. He persuaded William Mulholland to consider this water source for the city.

In July 1905, the voters of Los Angeles approved a $ 1,500,000 bond issue to acquire Owens Valley lands and water rights. An additional bond issue of $23,000,000 was passed in 1907 to construct what would become one of the engineering marvels of its time. Construction of the aqueduct began in 1908 and was completed in 1913, on time and under budget, an unheard of thing today. On November 5, 1913, some 40,000 Angelinos turned out to watch the Owens River water cascade into a San Fernando reservoir, later to be called the Van Norman Reservoir. "There it is," said Mulholland, "take it."

According to some officials, with the aqueduct the city had all the water it would ever need. The city constructed two power plants in San Francisquito Canyon with Power House #1 regulating the water coming into Los Angeles. Everything seemed to be perfect until certain people in the Owens Valley started to rise up against the city and its aqueduct. On May 21, 1924, a group of men dynamited the aqueduct spillway gate near Lone Pine. This would be only the first of many acts of sabotage to the city's water system.

Following these acts, Mulholland decided to construct an additional storage facility to insure that the city would have adequate water. Mulholland was also concerned that the Elizabeth Tunnel, which was bored through the San Andreas Fault, could fail in a seismic event. He decided to construct a new reservoir that would be formed by the Saint Francis Dam, a 688 foot long arched dam with an additional 588 foot wing dike on the west side. The reservoir would cover 600 acres and have a capacity of 38,168 acre feet. Work began on the dam in 1924 with the pouring of concrete commencing in August of that year. By 1926 the dam was completed and the reservoir began to fill.

As the water level rose behind the great dam, leaks and cracks appeared not only on the face of the dam, but at the east and west abutments. The cracks in the concrete were packed with oakum in an effort to seal off the leaks. This operation was not entirely successful, for water continued to permeate through the downstream face of the dam. Workers installed a two-inch pipe to the leak on the west abutment, adjacent to the inactive San Francisquito Fault line, and the water collected and carried down to damkeeper Harnischfeger's cottage for home use.

By April 1927, the reservoir had filled to within ten feet of the spillway, and most of the month of May saw water elevations within three feet of the overflow. No significant change was detected in the seepage from either abutment other than what could normally be expected from the increased pressure. William Mulholland stated "Of all the dams I have built and of all the dams I have ever seen, it was the driest dam of its size I ever saw."

The water level in the St. Francis Reservoir

rose steadily until March 7, 1928, when Mulholland ordered that no more water be turned into the reservoir. The level was within three inches of the spillway and would tend to waste over the dam in case of high wave action caused by the prevailing down-canyon winds. The reservoir held enough water to last the entire city for a year. Meanwhile, gossip continued by inhabitants of the canyon regarding the leaking dam and the amount of water flowing down the canyon. Whenever neighbors in the canyon stopped to talk, the subject invariable was about the dam. One canyon dweller said:

> *I stood there and talked to some friends of mine working in the rock quarry. One day we were talking about that leak increasing and I told them I said, 'It looks like that leak is getting pretty bad,' and they asked me if there was any danger of the dam breaking and I told them I didn't know.*

The morning of March 12 began like any other. The keeper of the dam went about his work which included checking for new leaks. His concern over a leak at the west abutment prompted the call to Mulholland and the subsequent inspection. At Powerhouse No. 2, a short distance down canyon from the dam, the day shift was ready to start its tour at seven, while the men who had been on duty since eleven the previous night looked forward to breakfast and a late bed. Mothers readied their children for school and prepared breakfast for their men. Life was quiet and serene at the homes located close to the powerhouse.

As evening fell, families gathered to visit and to pass the time. A lone motorcyclist made his was up the canyon on his way to Powerhouse No. 1. A mile past the dam he stopped after he heard a loud noise. He listened to what he thought was the sound of a landslide, but they were common in the canyon, so he continued on his way.

At 11:57:30 P.M. people in Los Angeles, some 50 miles away, noticed the lights flicker momentarily. Bureau of Power and Light operators noticed a sharp drop in voltage for two seconds. At the Saugus substation of the Southern California Edison Company, the transmission line to Lancaster shorted out, blowing up an oil switch in the station.

High above Powerhouse No. 2, the surge chamber attendant was awakened by what he thought to be an earthquake, but the vibrations grew stronger. Suddenly the lights dipped to a dull glow, remained for a second or two and then went out. He knew something was wrong at the powerhouse. The attendant was right, something was wrong at the powerhouse, for a wall of water 120 feet high had swept over the building washing away everything except the generators. Of the twenty-eight workmen and their families living at Powerhouse No. 2 only three people survived.

The flood had taken only five minutes to travel from the site of the dam to the power house. There was nothing that could have stopped the rush of the water as it stripped San Francisquito Canyon bare. Buildings, cars, livestock, trees, people and the soil itself were washed towards the ocean.

By now authorities were becoming aware of what had happened. Powerhouse No. 1 sent a man down canyon to investigate; he reported that the dam was gone and the reservoir was empty.

Downstream, the rampaging water continued its destructive path taking out the Edison substation in Saugus as it made its turn to the west. The wall of water, still 75 feet high, swept over the buildings of Castaic Junction and destroyed the bridge across the Santa Clara River. At Kemp (Blue Cut), the Edison Company's camp of workers was right in the path of the flood. The night security officer, Ed Locke, heard the rumbling vibrations of the approaching water but could not determine what the problem was until it was too late. The flood wave struck the hills west of the camp and rebounded up the valley. Locke tried to awaken the sleeping men but his efforts were, for the most part, futile. Of the one hundred fifty men in the camp, eighty-four perished in the cold floodwaters, including the heroic watchman. The onslaught of the flood swept across the Camulos Ranch. The water tore through the

View of the dam site after the collapse. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

groves of orange trees, ripping them out of the ground. It did little to slow the advance of the water as it continued towards Fillmore and Santa Paula.

At 1:30 A.M. March 13, 1928, the night telephone operator in Santa Paula received an urgent call from the chief operator of the Pacific Long Distance Telephone Company. She told the Santa Paula operator that the St. Francis Dam on the Los Angeles Aqueduct had broken and released a tremendous wall of water that was sweeping down the Santa Clara Valley. The Santa Paula operator immediately called Highway Patrolman Thorton Edwards to notify him of the impending disaster. Edwards quickly dressed and boarded his motorcycle to start a wild ride that would earn him the title "Paul Revere of the St. Francis Flood." He knocked on doors to awaken people and tell them of the pending flood. Finally, he used the siren on the cycle and raced up and down the streets in the danger zone in an attempt to warn the residents.

The flood waters roared past Fillmore destroying homes in the low lying areas and taking more lives as it continued towards Santa Paula. Bridges across the Santa Clara Valley river were swept away one by one. As the river level rose in Santa Paula, homes lining the river were floated off their foundations or splintered into pieces depending on their location. Homes became house boats and sailed around areas of the city, one ending up four blocks from its original location.

The water continued past Saticoy and under the Montalvo bridge and finally, five and one-half hours after it began, the flood waters, still 15 feet high and now semi-solid with mud, debris and bodies, reached the Pacific Ocean. The flood was over, and the huge clean-up began.

The City of Los Angeles accepted the responsibility for the disaster and agreed to pay the cost of the clean-up and reconstruction. An official report stated that the City of Los Angeles expended $9,392,487.57 in rehabilitation work and the settlement of claims. From the onset, Mulholland accepted the blame, telling the Coroner's in-

Chief Engineer William Mulholland. Courtesy of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

quiry that he "only envied those who were killed." His final statement at the inquest told how he felt when he said "Don't blame anyone else, you just fasten it on me. If there was an error in human judgment, I was the human."

But what had caused the great dam to fail? Theories were many but recent findings take most of the blame off William Mulholland and place it on events and factors that neither he nor his engineers knew about at the time of the construction of the dam. In *The St. Francis Dam Disaster Revisited*, J. David Rogers points out that the area of San Francisquito Canyon where the dam was constructed has many ancient mega landslides of which Mulholland was unaware. These slides contributed to the overall failure of the structure. Rogers discusses the effects of uplift pressures on gravity dams. He states:

> *In lay terms, uplift pressures are caused by bouyance due to simple submergence or percolation. When water fills behind a dam, the dry dead weight of the dam is significantly reduced because of the water pressures within the foundation rock beneath the dam are pushing upward.*

So the failure of the St. Francis Dam was not caused by anything that Mulholland did, but because of things he did not know. As pressures built, the great dam was lifted upward. At the same time, the east abutment area had become saturated with moisture and as the structure lifted, the mountain side on the east side slid into the reservoir creating a giant opening for the water to es-

cape. As the water started its rush down canyon, the dam leaned to the east and broke apart. As the dam fell in gigantic pieces, a flood wave estimated at 1.7 million cubic feet per second began its race to the Pacific Ocean.

Today remnants of the dam remain in San Francisquito Canyon, but memories of the disaster remain only in the many books written on the subject. Unfortunately William Mulholland died in 1935 without knowing what really happened to cause the night of the flood.

[An expanded version of this article was printed in the *Dogtown Territorial Quarterly*, No. 33, Spring 1998.]

SUGGESTED READINGS

Davis, Margaret Leslie. *Rivers in the Desert: William Mulholland and the Inventing of Los Angeles.*

Hoffman, Abraham. *Vision or Villainy: Origins of the Owens Valley-Los Angeles Water Controversy.*

Kahrl, William. *Water and Power: The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley.*

Nadeau, Remi. *The Water Seekers.*

Southern California Quarterly Vol. 79, #3 (Fall 1997).

Outland, Charles F. *Man-Made Disaster: The Story of St. Francis Dam.*

Public funeral Ceremony at Santa Paula, Calif. March 19, 1928. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

A Decent Burial: Dealing with the Victims of the St. Francis Dam Tragedy

by Abraham Hoffman

The St. Francis Dam failure on March 12, 1928, was one of the worst tragedies in California history, its magnitude in death and destruction rated second only to the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906. In describing the tragedy California historians have given various estimates of the number of dead. Authors of general histories of the state (usually used as textbooks) have tended to round off the figure for the number who died. For example, Andrew Rolle in *California: A History*, 4th edition, chose the conservative figure of 385. John Caughey and Norris Hundley, in *California*, 4th edition by contrast kept the figure ambiguous, stating, "The toll of lives was between 400 and 450."

W. H. Hutchinson took a more generous view in his book *California: Two Centuries of Man, Land, and Growth*, claiming "While the total loss of life remains unknown, it has been estimated at about five hundred persons," without giving the source for this estimate. In a subsequent work on California, *California: The Golden Shore by the Sundown Sea*, he lowered the toll to "more than 400 lives." Robert Glass Cleland, in *California in Our Time*, chose not to give a number, instead stating that "the loss of life approached the toll of San Francisco's terrible disaster of 1906." For that toll he wrote, "Between four and five hundred lives were reported lost in the earthquake and fire, though the actual number was far greater." Julian Nava and Bob Barger, in their book *California: Five Centuries of Cultural Contrasts*, after carelessly placing the disaster in 1927, said the flood "killed over 400 people from Newhall to Ventura" (the authors do not explain how anyone in Newhall ended up in the way of the flood).

Historians focusing on the Owens Valley-Los Angeles water dispute have included the St. Francis Dam disaster as part of their story. Remi Nadeau accepted a generous estimate of "more than 500 persons" in the 1993 edition of his *The Water Seekers*, a considerable boost above the 385 he accepted for his 1974 edition. William Kahrl in *Water and Power* stated that "more than four hundred lives" were lost. Any and all such estimates invariably give general numbers, usually accompanied by property damage costs which tend to be much more specific. Of recent studies, only Margaret Leslie Davis, in *Rivers in the Desert*, described the human dimensions of the tragedy. "There were so many unidentified corpses recovered that the coroner and department officials had to use 3 x 5 cards inscribed with notes to identify each cadaver," she wrote. "Phrases like 'brunette,' 'cesarian [sic] section,' 'bald,' 'missing teeth,' were scratched on the cards in hopes that it could aid in the identification process."

Victims of the flood had not simply drowned; they had been beaten to death, battered by rocks, boards, concrete blocks, trees, muck and debris. Davis described the damage done to a little girl. "Such was the force of the flood that her teeth were cleaved to the gums, and her naked body was clothed only by one shoe with the laces untied." Of all the writers who dealt with St. Francis Dam casualty figures, only Davis accepted and printed a toll specifically exceeding 500. She listed "511 dead or missing, with 381 bodies recovered, 297 bodies identified, and 74 corpses still unclaimed."

The nearest study to being a definitive work on the tragedy remains *Man-Made Disaster*, the account written by Charles F. Outland, Santa Paula rancher, farmer and local historian. Outland based his total num-

1 PLACE OF DEATH. DIST. No. (To be inserted by Registrar)
County of Ventura
City or Town of
or Rural Registration District
No. St.; Ward)
If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number
Ventura #42

California State Board of Health
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS
STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

State Index No. 374
Local Registered No.

2 FULL NAME Unidentified

WRITE PLAINLY WITH UNFADING INK—THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD
READ THE INSTRUCTIONS ON BACK OF THIS CERTIFICATE
MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

3 SEX: Male
4 COLOR OR RACE: White
5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED (Write the word): Unknown
5a If married, widowed, or divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of: Unknown
6 DATE OF BIRTH: Unknown (Month) (Day) (Year)
7 AGE: Unknown years months days; If LESS than 1 day, hrs. or min.
8 OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession, or particular kind of work (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer): Unknown
(c) Name of employer
9 BIRTHPLACE (State or country city or town): Unknown
PARENTS
10 NAME OF FATHER: Unknown
11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (city or town) (State or country)
12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER: "
13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (city or town) (State or country): "
13a LENGTH OF RESIDENCE At Place of Death years months days (Primary registration district) (If nonresident, give city or town and State): Unknown
In California years months days
How long in U.S., if of foreign birth? years months days
14 THE ABOVE IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE
(Informant) Oliver L Reardon
(Address) Ventura, Calif
15 Filed 19 Subregistrar
Filed 19 Registrar or Deputy

CORONER'S CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

16 DATE OF DEATH Mar 13, 1928 (Month) (Day) (Year)
17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, as to the person above named and herein described, That on Mar 15, 1928 I held an inquest and the jury rendered a verdict on the death. Or, that I have investigated the death officially on account of
The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows:
Flood waters
St. Francis Dam
Drowning or shock
State whether attributed to dangerous or insanitary conditions of employment: Picked up Apr. 27, 1928
(Signed) Autopsy Surgeon
Approved: (Signed) Oliver L Reardon Coroner
Mar 15 1928 (Address) Ventura County
*State the DISEASE CAUSING DEATH, or, in deaths from VIOLENT CAUSES, state (1) MEANS OF INJURY; and (2) whether (probably) ACCIDENTAL, SUICIDAL, or HOMICIDAL. (See reverse side for additional space.)
18b SPECIAL INFORMATION for Hospitals, Institutions, Transients or Recent Residents
Where was disease contracted, if not at place of death?
Former or usual residence
19 PLACE OF BURIAL OR REMOVAL: Ivy Lawn Cem — DATE OF BURIAL: 4- -1928
20 UNDERTAKER: Oliver L Reardon — EMBALMER'S LICENSE No. 429
ADDRESS Ventura, Calif

(42)

43703 2-28 50M

374

Montalvo, Calif., June 19 1928

RECEIVED of City of Los Angeles Dept of Water & Power the sum of $ 20 00/xx, in payment for the privilege of burial of the body of Unknown #(42) O L Reardon in space No. 155 Tier No. 1 of Section D of IVY LAWN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION, as said lot, space, tier and section are described and delineated upon that certain map entitled "Map of Ivy Lawn Cemetery in Lot 1 of Ivy Lawn Subdivision, Ventura Co., California, showing subdivision of Secs. A & B and parts of Secs. C, D & G," and filed in the office of the County Recorder of Ventura County, on the 24th day of August, 1917, subject to all the rules and regulations of said IVY LAWN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION as now adopted and in force or as said rules and regulations may be hereafter amended.

IVY LAWN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION,

By David Darling Its President.

By E W Carne Its Secretary.

Death Certificate of Unknown Victim #42. Courtesy Ventura County.

ber of fatal casualties on two sources. The Claims Bureau of the Citizens Restoration Committee listed 224 identified dead, 60 unidentified dead, and 101 missing as of August 1928, five months after the disaster. This totaled 385. A second source came from Oliver Reardon, Ventura County Coroner. Reardon listed 231 dead in Ventura County, 88 in Los Angeles County and 101 missing, for a total of 420 to the end of July 1928. Outland considered Reardon's records as more accurate. Acknowledging inevitable errors, Outland concluded that "any death figure over 450 or under 400 is unrealistic."

The records convey a finality apart from the horror of recovering the bodies of those who had perished. As the weeks passed following the disaster, workers continued to find bodies. Some corpses had been swept out to sea and were washed ashore far down the Pacific Coast. Orders were given to sift the debris as carefully as possible, with men stationed at the dredges to check for bodies. The City of Los Angeles cooperated fully in efforts to identify the dead, pay burial expenses and provide relief to survivors who were now homeless. The grim reality of the tragedy numbed the senses of the workers who found the bodies, brought them to makeshift morgues and attempted to identify the corpses. "The bodies were stacked like cordwood," was an often-repeated comment made by workers.

By September 320 bodies were accounted for, but another 100 or more were reported as still missing. Both government officials and survivors agreed that not all bodies would be found. Migrant farm workers were living in the Santa Paula Valley, and no count could be made of those who had perished, since no one knew how many were there when the dam failed, how many had died in the flood or if survivors had left the area without telling officials of dead or missing family members.

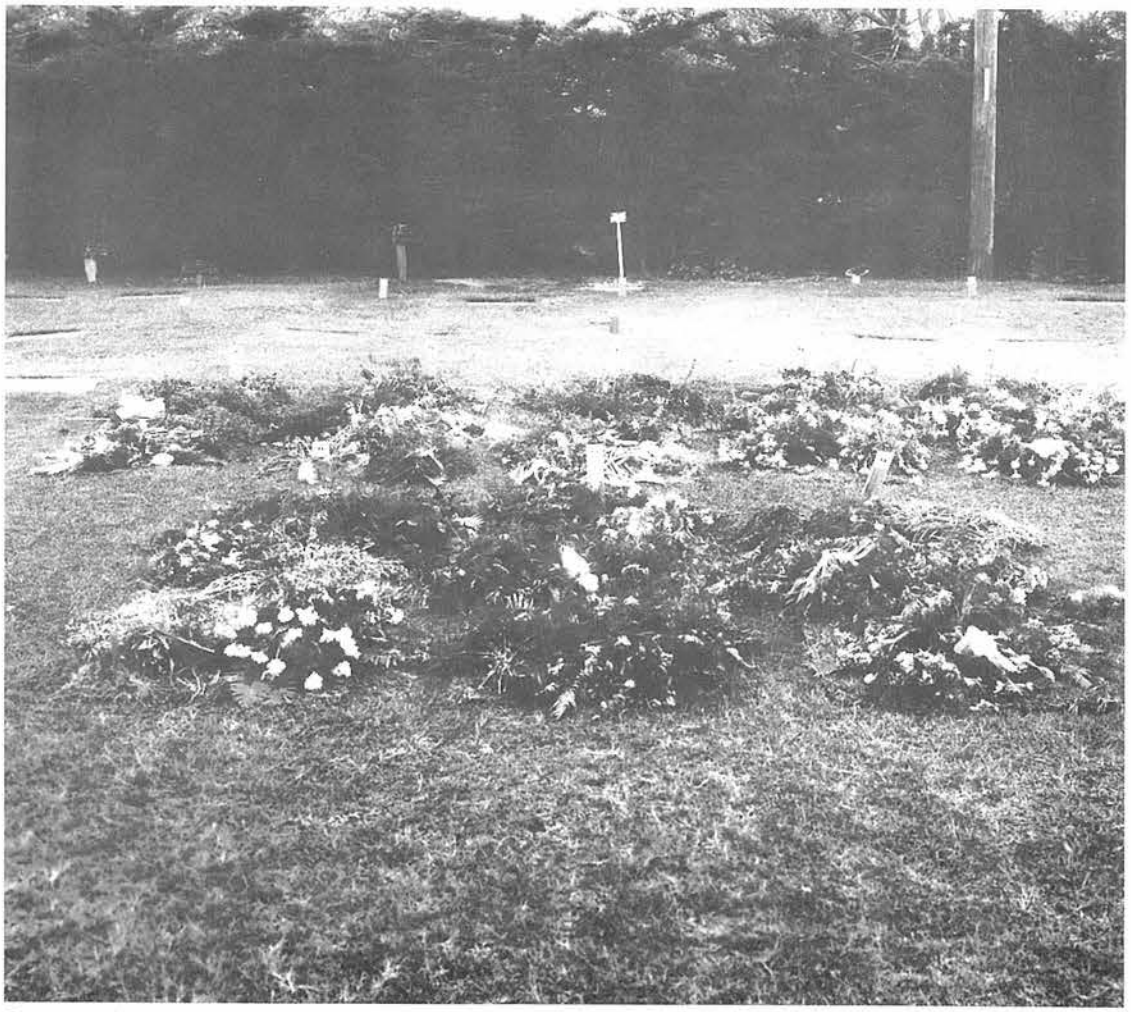
As of September 27, 1928, 69 bodies remained unidentified. Morticians and coroners did they best they could. Descriptions were carefully made of each body in the hope that someone might show up who could identify the corpse. A typical report read:

> *Unidentified man approximately five feet eight inches tall, well built, full set of teeth, no dental work, hand, hair and scalp gone, picked up by Robinson and Roberts clam shell [dredger] in river bed near Joe Dutros place this afternoon. Also body unidentified woman, approximately six foot tall, large build, full set of natural even teeth, hands gone, picked up by V. H. Kuhn clam shell in river bed near Flisher place this afternoon. [May 28]*

Dozens of such descriptions were recorded. On occasion someone was able to identify a victim. William S. Hart, who had retired from motion pictures to his ranch at Newhall, visited one of the morgue sites. He saw the body of a young boy, miraculously unmarked, but unidentified. Hart decided to memorialize the tragedy by providing a grave and monument and inscribing it with a poem in the child's memory. As Hart made plans for the burial, someone did identify and claim the body.

Over the next few months and even years after the disaster, the remains of a victim would now and then be found. Decomposition made it all but impossible to identify the corpse. All that could be done was to give the body a decent burial.. The involvement of the City of Los Angeles remained a touchy subject. William Mulholland's career was effectively destroyed by the dam's failure, but Ventura County residents understandably found it difficult to forget or forgive. Los Angeles paid all damage claims and funeral expenses; only one lawsuit was filed against the city. For several years, DWP workers marked the anniversary of the tragedy by donating money for flowers to decorate the graves at the Ivy Lawn, Santa Paula, Bardsdale and Piru cemeteries.

Not everyone was buried in a Ventura County cemetery. Families claiming bodies for burial had them shipped as far away as Atlanta, Georgia, and Red Lodge, Montana. Six months after the disaster, Los Angeles had expended $32,352.57, of which $29,805.38



Grave sites of unknown victims of San Francis Dam. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

went for burial expenses. The per person cost of burial was $128.50. For the victims of the St. Francis Dam failure, death came cheaply. No one, however, could put a price on human life.

Cover of first letter known to have travelled overland from California. Courtesy Author's collection.

A Trip to the Post Office in 1848

by Eric A. Nelson

In 1848, neither governmental nor private express mail service to or from California existed. Rather, correspondents for the most part were forced to rely on sending their correspondence to the United States by entrusting ship's officers or ship passengers to carry it for them, to post at the eastern port of entry. Correspondence was also delivered privately within California, even though in 1847 General Kearny had established a free semi-monthly mail service between San Francisco and San Diego using army couriers, according to *The California Star*.

Delivery of official dispatches to the United States suffered similar shortcomings, although Kit Carson provided one notable exception when, between March and October 1847, he carried official dispatches from Los Angeles to Washington D.C. and back again.

On March 15, 1848, *The California Star* announced that, in addition to official dispatches, a military courier would carry ordinary letters, free of charge, from Los Angeles to St. Louis. The journey was to commence in early May. Colonel Richard B. Mason, military governor of California, chose Kit Carson to perform this task. This was to be the first government delivery of mail carried overland from California to the States.

That Carson carried ordinary mail on this trip is corroborated by Lieutenant George Douglas Brewerton, who accompanied Carson on the trip as far as Santa Fe, New Mexico. In addition, Lieutenant William Tecumseh Sherman, an Adjutant under Colonel Mason, alluded to Carson carrying ordinary mail when he wrote from Monterey on April 10th that "the time is rapidly approaching when Lieutenant Carson will start for home. He goes from Los Angeles to Santa Fe and thence to St. Louis where he will put his mail in the Post-Office."

Among the ordinary mail carried in Carson's mail bags was a folded letter, addressed to the Editor of the *New York Herald*. That letter, datelined *Pueblo de Los Angeles*, May 1, 1848, reads as follows (punctuation has been added where necessary to aid in understanding the text):

> *To James Gordon Bennett Esqr.*
>
> *Friend - Editor. An Affair of honour came off at this place this morning which may be well termed—Virginia pride vs. Yankee pluck. The parties were*

J.C.B. 1st Lieut of our NY Vols and a Yanka Supercargo stopping in town a few days. Weapons used Rifles—distance forty paces—the seconds having been chosen and all the preliminary arrangements previously completed. The parties repaired at early dawn to the chosen field of action attended only by their seconds. After arriving at the spot, taking distance &c—the words one and two was given when the Brave *Virginian fired, but only to waste his charge. [B]ut the Yanka retained his charge untill; the word three. When he cooly fired, the ball passed well along the Gallant Virginian Liet's rifle, cutting the fourth finger from his left hand & entering the right one passed into his wrist and lodged. (H)ad the piece been properly loded the ball would have entered his head & killed him on the spot, but the charge was to light—to which fact he is truly indebted for his life. We understand from the Surgeon that Liet. B looses one finger but the wound on the right hand not likely to prove very severe. The affair created some excitement among the Vols, but having no good feelings for NY's B thare appears to be no sympitha for him —I understand the difficulty was respecting a spanish Lady living alone in the place. [H]er husband (a mexican officer) was obliged to flee to Mexico at the time of Gen. Kearny's entering the country.*

Yours very Respectfully
/s/ A. Valentine

PS This was written in haste as the mail bags close this day for the states. [Y]ou will please correct mistakes & publish it.
Yours /s/ A.V.

If only a letter could talk, what tales it could tell about its journey to its destination! Although it is not common that the details of a letter's journey can be traced, Mr. Valentine's letter to Mr. Bennett is an exception.

Carson left Los Angeles on May 4, 1848. His party included Lieutenant Brewerton and twenty hired men, some of whom were experienced mountainmen who had known Carson for years. In addition, there were three citizens and three Mexican servants. Carson's animal of choice, both for riding and packing, was the mule.

Carson's route as far as Santa Fe generally followed the Old Spanish Trail, seldom used and stretching nearly 1,200 miles. From Los Angeles, he proceeded through the San Gabriel Valley and the Cajon Pass into the Mojave Desert. In the desert, the party covered between fifteen and fifty miles per day, depending upon the distance between water holes. At times, after a long ride, they remained camped for twenty-four hours, grass and water permitting, to allow the animals to recover.

They were almost never free of Indians. Shortly after they left the desert, they encountered Digger Indians. At first they were not considered hostile, they merely sought handouts of food and then departed. However, they continued to follow the party for several days. When they reappeared, Carson considered their actions suspicious and ordered taking one of the tribe as a hostage for the tribe's good behavior during the night. He was released the following day, unharmed and without incident.

Crossing into what is now southern Nevada, Carson camped for a day and a night at the Archilette, a camping-ground used by the few travelers who passed this way. It was here in 1844, Indians murdered members of a party headed by John C. Frémont. On that occasion, Carson and another man immediately left Frémont's party, searched out and killed the culprits.

At the Virgin River signal fires and other signs of Indians became more plentiful. One of the horse guard reported having discovered fresh Indian tracks near the animals. Carson, Brewerton and two others investigated and found a Digger Indian who had been reconnoitering near their camp. They gave chase and eventually shot him, but he managed to escape. After that the party had no problems with the Diggers.

In what is now Utah, they left the desert

and arrived at Las Vegas de Santa Clara, later to be renamed Mountain Meadows, site of the 1857 massacre.

Outside Little Salt Lake, they first encountered the Ute Indians, although no incidents occurred. Leaving Little Salt Lake, they entered the Wasatch Mountains and traveled for several days until they reached several feet of snow. They camped near a lake and were again visited by Ute Indians. With provisions becoming scanty, Carson purchased provisions from the Indians. He asked for fish, whereupon an Indian departed and returned in a few minutes with a trout. They learned that the fish had been killed by an arrow wound in the back; suddenly two of Carson's men came back with as many fish as they could carry. A small stream, which was a tributary to the lake, contained so many fish that they were able to kill them with sticks. Brewerton reported having caught five dozen fish with an old bayonet fastened to a stick. He named the lake "Trout Lake." Whether or not this is just another "fish story," is unknown; historians have not been able to determine if this lake exists.

As they climbed further in the Wasatch Mountains, the weather became colder. They crossed snowy ridges where, as Brewerton states, "the icy winds made us fairly crouch in our saddles." As they descended, they came upon fertile forests, passing the bones of human skeletons whose owners had been the victims of an Indian attack.

Leaving the Wasatch Mountains, the party crossed the Green River and arrived at the Grand River, near present-day Moab, where they experienced a near catastrophe. It was now June and the river was swollen by melting snows, posing the first serious danger to the mail bags. They built rafts to ferry their gear and packs across the river.

Brewerton states:

> *Having freighted it [the raft] as heavily as we dared with our packs and riding saddles, and placed the bags containing the California mails upon the securest portion, we next proceeded to determine who of our party should be the first to swim the stream.*

Christopher (Kit) Carson

The swimmers, under Brewerton's command, were to tow the raft across. Non-swimmers were to hold on to the corners of the raft, but were ordered by Carson not to get onto the raft itself. Carson's instructions ended with the statement "keep a good look-out for rocks and floating timber; and whatever you do, don't lose the mail bags." Carson, with approximately half of the party, remained on shore for the next launching.

Unfortunately, Brewerton's party did not get across. The rapids carried and deposited them a mile downstream, on the same side of the river from which they had started. They could not take the raft upstream against the rapids, so they had no choice but to shoulder the baggage and mail bags and travel by foot back to the starting point. The task was made that much more difficult because the only clothing they were wearing were their hats; their clothing had been left behind to be carried on another raft.

Back at the starting point, Brewerton's

George D. Brewerton in later years.

party built another raft and made a successful crossing. Exhausted, they could scarcely unload the raft. A band of Ute Indians, who had been watching the proceedings, unloaded the raft. The California mail was saved.

The animals and remaining baggage were next to cross. The animals swam across successfully, as did Carson with a small amount of baggage. However, a large raft, carrying the greater share of their provisions, ran into an obstruction and broke apart. The men saved themselves, but they lost six rifles, three saddles, much of the ammunition and almost all of their provisions. Fortunately, the raft which hit the obstruction was not carrying the mail bags!

They entered into what is now Colorado and began climbing the Rocky Mountains. Brewerton found this part of the journey the most pleasant, not only for the majestic scenery, with its cliffs, mountain passes and rocky barriers, but also because they were able to find game.

Leaving the Rocky Mountains, they descended into the Taos Valley of New Mexico. They camped near a stream, which turned out to be infested by an incredible number of mosquitoes.

However, apparently a more serious danger was lurking. After one day in Taos Valley, Carson noticed "Indian sign," which he concluded meant a war party. They came upon the "Indian" encampment and decided to make a charge since they appeared to be evenly matched in numbers. They charged, but stopped short when they discovered that the "enemy" was actually a group of Mexican traders who had come to trade with the Indians. However, they learned from this group that a war party of Indians was nearby. Rather than be caught in their camp that night, Carson decided that they should continue traveling in order to cover the one hundred miles to the first settlements in New Mexico.

When they were within eighteen miles of the settlements, they nearly stumbled into the very Indian village they were trying to avoid. There was no way to avoid detection. The Indians, in war paint, rode up to their party; Carson tried to converse with the chief to no avail. Carson gave orders to drive the animals together about two hundred yards farther from the village. Having done this, they turned to see what the Indians were doing and discovered about one hundred fifty Indians, in war paint, charging down on them, brandishing spears and lances. Carson, ever mindful of the mail, ordered his men to dismount; tie up the riding mules; those without guns hold onto the mules; those with guns look out for the Indians; and "shoot down the mule with the mail bags on her pack, if they try to stampede the animals."

What happened next was strange. Carson was haranguing the Indians; the Indians were brandishing their weapons, the chiefs dashing among the Indians commanding and directing them. Even though his men had only three rounds each, Carson told the Indians if they came any further his men would shoot them. Just as it seemed that all was lost, an Indian came riding fast toward the warriors. The chief consulted

with the rider, and the warriors fell back. In the confusion, Carson ordered his men to jump into their saddles and make a running fight of it if it came to a fight, but the Indians disappeared, returning to their village.

Carson's party rode hard to the Mexican settlement, where they learned the secret of their escape. A party of two hundred American volunteers was on its way to punish the perpetrators of recent Indian outrages in the vicinity. Obviously, the Indian messenger had come to warn the chiefs of this superior force. The California mail was saved again.

The following day, June 14th, they arrived in Taos without further incident. Carson remained in Taos, where he and his wife had their home. Brewerton continued on to Santa Fe, three days distant. Three days later, Carson arrived in Santa Fe to outfit for the trip to the States. At Santa Fe Carson and Brewerton parted, as Brewerton was to travel to a new post in Mississippi.

Carson left Santa Fe on June 26th. At Taos, Carson was warned that the Comanches were causing troubles on the Santa Fe Trail. He also received first hand accounts of attacks by Utes and mountain Apaches, possibly members of the same band of Indians which he had encountered just before entering Taos. Carson enlisted a small party, possibly no more than four, to slip past the Indians with the mail.

Carson's own memoirs contribute very little to this portion of the trip. Most information available has come to us from Jesse Nelson, one of the four recruits.

Carson decided that it would be better to travel the mountains than the plains, since they would stand a better chance against Indian attack.

They traveled day and night from Taos to a pueblo settlement on the upper Arkansas River, seventy-five miles north of Bent's Fort. From there, they proceeded along the foothills, aiming for the Platte River trail to the Missouri frontier.

When they camped on the Bijou River, in rode seven Kiowas. Although Carson's exploits were well known to the plains tribes, Carson had not had contact with them for six years. Carson's face apparently was not familiar to these seven young Kiowas. Unknown to the Indians, Carson knew enough of their language to understand what they were saying. Their plan was for Carson and his party to sit, eat and smoke a pipe, but when the pipe started to make the rounds for the third time, the Indians would kill them. Without changing his attitude, Carson told his men to tend the animals, he would finish the smoke, and if he raised his hand they should shoot. As Carson took the pipe for the third time, he signaled his men who, in turn, pulled their guns. Carson then berated the Indians in Kiowa and English telling them that he was Kit Carson and they should take a good look at him before they die. The Kiowas wilted, whereupon Carson told them that they were cowards, and they should tell their chiefs they had seen Kit Carson and he had given them their lives, but that they could use their bows to kill a few rabbits. Carson's party then left. The mail was saved again.

Carson continued to the South Platte. To avoid discovery he made evening campfires to cook supper and then abandoned them by traveling six or eight more miles to rest without a fire.

At the juncture of the South and North Platte Rivers, Carson and his squad met a trading party from Fort Laramie. Carson's men turned back to Taos with one of the traders who was heading in that direction. Carson joined the trading party down the South Platte to Grand Island, then south along the Republican and Kansas Rivers, through more Indian territory without incident, and into Fort Leavenworth. There he turned in his animals and took a boat to St. Louis, arriving on July 25, 1848, a month after he had left Santa Fe.

At St. Louis, Carson delivered the private mail to the post office, where the mail received a postal marking dated July 26, 1848. From that point, the mail was routed by the United States Post Office Department.

Today, our letters enter the mail system when we deposit them in a mail box around

the corner. Mr. Valentine's letter to Mr. Bennett rode in Kit Carson's mailbag for eighty-three days before finally entering the mail, enduring dangers almost impossible to imagine and surviving to this day because of the extraordinary exploits of the most famous of Western adventurers, Kit Carson.

Postscript

Although it is generally accepted that the Valentine letter was delivered, it was never published. The probable explanation was that James Gordon Bennett considered the New York Volunteers heroes and would not print a story derogatory to the honor of one of its officers.

The author of the letter still remains a mystery. Obviously, he was in the Los Angeles area and closely enough connected to the New York Volunteers to know the accused officer's middle initial. No one in the Los Angeles area nor the military forces had the name. The officer, J.C.B., is assumed to have been Lieutenant John C. Bonnycastle who was assigned to Company C of Stevenson's Regiment. In the same Company was a Valentine Miller. But would a soldier risk such a thin disguise in view of the possible penalties if discovered? The *nom de plume* still appears a pun by an unknown writer on the lover triangle described.

On August 19, 1848, the *New York Herald* published the first letter on the East Coast advising of the discovery of gold in California. The correspondent gave enough detail to show knowledge of the event. Since Colonel Mason's official report did not leave Monterey until August 28, most likely this letter was also in Carson's mail bags.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Blackwelder, Bernice. *Great Westerner, The Story of Kit Carson.*

Brewerton, George D. *Overland with Kit Carson,* edited by Stallo Vinton.

Carson, Christopher. *Kit Carson's Autobiography* edited by Milo M. Quaife.

Giffen, Guy J. *California Expedition: Stevenson's Regiment of the First New York Volunteers.*

Sabin, Edwin L. *Kit Carson Days.*

Monthly Roundup (Continued from page 2)
After completing college, he took Jesuit orders and was assigned to missionary service in Mexico, but due to ship accidents, illness and other problems, it took two and a half years to reach there. In 1683 he accompanied Ysidero Antondo y Antillón on a voyage to establish settlements in Baja California. Like most others, Kino believed California to be an island. His often copied 1695 map showed California as an island patterned after Sanson.

The La Paz mission failed, and they moved north to San Bruno, near current day Mulege. From here Kino explored overland, reaching the west coast of Baja and finding cold water blue abalone shells. These shells would figure in his later realization that California was a peninsula.

Drought closed San Bruno, and Kino moved on to Sonora where he established many new missions. He continued to explore, looking for a possible land route to resupply future Baja missions. On one such expedition he stood on a mountain top and saw the closed north end of the Gulf of California. He later visited the junction of the Gila and Colorado Rivers. While there he found natives trading blue abalone shells he knew could only come from the Pacific shore. He reasoned their overland trade routes confirmed his conclusion that California was a peninsula.

In 1701 he sent a map and report to Mexico City with copies to Europe. Jesuit friends in France had Kino's map engraved and published in 1705. This map proved California was not an island but map makers continued to show it as such for some time.

For his service in exploring the Southwest and establishing missions, the most famous of which was San Xavier del Bac near Tucson, the State of Arizona selected Father Kino to be one of two people honored by a statue in the Rotunda of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

Fandango

On Sunday, May 31, the Los Angeles Corral held its annual Fandango at the Banning Home in Wilmington. Corral members, their spouses and friends toured the home, the 19th-century residence of entrepreneur Phineas Banning. They learned he was a transportation pioneer, establishing first a stage route and then a railroad connecting San Pedro Harbor to Los Angeles. Banning also founded the port of Wilmington, named for his Delaware origins. Today the Banning home is the centerpiece for a City park enjoyed by people of all ages (the circular driveway serves as a modern-day roadway for tricycle riders).

Corral members and their guests enjoyed a catered Mexican dinner and good fellowship. Two Andy Dagosta paintings were raffled off as well as a magnum of wine. Deputy Sheriff Ray Peter masterminded the proceedings under the watchful eye of Glenn Thornhill, while Head Wrangler Eric Nelson and his posse of wranglers, aided by the Gallucci gang, saw that everything went smoothly.

Abraham Hoffman

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton

Evening shadows fall as guests enjoy refreshments at the Banning House.

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton

Dick Yale, Bill Newbro and wife entertain guests at the Fandango.

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton

June Meeting Speaker Msgr. Francis Weber

JUNE 1998 MEETING

Past Sheriff Msgr. Frank Weber discussed the sewage challenges of the California missions—how the problem of the disposal of human waste was dealt with. Urban living, or concentrations of people in small areas, presented problems of waste disposal not apparent in rural places. Cities were filthy and disease-ridden because of unsanitary practices. Prior to the arrival of Franciscan missionaries in California, Indians took care of their biological needs some distance from their villages, burying it in the earth. Ohlone children were taught at a young age to bury their waste. The friars were surprised and shocked at some of the Indian practices. The accepted practice of the padres was to use chamber pots.

Weber noted that virtually no evidence exists that the missions had indoor plumbing. Historians dispute whether mission rooms included any special toilet facilities. Excavation of mission sites has revealed some privies, but they may date from the post-mission period. Since few gastro-intestinal infections affected mission residents, hygienic precautions must have been taken in the disposal of human excrement. These included a system of trench latrines coated with lime, corncobs or leaves in place of paper, construction of new latrines and daily emptying of chamber pots. All of these practices were biodegradable.

A lively session then ensued as Father Weber fielded questions concerning this fascinating topic.

Abraham Hoffman

Corral Chips

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton

February Meeting Speaker Suellen Cheng

HAL EDGAR, was honored by the *South Pasadena Review* as the Senior Citizen of 1998. He was presented to the city in the Fourth of July Parade.

ABRAHAM HOFFMAN had an article, "Albert Einstein at Caltech" appear in the Winter 1997-1998 issue of *California History*.

GLORIA LOTHROP has been busy. She chaired a session attended by **PAT ADLER, DOYCE NUNIS** and **ABRAHAM HOFFMAN**

at the Los Angeles Interchange at the Getty Center. Later she made a presentation at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage about the "Not -So-Shady Ladies of the West."

At the Rueff Family Foundation's Mantilla Dinner at historic El Rancho Cordillera del Norte **CM ELISABETH WALDO** presented a musicale, **CM PAUL DENTZEL** displayed an art exhibit and **JAMES GULBRANSON** made a historical presentation.

CM WILBUR JACOBS was killed in an automobile accident recently. Since retiring from UC, Santa Barbara, Dr. Jacobs has been a researcher at the Huntington Library.

CM STEVEN TICE recently had an article on Juan Flores and his gang published in the *Wild West* magazine.

Directory Changes

New Members
David P. Hutchens
3601 W. Hidden Lane #203
Palos Verdes, CA 90274

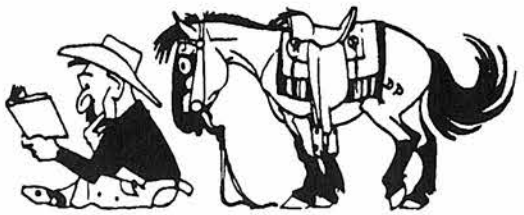
Change in Status to Associate:
Nicholas "Nick" Curry
Stephen A. Kanter
Paul Rippens

Changes in Address.
Herbert Blasier
3430 NW Westside Road
McMinnville, OR 97128

Walter Geisen
76 Navajo Circle
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

Patrick Smith
4038 Redwood Avenue
Mar Vista, CA 90066

William White
14724 Proctor Avenue
La Puente, CA 91746-3202



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

The West is dead, my friend,
But writers hold the seed.
And what they saw will live and grow,
Again to those who read.
Charles M. Russell, 1917

MIGRANTS WEST: ***Toward the Southern California Frontier,*** by Ronald C. Woolsey. Grizzly Bear Publishing Company. Sebastopol, CA, 1996. 221 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography and Index. Cloth $24.95. Distributed by Sunbelt Publications, El Cajon, CA. (800) 626-6579.

This well researched work describes the lives of pioneers who made their way to California in their quest for the California Dream. They became civic leaders, boosters, historians, businessmen, gold seekers, sheriffs, bandidos, lawyers, judges and smugglers. The ten vignettes, all captivating and compelling in their interest, describe the lives of individuals who contributed to the development of the area. Each can be considered a symbol for several types who contributed to the development.

Abel Sterns, the forthright capitalist and opportunist, and Hugo Reid, the Scot Paisano, epitomized the men who adopted the local color while bringing great changes. Stern married into a *Californio* family and became a *ranchero*. Like many, he lost much of his fortune when the ranching period collapsed. Reid, on the other hand, married an Indian woman and became an advocate for Indian rights.

Three others, Benjamin Hayes, Horace Bell and Charles Louis Ducommon, represent the Anglo who came but did not adapt

to the local culture. Each of these men were successful but on non-*ranchero* standards. Each one was a major contributor in the change to an Anglo society.

In a way, Edward Kewen was a man caught between two cultures. He served as a lawyer but also tried to be a rancher. In the end, he was forced to sell his lands to keep financially stable.

James Barton depicts the clash of the two cultures and the rise of vigilantism in the area. His conflict with Juan Flores, in which both died, shows the less appealing aspects of the change in cultures.

The two women discussed, Margaret (Hereford) Wilson and Judah, a slave, furnish a view of the hardships faced by women and how they could bring change. Wilson's life was full of travail, but she survived and in the end found a pleasant life. Judah's life was all strife, but her court case against her master beating her contributed an element in forming attitudes in Southern California,

The last biography of Antonio Coronel depicts not an immigrant but a native who aided in the transfer of cultures. He was important in persuading the Hispanic population to participate in local affairs which bestowed him with the role of spokesman for the *pobalanos*.

This book is engaging and will better inform all about the period of Mexican reign in Southern Californian's history land into the 1890s. It should be read by all Southern Californians, young and old alike.

Kenneth Pauley

HIGHWAY 99: ***A Literary Journey Through California's Great Central Valley,*** edited by Stan Yogi. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1996. 428 pp. Maps, Illustrations, Bibliography, Paper, $16.00 Order from Heyday Books P.O. Box 9145, Berkeley, CA 94709 (510) 547-3564.

This anthology of miscellaneous writings about the San Joaquin Valley, threaded for its entire length by "the backbone of California," Highway 99, gives all persons who know and love the Valley a chance to be their own critics. The contributions are basically of three kinds—fiction, essays and poetry. There are 128 entries from more than 70 authors, who are prior or actual residents of the Valley, or in a few cases persons who have known the Valley without actually living there.

The well-known names are here—Saroyan, Frank Norris, Steinbeck, Everson (Brother Antonius), Joan Didion, Philip Levine—as well as lesser-known poets, essayists, also included are travelers and naturalists, such as Pedro Fages, Jedediah Smith, William Brewer and John Muir, as well as other "writers" who have loved the Valley and written about it in their own style.

Most authors have but one contribution, but some have two or three, among them Everson, Saroyan and Dixie Salazar. The arrangement seems not to follow any obvious sequence, unless it be by date of original publication, beginning with the earliest explorers, Fages and Smith; then some authors recounting events earlier in their lives, such as Thomas Mayfield ("Uncle Jeff"); then, for the bulk of the book, authors of our century, up to the 1990's.

The work has no index as such, but at the front there is a listing of the authors and their selections in sequence as they appear in the book, and at the end is a one-page list of authors, with their pagination, followed by some thumb-nail sketches of their lives. Finally there is a quite extensive bibliography of authors who have written about the Valley, even if they are not represented in this volume. This bibliography is divided into Anthologies, Poetry, Prose and Drama, so that some authors, such as Saroyan, David Kherdian or Art Coelho should be sought in the several sections.

It should be stressed that this is a literary, not a historical, tour of the Valley. No historians are included; two early travelers are Fages and Smith, but not Garcés or Frémont; there is no mention of the bandits Sontag and Evans; Wallace Smith's tag line, "Garden of the Sun," is not included; Latta is included only by reason of Tailholt Tales;

and Fresnans will miss the poetry of Robert M. Wash who is not even listed in the bibliography. Perhaps because he was also an historian?

Even so, this is a book that will be cherished and loved by any and all of the millions of who have ever lived in, visited or merely driven through California's heartland, the great, level, fertile San Joaquin Valley.

Raymund F. Wood

THE FIRST ANGELINOS: ***The Gabrielino Indians of Los Angeles,*** by William McCrawley. Menlo Park: Ballena Press, 1996. 288 pp. Maps, Color Plates, Figures, References, Index, Appendices. Cloth, $49.95; Paper, $34.95. Order from Ballena Press Publishers' Service, P.O. Box 2510, Novato, CA 94948 (415) 883-3530.

This is an anthropologist's dream book. McCrawley has assembled extensive bibliographic and photographic resources to produce a superior work on the Gabrielino. The book is more than baskets and beads. McCrawley makes specific comparisons with other tribes to bring the cultural and economic life of the Gabrielino into clear focus.

The Gabrielino were more than the first peoples of Los Angeles; they ranged throughout Orange County and out to the Channel Islands. McCrawley makes important distinctions among the tribe's geographic constituencies. They were a people of the inland valleys, the coastal plains and the Channel Islands. Their range and cultural varieties are clearly delineated.

The Gabrielino society was centered in kinship groups with segmented lineages united under a chief or *tomyaar*. A council of elders constituted an advisory board. Other minor officials maintained cultural rituals and order. Shamans played a significant role in tribal life and shamanic associations cutting across lineage boundaries formed important limits on the authority of shamans. The Gabrielino had an extensive system of laws that governed behavior with social and supernatural imperatives holding deviance in check.

Going beyond standard description, McCrawley puts religion, ritual, life cycle, stories, songs, dances and games into the cultural mix. Many of these attributes of culture are familiar, but McCrawley makes clear that an advanced civilization was emerging without the benefit of agriculture. The Gabrielino were a hunting and gathering tribe, yet advanced their culture substantially.

The coming of the Spanish explorers, the missions and the ranchos devastated Gabrielino populations and culture. Disease wiped out villages, crushed culture and weakened resolve. The missions institutionalized the slaughter, and the ranchos continued the work. The Indians revolted, but never successfully. The Gabrielino story is another of a tribe lost in an Anglo world, but surviving despite the odds.

Gordon Morris Bakken

REMAKING THE AGRARIAN DREAM: ***New Deal Resettlement in the Mountain West,*** by Brian Q. Cannon. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996. 195 pp. Maps, Tables, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, $40. Order from the University of New Mexico Press, 1720 Lomas Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87131-1591 (505) 277-0853.

This interesting book is more of a sociological study of the Mountain Resettlement Programs than a history. Although the author gives some background and administrative history, the book deals mostly with the participants' reactions to the program and the situation.

The program was primarily designed to accommodate families displaced by federal purchase of sub-marginal lands; however, anyone whose farm was too small or too poor to support them could also apply. Unlike earlier settlers, these people had the benefit of lands that were already cleared and leveled, a sturdy, furnished house and access to

long-term government loans. Government administrators assisted in forming cooperatives, networks and organized social, cultural and educational activities for the settlers.

All of this government assistance seemed to be one of the major problems with the program. Like researchers several decades ago, Connor found the most successful and well adjusted projects were those where the participants had the most to say about their work, planning and recreation. Reaction to many of the activities of the federal administrators goes a long way in explaining the anti-government feeling in this region today. Also the unclear and overlapping lines of authority and jurisdiction helped lead to doubting the efficiency of the government and its ability to solve problems.

This reviewer found the most interesting part of the book the section on revolutions. The author found the settlers to be participant rebels or ones who wished to correct the system so that it would work; they had no interest in grabbing power or overthrowing the system. One only wishes he had carried this further and made some comparisons to present day happenings.

This volume seems balanced. The author points out the government's errors, but he also comes down on the participants for spending money beyond their means and too freely availing themselves of cheap government loans. One thing he seems to ignore is the land itself. The new lands seemed only slightly less marginal than the original holdings.

This book gives an interesting picture of an attempt at social engineering that was less than successful. People interested in the Depression in the West and the development of farming in the area will find it very informative. Others will find it interesting for insights it gives to the development of some current western attitudes.

Robert W. Blew

THE INDIAN TRIAL: ***The Complete Story of the Warren Wagon Train Massacre and the Fall of the Iowa Nation*** by Charles M. Robinson III; The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1997. 207 pp. Illustrations, Bibliography and Index, Cloth, $27.50. Order from the Arthur H. Clark Company, P.O. Box 14707, Spokane, WA 99214 or (800) 842-9286,

Although much has already been written about the conflict between the Indians and whites, author Charles Robinson has performed an important service by writing an outstandingly clear and objective report on the beginning of the battles between Indians and whites in the Great Plains known as the Indian Wars.

Robinson reports on the fighting between Kiowa and Comanche Indians on the one side and ranchers, drovers and segments of the United States Army on the other. Fighting that had as its rallying cry for the whites the Warren Wagon Train Massacre in west Texas.

The author writes that there are no heroes or villains in this story, but some readers will find both on each side of the controversy. Some readers will find materials to bolster their opinions that Indians were defending their homeland or were simply murderers, or that whites were civilizers or were ruthless landgrabbers. What Robinson clearly establishes is that the tragic conflict occurred because each side did not understand the philosophy of the other. Quaker reservation agents and other exceptional government agents thought that all Indians could be converted to peace by benevolent and forgiving acts. For the Indians, with their warrior supremacy society, the acts of the whites was a sign of their weaknesses and they could, therefore, be defeated and driven out of the country. After receiving their handout of living supplies, the Indians would temporarily leave the reservation to raid and take prisoners for ransom.

Robinson used his extensive research skillfully, sifting a great deal of information for the most reliable explanation, often using excerpts of sources to tell the story more dramatically.

Siegfried G. Demke