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The infamous twists and turns of the Old Ridge Route as it descended Grapevine Canyon to the San Joaquin Valley, ca. 1920. Courtesy of the author.

## Crossing The Tehachapis

*by John W. Robinson*

In the northwestern corner of Los Angeles County, along the Kern County line, the Tehachapi, Liebre, and Los Padres ranges come together in a three-way Gordian Knot. Interstate 5—the Golden State Freeway, or "The Grapevine", as it has unfortunately become known, thanks to the media—sweeps through Tejon Pass, a gap in the great mountain barrier that separates California's great Central Valley from the Southern California

lowlands. Today, one speeds over "The Grapevine" in an hour or so of easy driving, but this was not always so. The imposing mountain wall of the Tehachapis was once a formidable obstacle to travel.

Centuries before the white man's arrival, Yokuts and Interior Chumash peoples crossed the Tehachapis to trade with Kitanemuk, Tatavian, and Tongva peoples to the south.

*(Continued on page 3)*

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## THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

### MARCH 2001 MEETING

Elizabeth Pomeroy, freelance writer and professor of English at Pasadena City College, shared her experiences in "history with pen and camera" with the members of the Corral.



March Meeting Speaker Elizabeth Pomeroy

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton

Six years ago, Dr. Pomeroy started writing a weekly newspaper column on historic places entitled "Lost and Found" which appears in three local newspapers. Recently, 103 of her articles were collected and published in a book with the same title.

To be successful at finding lost or forgotten places, one needs to walk with a pen and camera. One needs to get a feel for the terrain and neighborhood. Children can frequently be a help in finding places. Once a

*(Continued on page 19)*

Mojave traders from the Colorado River journeyed over the mountains to exchange goods with the Yokuts and other central valley inhabitants. According to the late Kern County historian Frank Latta, there were four or five well-trod Indian trails over the Tehachapis, from today's Tejon Pass, which appears to have been the route most traveled, eastward to Tehachapi Pass.

The first non-Indian known to have crossed the Tehachapis was Captain Pedro Fages and a small party of *soldados de cuera* (leather-jacket soldiers) who made the long inland trek from San Diego to San Luis Obispo in 1772. In a report Fages wrote several years later, he stated "The Plain of San Francisco [San Joaquin Valley] extends from the mouth of the river to a village called Buena Vista near the Pass of Cortés where there are many grapevines." The name Fages used for Tejon Pass *Paseo de Cortés* failed to take hold, but the grapevines he noticed led later to the name *Cañada de las Uvas*, or Canyon of the Grapes.

In 1776 the intrepid Franciscan explorer-missionary Fray Francisco Hermenegildo Garcés, on one of his long *entradas*, crossed the Tehachapis enroute to visit the Indians of the southern San Joaquin Valley. Garcés' diary is too vague to ascertain his exact route over the mountains, but some historians believe he crossed via what is known today as Old Tejon Pass, some twenty miles east of the present Tejon Pass. After traveling to a point just north of the Kern River, Garcés departed the valley, possibly through Tehachapi Pass, and headed back across the Mojave Desert to the Mojave villages on the Colorado River.

In 1806 two Spanish expeditions, one led by Fray José Maria Zalvidea and Lieutenant Francisco Ruiz, the other by Fray Pedro Muñoz escorted by Lieutenant Gabriel Moraga, crossed the Tehachapis. They explored *Cañada de las Uvas*, noting the abundance of grapevines, and another canyon ten miles east, which they named *Cañada del Tejón* because they came across a dead badger at its entrance. The pass over the Tehachapis above the head of Tejon Canyon became known as Tejon Pass. This first Tejon Pass

has caused confusion among some writers who fail to realize that two different passes across the Tehachapis have borne the name *Tejón*. Today's Tejon Pass was known to early travelers as *Cañada de las Uvas* as it traversed the "Canyon of the Grapes."

About the time of the two 1806 *entradas*, possibly earlier, a rough horseback and *carreta* trail, utilizing primitive Indian trails part of the way, was forged from Los Angeles to Valle de los Tulares and on to the San Francisco Bay area. This inland route later became known as *El Camino Viejo* (The Old Road). Jesús Lopez, cattle boss at the Tejon Ranch for fifty years, interviewed by Frank Latta in 1930, claimed that "The Spanish had taken ox carts from San Pedro through the San Joaquin Valley to San Antonio, now East Oakland, before the year 1800."

*El Camino Viejo* went from Los Angeles through Cahuenga Pass and across the dry San Fernando Valley to Mission San Fernando. From here it climbed over San Fernando Pass (incorrectly called Newhall Pass today) and down to the mission livestock ranch along the Santa Clara River, then up San Francisquito Canyon to *Laguna de Chico Lopez*, today's Elizabeth Lake. The trail then followed the southern edge of Antelope Valley northwest over Tejon Pass and down into the head of *Cañada de las Uvas*, where it turned west through what are now Frazier Park and Cuddy Valley, and dropped down San Emigdio Canyon into the great valley. It followed the western edge of the San Joaquin Valley, then known as *Valle de los Tulares*, because its central section was covered with marshes, tules, and shallow lakes, some three hundred miles before curving west to the Bay Area.

Taking an ox-drawn *carreta* over the mountains on *El Camino Viejo* was a slow and tiresome task. But with a skillful driver the carts could negotiate incredibly rough terrain. Jesús Lopez stated that:

*The old carretas were driven up the bottoms of any but the steepest or rockiest gulches. . . . Even in narrow gulches, by careful driving, you could keep a wheeled*

*vehicle level by straddling the bottom. . . I can remember my grandfather showing me some of the gulches he had traveled with loaded carretas that, as he pointed them out to me, would have been difficult to travel with a pack animal.*

Scores, perhaps hundreds, traveled the old ox-cart road over the mountains during the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century. Jesús Lopez related that his grandfather, Stefano Lopez, drove *carretas* over the old road many times.

The first American known to have crossed the Tehachapis was Jedediah Smith in early 1827. Smith and his small band of trappers traveled from Salt Lake to Mission San Gabriel in late 1826. Ordered by Mexican authorities to return the way he came, Smith and his men retraced their route to the Mojave River, but then turned northward and crossed the mountains into the San Joaquin Valley. They obviously traversed over the Tehachapis by one of five passes: San Emigido, *Cañada de las Uvas*, (Old) Tejon, Oak Creek, or Tehachapi. Since Smith clearly states that he maintained a northwesterly course from the Mojave River and he entered the Central Valley of California from the southeast, Old Tejon, Oak Creek, or Tehachapi Pass appear to be the likely route he took over the mountain barrier. *Cañada de las Uvas* is too far west.

One name involved in the early history of the Tehachapi country is wrapped in mystery. All we know about Peter Lebeck, or Lebec, is what was carved into an oak tree on what later became the parade ground of Fort Tejon: "In memory of Peter Lebeck, killed by a X Bear, Oct. 17, 1837." Some have speculated that he was a member of a Hudson's Bay Company trapping party that is known to have entered California from the north in 1837, but more recent research has revealed that the 1837 party came no farther south than the Sacramento River. A recent theory holds that he may have been a member of the notorious *Chaguanoso* gang of horse-thieves from New Mexico, who are known to have entered the Central Valley in the years 1837 to 1840. The *Chaguanosos*, "adventurers

from all nations," were led by a French Canadian trapper named Jean-Baptiste Chalfoux and consisted of about sixty men, a motley crowd of American and Canadian trappers, New Mexicans, and Indians. They raided missions and ranchos from San Luis Obispo to San Fernando, wintered their stolen horses in the Tulares Valley before driving the animals to New Mexico the following spring. They may have crossed the mountains via *Cañada de la Uvas*, where the Lebec grave is. Grizzly bears were numerous in the Tehachapis and most California mountain ranges then; one of the beasts apparently mauled and killed the unfortunate trapper/horsethief.

During the Gold Rush years, *Cañada de las Uvas* developed into a major route for southern California ranchers driving their herds north to Sacramento and the Mother Lode. In 1847 before the gold excitement, Benjamin Wilson, a Tennessee-born rancher who had lived in southern California since 1841, drove 2,000 head of cattle over *Cañada de las Uvas* Pass enroute from Los Angeles to Sutter's Fort. "There was not a white man living on that route from San Fernando Mission to Sutter's Fort," wrote Wilson.

Wilson's 1847 cattle-driving odyssey is believed to have been the first such drive over the pass, but a few years later livestock by the tens of thousands made the trip north. "The traffic was comparable to the great cattle drives over the Bozeman Trail of Montana or the Abilene Trail of Kansas," wrote historian Robert Glass Cleland. An estimated 17,000 head of cattle were driven north in 1852, 25,000 in 1853. Not all the livestock went via *Cañada de las Uvas*; some herds were driven up the coast route, and some went over Old Tejon Pass. Cattlemen and sheep herders driving their animals north traveled from ten to fifteen miles a day depending on the terrain, the forage available, and the water sources. A favorite resting place in *Cañada de las Uvas* was Bear Camp Springs, an oak-shaded, well-watered dell, later the site of Fort Tejon.

Explorations for wagon roads and rail-

road routes over the Tehachapis began with the great pathfinder, John C. Frémont. Frémont's Second Expedition crossed the mountains via Oak Creek Pass in April 1844, enroute to the Mojave River and back to Salt Lake. Although not acknowledged by Frémont's biographers, the pathfinder was well acquainted with both Tejon Passes. In a letter written to the *National Intelligencer* (June 13, 1854) he states:

*The Tejon Passes are two, one of them, from the abundance of vines at its lower level, called Caxon [sic] de las Uvas. They were of long use, and were examined by me and their practicability ascertained in my expedition of 1848-49, and in 1851 I again passed through them both, bringing three thousand head of cattle through one of them.*

Frémont's 1851 cattle drive was made to fulfill a government contract to deliver beef to Indians on the Fresno River.

In 1853 came the Pacific Railroad Survey, an effort by the Army's Corps of Topographical Engineers, authorized by Congress and directed by Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, to find possible routes for transcontinental railways. Six cross-country routes were examined.

A Pacific Railroad Survey party under Lieutenant Robert S. Williamson examined possible routes over the Tehachapis. Working south through the San Joaquin Valley, the Williamson party paused to investigate five mountain passes to ascertain which might be appropriate for a railroad. Walker and Bird Spring passes, at the southern end of the Sierra Nevada, were ruled out as too rough. Easy grades made Tehachapi Pass the recommended railroad route. Moving west, Williamson checked out (Old) Tejon Pass and decried it as "one of the worst roads I ever saw." The Williamson party finally examined *Cañada de las Uvas*. They ascended the canyon via its well-used livestock trail and camped the night next to the Peter Lebeck inscription. William Blake, the expedition geologist, made note of the large number of grizzly bears in the canyon. "They frequently come to the water to drink in the

evening, just after sunset," he wrote. Next day, continuing south to the summit of the pass, Blake noticed a large wooden cross. Mystery surrounds this "Cross of El Tejon." Who placed it there and why are unknown. Perhaps it was a monument to some traveler who suffered a "grizzly" death. In his final report, written a year later, Williamson recommended a wagon road be constructed over *Cañada de las Uvas* Pass.

The first attempt to build a wagon road over the Tehachapis was made in 1850, and its route was over "Old" Tejon Pass. The Merchants Association of Los Angeles, anxious to "cash in" on trade with the gold country, hired John Hudgins and his party of sixteen men, who had just arrived in California via the Yuma route and were headed north to the mines, to improve the old trail up Cottonwood Canyon, over the pass, and down Tejon Canyon. They were paid \$750 and "all the provisions and tobacco they could use" to make the trail passable for wagons. This was to be part of the so-called Los Angeles-Stockton Road that, on the map, looked to be the most direct route to the mines. All the Hudgins party apparently did was to remove a few large boulders from the trail before they hurried north. Very few wagons ever made it over "Old" Tejon Pass, and the route was abandoned by all but a few horsemen and cattle drivers in favor of a much better road twenty miles to the west.

The wagon road that successfully mounted the Tehachapi barrier near its western end was the Los Angeles-Fort Tejon Road, completed in 1855. The genesis for this road was the establishment of the Sebastian Indian Reservation at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, under the direction of Edward F. Beale in 1853, and the founding of Fort Tejon, built by the Army to protect the reservation, in 1854. Both the reservation and the military post in *Cañada de las Uvas* depended largely on supplies from Los Angeles. In a joint effort by Army work crews and laborers hired by Los Angeles merchants, *El Camino Viejo* was converted into a road passable for heavy freight wagons from Los Angeles as far as upper *Cañada*

*de las Uvas* and a new road was built down the canyon to Fort Tejon and on to the Sebastian Reservation on the valley floor. From there, it followed the eastern edge of the Central Valley north to Stockton and Sacramento. The pass six miles south of the new military post became known first as Fort Tejon Pass and finally Tejon Pass. "Old" Tejon Pass lost its traffic and its name; it no longer appears on maps.

Phineas Banning, Wilmington entrepreneur and "transportation king" of southern California, and his business partner David Alexander of Los Angeles were first to provide stage service from Los Angeles over "New" Tejon Pass to Fort Tejon and the Sebastian Reservation shortly after the wagon road was opened in January 1855. When gold was discovered on the Kern River near present-day Lake Isabella later that same year, Banning announced an extension of the stage line from Fort Tejon to the new diggings. "Ho for the Kern River" became the cry. Banning also supplied heavy freight wagons to tote provisions to the fort and the small community that developed adjacent to the post, also known as Fort Tejon.

Undoubtedly, the strangest procession to make its way over Tejon Pass was a caravan of government camels brought west by Beale in 1857. The camels were utilized as burden-bearers, able to cover up to thirty-five miles a day bearing loads of from 600 to 800 pounds. Some were used for non-military purposes to carry provisions from Los Angeles to the town of Fort Tejon. The *Los Angeles Star* (July 21, 1858) reported that "The camels, eight in number, came into town from Fort Tejon, after provisions for that camp. The largest ones pack a ton and travel sixteen miles per hour"—a gross exaggeration but illustrative of the wonder the animals caused.

On October 8, 1858, the first westbound stage of John Butterfield's Overland Mail Company crossed Tejon Pass and pulled into Fort Tejon on the 2700-mile journey from St. Louis to San Francisco. Four times a week—twice westbound and twice eastbound—

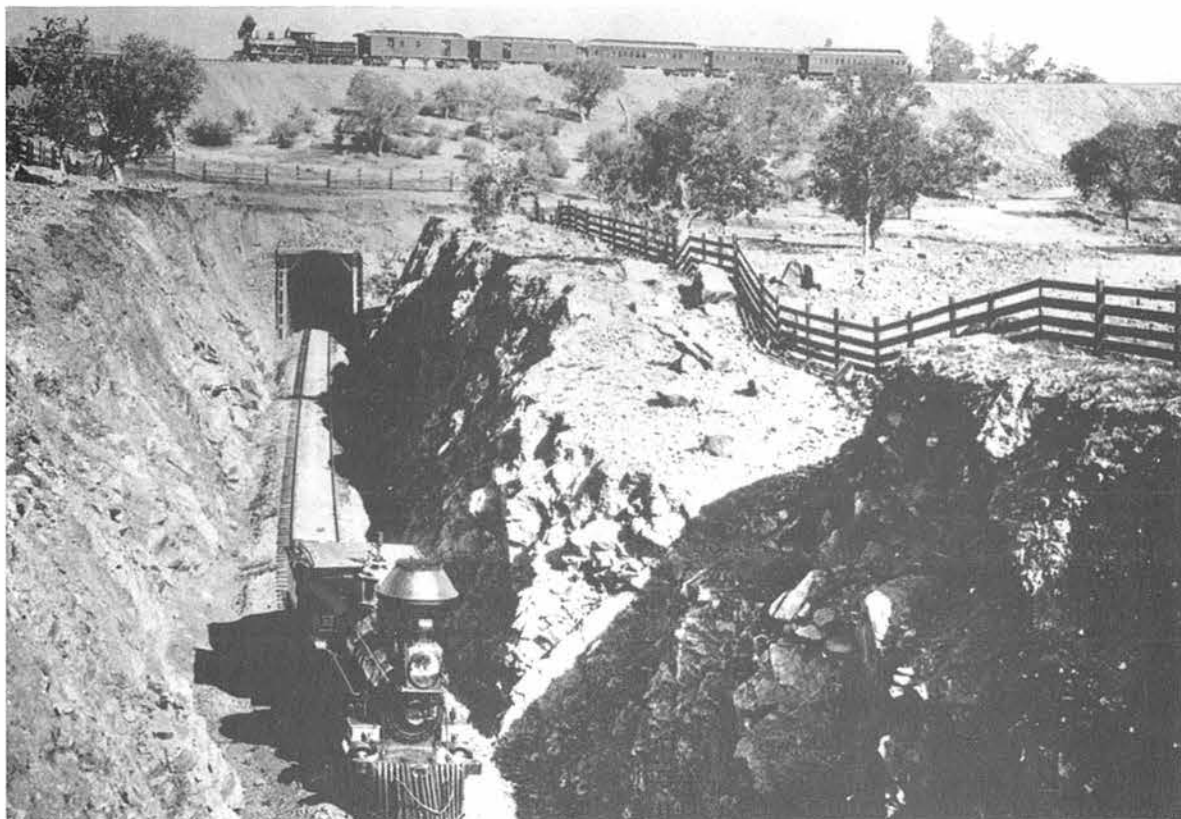
Butterfield stages would pull into the Fort Tejon station located at George Alexander's store. There was also a station at Reed's Rancho, two miles south of Tejon Pass where the town of Gorman lies today.

By 1860, the road over Tejon Pass was getting as much traffic as any in southern California save the San Pedro-Los Angeles and Los Angeles-El Monte-San Bernardino runs. The outbreak of the Civil War a year later changed this. Because of a perceived secessionist threat in Los Angeles, the 1st Dragoons, stationed at Fort Tejon since 1854, were ordered south. The fort closed June 15, 1861. It was briefly reoccupied by the California Volunteers, who replaced the Army regulars for the duration of the war in 1863-64, and then abandoned for good. The last procession of camels, twenty-eight in number, crossed Tejon Pass bound for Los Angeles and later Drum Barracks on June 15, 1861. The last Butterfield stage crossed Tejon Pass in April 1861; the Overland Mail Company's southern route, passing through Confederate territory, was abandoned in favor of a central overland route.

With the Army gone, the Tehachapis once again became the domain of cattlemen and sheep herders, most of them employed by the empire builder, Edward F. Beale. Beale, owner of Rancho La Liebre on the southeastern edge of Antelope Valley since 1855, purchased three other land grant ranchos and combined them into his giant 200,000-plus acre Rancho El Tejon in 1866. His holdings included the site and all the buildings of Fort Tejon, which he converted into ranch offices, a blacksmith shop, a storehouse, and quarters for ranch hands, cowboys, and sheep herders.

With the Civil War over, the wagon road over Tejon Pass again became a busy thoroughfare. Remi Nadeau, who had succeeded Banning as southern California's premier freight carrier, ran six-horse teams hauling wool and hides from Rancho El Tejon to San Pedro for shipment. On the return trip, he brought in supplies for the sprawling ranch.

Two stage lines competed for business on the Los Angeles-San Joaquin Valley run.

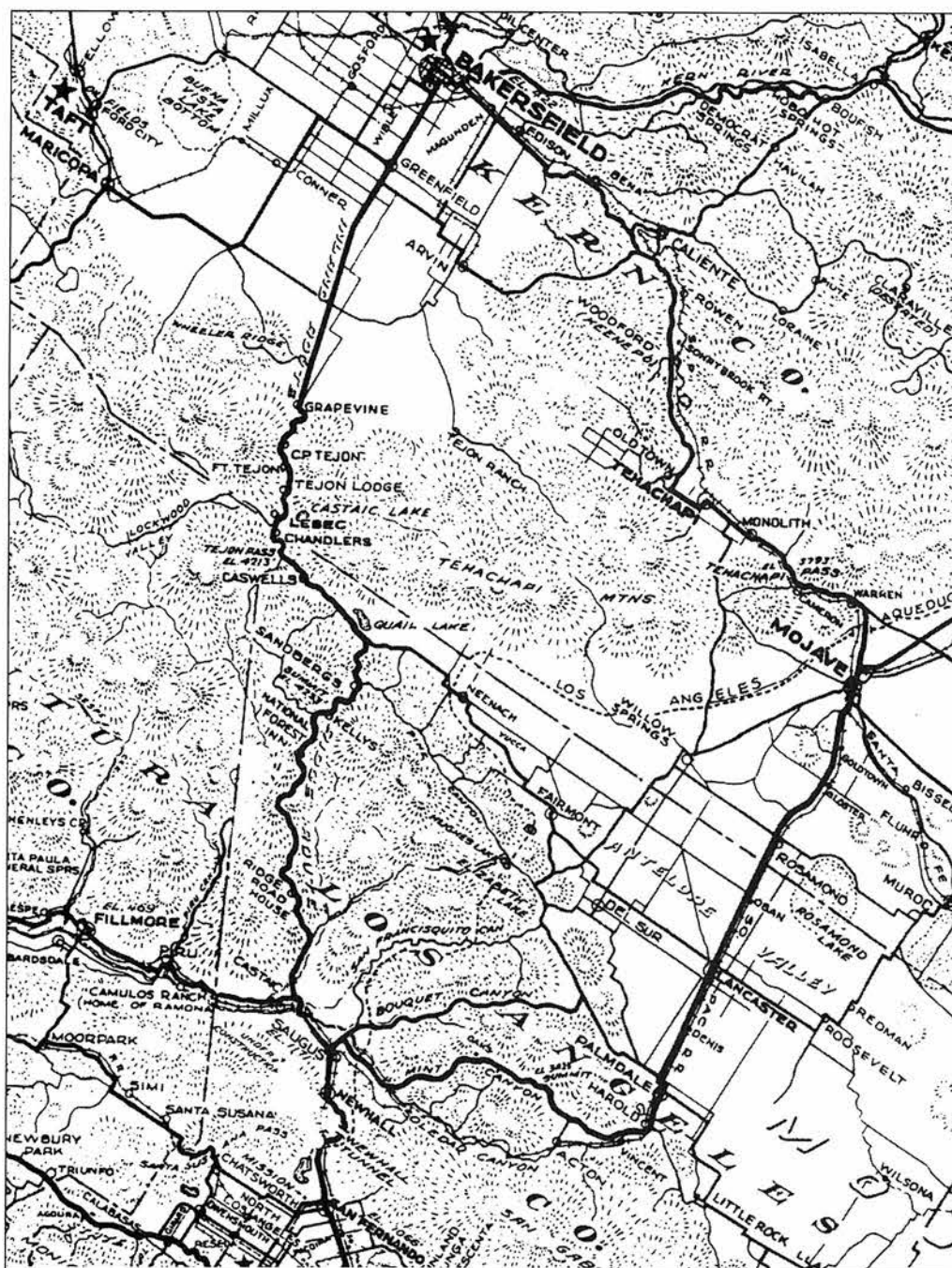


Southern Pacific trains on the famous Tehachapi Loop, 1876. The railroad from Los Angeles to San Francisco reduced traffic over the Tejon Pass, and it did not become a major route until the age of the automobile. Courtesy of the author.

George Andrews, who had been running stages from Los Angeles over Tehachapi Pass to the mining town of Havilah, switched to the Los Angeles-Fort Tejon Road and on to the new community of Bakersfield, founded by Colonel Thomas Baker in 1868. Stage service to Bakersfield started in 1871. With Central Valley towns like Fresno, Visalia, and Bakersfield growing fast and trade with Los Angeles booming, another stage line moved its route over Tejon Pass. The Telegraph Stage Line, so named because it followed the old telegraph line through the Central Valley, was founded by Amos Thoms in 1863. For four years, from its opening over Tejon Pass in 1872 until 1876, the Telegraph Stage Line was the major inland carrier between the Bay Area and Los Angeles. The line used most of the old Butterfield stations, including Fort Tejon, now Tejon Ranch Stables,

and Gorman, the old Reed's Rancho, now run by James Gorman and his wife Hannah. A new stop was made at Rose Station, just outside the mouth of Grapevine Canyon.

It was the coming of the iron horse that caused a forty-year eclipse for Tejon Pass as a major transportation corridor. During the years 1874 to 1876, Southern Pacific Railroad crews, made up largely of industrious Chinese and Irishmen, laid track south through the San Joaquin Valley, over Tehachapi Pass into the Mojave Desert, south through Soledad Canyon and the San Fernando Tunnel to Los Angeles. Surmounting Tehachapi Pass required the construction of an ingenious 360-degree loop to gain elevation. The "Tehachapi Loop" is still in use today. With Southern Pacific trains chugging back and forth over Tehachapi Pass carrying passengers and freight, there was no longer a need for stage service over



Highways over the Tehachapis, 1925. Courtesy of the author.

Tejon Pass. The old Los Angeles-Fort Tejon Road fell into disuse. Freight bound to and from Rancho El Tejon now utilized the railroad depots at Mojave, Caliente, and Bakersfield. Only local ranchers, mountain settlers, and a few wagon travelers used the old wagon path.

Traffic over Tejon Pass picked up somewhat in the 1890s. The town of Lebec, founded in the 1880s, was large enough to qualify for a post office in 1895. The San Joaquin Valley was booming with new settlers, many of whom drove their wagons over the old road.

The advent of the automobile brought renewed interest in Tejon Pass and heralded its development as a key link in one of California's most important transportation arteries. The first motor vehicle known to have traveled over the pass was a 1902 Autocar, purchased by a San Joaquin Valley rancher who hired race car driver Ralph Hamlin to drive it from Los Angeles to the valley. Hamlin piloted the machine over San Fernando Pass via Beale's Cut, up San Francisquito Canyon into Antelope Valley, then northwest over Tejon Pass. The stretch down Grapevine Canyon was painfully tedious; the road was extremely rough, steep in places, and zigzagged back and forth across the creek. There were washouts where Hamlin and his frightened passenger had to get out and rebuild the road. The next few years saw more and more motor vehicles driving the "Tejon Road", as it was known.

By 1912 the horseless carriage was fast replacing the horse-drawn wagon as the primary method of travel. The age of the automobile had arrived. The California Bureau of Highways, created by an act of the legislature in 1895, began planning for a network of interconnecting automobile roads to serve the state. High on the state highway commissioners list of priorities was a direct route from the Central Valley to Los Angeles. Two routes over the Tehachapis were considered: Tehachapi Pass and Tejon Pass. Both had wagon roads which could be converted to highways, the Tejon Road previously mentioned and the Bakersfield-Mojave Road

over Tehachapi Pass that had been improved by Kern County to allow wagon travel in the 1890s. In 1912 the Tejon Pass route was chosen by the State Highway Commission, which had replaced the old Bureau of Highways two years earlier.

Thus the Tejon-Castaic Ridge Road, soon to become famous—or infamous—as the Ridge Route was born. State surveyors plotted a route up Grapevine Canyon, over Tejon Pass and down into the head of Antelope Valley, then south over the west shoulder of Liebre Mountain and along the sinuous ridgeline to Castaic. Construction crews climbed into the mountains in early 1914. Most of the labor hewing out the roadbed was done by hand, using pick and shovel. Grapevine Canyon posed a problem because of occasional flash floods. To surmount this threat and to provide a more gentle grade, the new highway was placed on the east slope of the canyon, gaining elevation via a series of spectacular hairpin curves. The largest excavation was Swede's Cut, from which over a million cubic yards of earth were removed by big steam-powered shovels. The roadbed was graded by large mule-drawn scrapers, known as "Fresno Scrapers."

The new mountain highway had been oiled but not completely cement paved when it was opened for public travel in November 1915.

Traffic on the Ridge Route was heavy right from the start. Numerous inns, cafes, and gasoline stations sprang up to serve motorists. But its 48 miles of winding pavement was a driver's nightmare encompassing 39,441 degrees of turn—110 complete circles—and over 6,000 feet of elevation gain and loss. From 1921 to 1928 alone, 32 persons lost their lives negotiating the Ridge Route. Many more suffered injury.

The Ridge Route was obsolete almost as soon as it was completed. It was built for an era of few cars. With the phenomenal increase in automobile traffic after World War I, the mountain highway by 1920 was carrying far more traffic than it had been designed to carry. By 1925, a mere ten years

after it was opened, state engineers were looking for a new, safer high speed route to connect Los Angeles with points north. They located and surveyed a new, more direct, safer route through Piru Gorge, immediately west of the Ridge Route.

The new high-speed highway was funded by state and federal dollars. Congress passed two Federal Highway Acts, in 1916 and 1921, providing for a nation-wide, interstate highway network, with federal grants to match those of the states. These interstate highways would be numbered, even for east-west, odd for north-south routes. The new Ridge Route Alternate, as it was first called, was designated U.S. Highway 99.

Work commenced on the Ridge Route Alternate in 1927. Deep cuts were blasted out of the flanks of Piru Gorge as construction went on at a rapid pace. The notorious Grapevine Grade was straightened, avoiding the dangerous serpentine curves of the old road. Most of the new highway was three lanes wide, with a two-way passing lane in the middle. The Grapevine Grade was widened to four lanes. The new highway over the Tehachapis was opened to public travel on October 29, 1933.

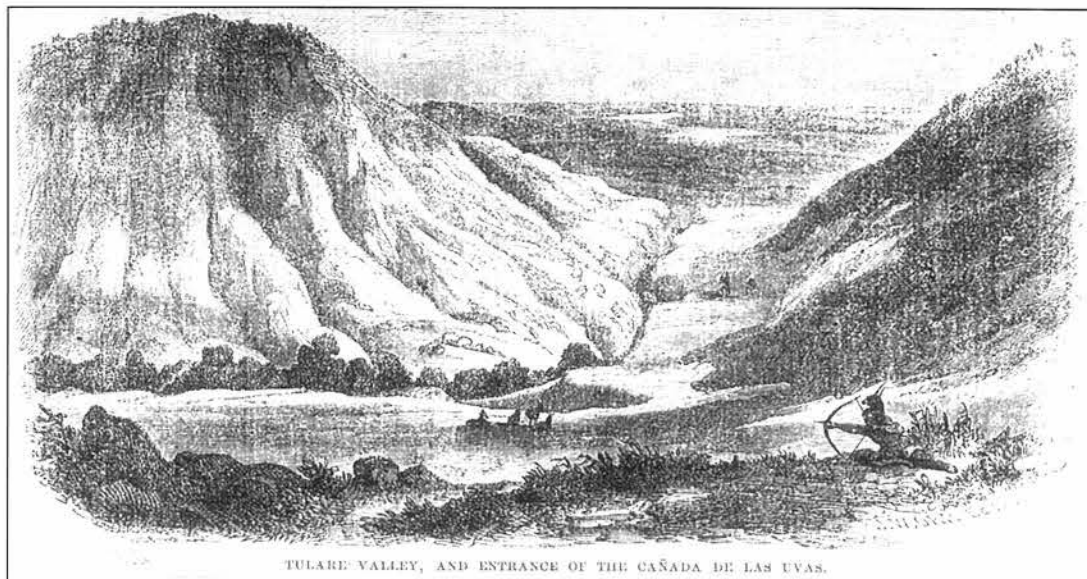
Highway 99, although certainly an improvement over the old Ridge Route, proved none too safe. Its three lanes proved a serious hazard to high speed driving. The center passing lane saw a number of bloody head-on collisions. Runaway trucks continued to be a problem on the downhill lanes of the Grapevine Grade. Grapevine itself, a small tourist stop located too close to the down-slanting lanes, was twice wiped out by out-of-control rigs. The highway was expanded to four lanes in the years 1947 to 1952, and the dangerous Grapevine Grade was partly rerouted and made eight lanes in

1960. Grapevine itself was moved lock, stock, and barrel back down to its original location just below the entrance to Grapevine Canyon.

This second Ridge Route was in use from 1933 to 1972. Of those thousands who traveled it, who can forget the long Violin Canyon Grade, the rest stop at Frenchman's Flat, where Piru Creek elbows west into the mountains, Piru Gorge, a geological wonder of slanting rock strata. Most of this spectacular gorge now slumbers beneath the waters of Pyramid Lake, part of the California Aqueduct system.

The phenomenal increase in automobile and truck traffic during the 1950s and '60s overwhelmed the highway planners. Armed with federal funds, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans, successor to the State Division of Highways) drew up plans for a divided, eight lane freeway to travel the length of the state from Mexico to Oregon. Work commenced on this mammoth project in the mid-1960s. The section of this Golden State Freeway, Interstate 5, between Castaic and the San Joaquin Valley was completed in 1972, and a new third Ridge Route was born. This is the great brute of a highway you follow today, unfortunately labeled "The Grapevine" by the media.

The driver speeding over "The Grapevine" is probably unaware that he is surmounting what was once a formidable obstacle to travel. Progress has come with the ages: *El Camino Viejo*, the Los Angeles-Fort Tejon Road, the Butterfield route, The old Ridge Route, Highway 99, and now the massive thoroughfare of the Golden State Freeway. All successively played their part in the ultimate taming of the great Tehachapi barrier.



Looking down the Canyon de las Uvas, drawn by Pacific Railroad Survey artist, 1853. Courtesy of the author.

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Roadside Monument with Tragedy Oak beyond. Courtesy of the author.

## The Settlers and the Southern Pacific

by Nicholas C. Polos

"War can never be separated from political intercourse." - Karl von Clausewitz

Turbulence and violence often seem to be an integral part of the early history of many states; California is an excellent example of this. California has always been what Carey McWilliams called "The Great Exception" and has been the target of American writers as a different and strange place. Americans seem to be well aware of these unique differences, and California stereotypes range from Los Angeles being called "La-La-Land" to H.L. Mencken's condemnation of the City because, as he said, "It stank of oranges." Even in recent years, one journalist, Neil Morgan, in his *Westward Tilt* insisted that, "They tilted the United States and everything that was loose rolled into California."

California has always been a land of con-

traditions, and this "El Dorado" or "Land of Seven Empires" has an exciting history, one characterized by violent and turbulent events. For example, in the early American period in California history one of the power forces was the Southern Pacific Railroad. The coming of the railroad, which started out as a beneficial enterprise, in a short time created a war-like atmosphere especially in the San Joaquin Valley. This resulted in what Richard Dillon called "The Southern Pacific War."

The Southern Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads had merged with the objective of coming through the San Joaquin Valley and, for better or worse, soon had an impact on all the residents of the Valley. Helen C. Bandini insisted that, "Without it [the Southern Pacific] California would still be a remote province, little known..." This, of course, is

pure conjecture because events move fast in California especially in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The passage of the No-Fence Law made it mandatory to fence in open range land; the railroad and the law hastened the end of the open range. The spread of cereal grain farming along with the availability of bulk transportation helped to develop the San Joaquin Valley economy.

It did not take the Southern Pacific Railroad long to intensify the enmity of the San Joaquin Valley residents. Even at the outset, as the railroad began to edge its way down the Valley, the businessmen of the established towns were stunned to find that the railroad, with some malice aforethought, had by-passed their communities. Naturally this angered many of the residents and added to the big catalogue of indictments against the railroad.

Two factors need to be high-lighted since they impacted upon the railroad's progress. When the Panic of 1873 struck the national economy as a whole, it intensified the depression that had begun in California four years earlier. The other important factor was that when the trans-continental railroad was opened, the Big Four believed that the revenues from passenger and freight would not bring them the returns they had enjoyed from the construction subsidies; so they made plans to retire from the transportation business. For some reason they did not do so. While their collective knowledge of the railroad was fairly limited, they understood that the revenues from the "long haul and short haul" could be large; so they remained in the railroad business.

One of the things the railroad did was to create its own towns: Lathrop, Modesto, Merced, Fresno, Goshen, Tulare, Tipton, Pixley, Allila, Delano, and Summer. The indictment against the railroad began to grow longer and longer. One of California's problems regarding land tenure had been left over from the the Mexican grant system, but further resentment against the railroad grew because, "It had become by far the largest private landowner in the state."

Consequently the issue of "land monopoly" became a paramount one in the state.

Along with this there were other burning issues, such as the unfair prices charged by the railroad for the expensive short freight haul which hurt the Valley farmers. The railroad used the "rate schedule" to extend its control into many areas. Also, the prices of the lands that the railroad controlled (this included many large areas) were quickly inflated and many previous promises were broken. This in time led to open warfare in the Valley. Another factor that led to sheer antagonism toward the Southern Pacific Railroad was that it had published a number of colorful pamphlets inviting settlers to occupy lands in the southern counties of the San Joaquin Valley. While the railroad did not have full legal ownership of these lands from the federal government, the pamphlets overtly promised that as soon as it did, the settlers would have the right to buy these lands, but the prices quoted were vague and, naturally, led to misunderstandings. Prices ranged from \$2.50 per acre upward, but did not include the value of the settler's improvements such as the elaborate systems of irrigation works.

Railroads that became a part of the Southern Pacific system received a total of 11,588,000 acres in California from the Federal Government. The problems of land tenure left over from the Mexican grant system tended to concentrate much land in the coastal regions in large units owned by American speculators. According to Frederick Jackson Turner, "The existence of an area of free land, its continual recession, and the advancement of American settlement westward explain American development." While this may have been true for the Upper Mississippi Valley, it is not very applicable to California's land development. Land was always a problem in California. When the railroad acquired title, it sent notice to the settlers that the land they occupied was now for sale "to anyone" and the prices ranged from \$17.00 to \$40.00 per acre. It also stated that the Federal Courts upheld the railroad's case stating that no specific

contract had been violated. In this regard W. Bean pointed out:

*Among the important factors of the railroad's power was its ability to enlist the most talented lawyers in its service. A good example of this was William F. Herrin who headed the Southern Pacific's legal and political departments from 1893 to 1910. It was under Herrin that the railroad's political machine in California reached its highest level of efficiency.*

It did not take the "Argonauts" now turned "Sandlappers" long to realize that they were in the grip of an "Octopus." While this may have been an exaggeration on their part, they clung to this concept. C.B. Glasscock observed:

*Pioneers who were struggling in sizzling heat and freezing fogs to build homes on the land, honestly believed the railroad to be wrong—viciously, greedily, and criminally wrong, and tyrannically subversive of the rights of the ranchers.*

The settlers decided to form a Settlers League. Not all the settlers were in favor of this organization. Winfield Scott Hopkins still smarted from the results of the Civil War where he, as a Virginian, had served the Confederacy. He insisted that it was not wise "to try to whip" Uncle Sam. Many of the settlers in the Mussel Slough region were, like Hopkins, Southerners by birth, and they look upon the owners of the Southern Pacific as "New England Yankees" which of course they were not. Sectional hostility fueled by the Reconstruction Period after the Civil War had not died.

At the preliminary meeting at the Orangeville school house hostility toward the League was overtly shown by Walter J. Crow, Louis Mass, and Dr. George de Wolfe, who was admittedly a railroad partisan and a representative of the Associated Press. At the outset John J. Doyle, James N. Patterson, and Major Thomas J. McQuiddy, three wheat growers, were elected to negotiate with the railroad in regard to land ownership. According to Wallace Smith, a com-

mittee was formed to prepare a pamphlet which presented their views on the land troubles with the Southern Pacific. Besides growing wheat Doyle was an active member of the community. He was a justice of the peace, notary public, a director of the Grangeville & Antioch Railroad, and in 1874 he had written a petition to Congress on behalf of the settlers. He had also helped organize the Settler's League at Hanford in 1879.

After the League was formed, Major McQuiddy formed a military squadron. This may have been a mistake because these were turbulent times and hostile feelings toward the railroad often were visited on other events and people. Before long many of the settlers attributed some violent actions to the squadron which Major McQuiddy quickly denied; the charges were often exaggerated.

The settlers themselves did very little land dispossessing or rough riding. However there were some instances where purchasers who had bought land from which the settlers had been removed were ejected by groups of citizens. The documentation on this is very thin. One source claimed that the settlers even burned a house and crops, but this was never verified.

Meanwhile in 1878, the Southern Pacific brought suit in the federal court to eject the settlers whom it deemed mainly as determined squatters. A decision favoring the Southern Pacific was handed down. James L. Brown, a resident of Kings County, observed, "Since no reversal of the decision was obtained, the company undoubtedly had a legal right to the land. Its stand was supported by law in all particulars." While there may have been a small amount of truth in his statement, it was not calculated to make the settlers very happy. In a short time the concept of the railroad as the "Octopus" took root, and the railroad began to take on a "monster-like" quality. One must agree that often in a bitter fight the main characters forget where their best interests lie.

In spite of Adolph Sutro and novelist Frank Norris, there were those who supported the railroad's position. Hubert H. Bancroft

THE OLD MAN IS HAPPY

Will Chapin, Los Angeles Times, 1899



THE OLD MAN IS HAPPY

Uncle Collis rubbing his hands over 'em. "Now isn't that just like Damon and Pythias? That's what I call harmony in railway circles."

Cartoon showing common conception of Huntington and the railroads. Courtesy of author.

in his *History of California* wrote:

*The coroner's jury resolved that the responsibility of the shedding of innocent blood [Mussel Slough Battle] rests upon the Southern Pacific Railroad company, and the feeling in the state was strongly adverse to the company's course. It was shown, however, upon the trial of those persons engaged in resisting the marshal, that the settlers had set themselves up as the rightful owners, regardless of the patents held by the railroad company ...*

He then goes on to describe his version of the activities of the military squadron as "masked men patrolling the streets," etc, thus showing the "Sandlappers" in a vengeful light. Yet while there was some show of armed resistance or retaliation, on the whole the farmers made no overt hostile actions. J.J. Doyle went to Washington on the settlers' behalf to get Congressional action; failing this, he appealed to the president of the railroad company, Leland Stanford. Stanford did visit Hanford in April 1880, but no agreement was reached.

When dawn broke on May 10, 1880, the situation was very tense around the Mussel Slough area. This was a great low-lying area a few miles northwest of the village of Hanford in what was then part of Tulare County, now Kings County. It was alluvial land, very swampy, rich but hard to work. For many years it had been a place of mystery left to thieves and beyond-the-law characters, full of crime and often the scene of many violent deaths. It was the arduous efforts of the men who toiled the land to create an adequate water supply system that later gave the area some lasting value. This area is now called Incerne.

It is very difficult to give a brief description of the so-called "Battle of Mussel Slough," which really not a battle at all, but a fight or skirmish, unlike Shakespeare's observation, "Here have a war, and blood for blood." There are as many versions of the Mussel Slough fight as there were participants. One very interesting version, which is not too accurate, is the Oscar Lewis analysis in *The Big Four*. Walton Bean called this incident

"one of the tragic experiences of the settlers."

Walter J. Crow and Mills D. Hart had purchased occupied lands from the Southern Pacific for about \$25 per acre. The settlers charge that Crow and Hart, whom they called "Buzzard and Gizzard," were dummy purchasers hired by the railroad to purchase the land at the price the railroad wanted. The two men were not newcomers to the region. Crow's family were pioneer settlers in the San Joaquin Valley, and his grandfather was the founder of Crow's Landing.

On May 10, 1880, a large crowd gathered for a picnic and to hear an address by the famous Judge David S. Terry of San Francisco. That same day United States Marshal Alonzo Poole came to Hanford with several deputies and Crow and Hart. He did not state his objectives for the visit, but later some settlers said his purpose was to remove people from the land they had purchased. According to the settlers, Hart had been the Goshen station agent, so he had close ties with the railroad, and W. J. Crow was a grain buyer and a land appraiser for the railroad. Marshal Poole's group stopped at Brewer's farm, where the settlers were having their picnic. (Today none of the natives seems to remember the location of Brewer's farm.) The scene seemed peaceful enough. The Marshal's party had two wagons. The second wagon was occupied by Crow and Hart; it was loaded with rifles, shot guns and revolvers. According to later testimony the shot gun shells had been replaced with lead slugs. It did not seem that Marshal Poole and his party had come unprepared.

When the Marshal's party arrived at the gate of the farm, it was met by some League members, some on foot and others on horse back. A short parley followed. It is from this point that there are many different versions of what happened. The events were so rapid that no one was really sure what actually occurred. One eye-witness said, "I heard ten shots altogether—it lasted about three-quarters of a minute." Marshal Poole who was usually considered a reliable witness remembered events differently. He later observed:

*The party all on horseback began moving all about me, suddenly there was a rush, and I was struck on the foot by a horse, and fell to the ground. Firing had commenced, and I think twenty or thirty shots were fired. By the time I got up the firing had ceased.*

The Marshal did not participate in the shooting, and it is impossible to tell who fired first or why. More than any single development the tragedy at Mussel Slough dramatized the intense public resentment against large land holders and the railroad in particular.

Every important event in the Mussel Slough tragedy had many different interpretations. There is no doubt of the site. A.T. Ellis, who opened the gate for the Marshal, stated, "The fight started in Section #4 about 150 yards from the southwest corner." It all took place in a few minutes. Afterward no one moved for a few seconds, and the black powder smoke drifted over the field. The spell was broken when Major McQuiddy galloped onto the field and took command.

The fallen men were taken to the Brewer farmhouse. Knutson, Harris, and Henderson were dead. McGregor and Kelly died that night, and Hart died the next day. Haymaker recovered in a short time, but Crow who had been shot while fleeing from the field died. This is questionable because some say he died later a long way from the field, but this was never documented. Thus ended what became known at the "Battle of Mussel Slough."

Oscar Lewis in his classic, *The Big Four*, observed that, "Charles Crocker in San Francisco, aided and abetted by a large group of railroad officials, toured the newspapers in the city to convince the editors that their agents had been attacked by a band of ruffians." Since the newspapers had no other avenue of information they foolishly printed this false story, but witnesses and reporters sent in a much different version from the battle site.

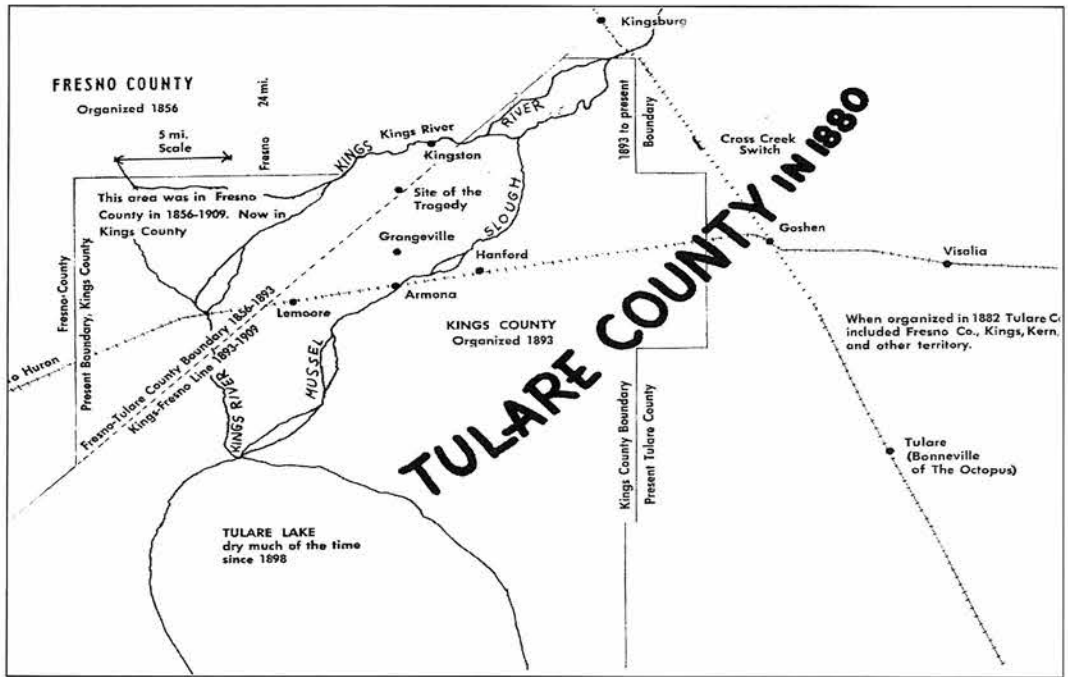
A coroners jury resolved "...the responsibility of the shedding of innocent blood rests upon the Southern Pacific railroad company." It is easy to fix the blame on a large corporation, and in troubled times when land ownership is hotly contested the railroad

was an easy target. Many of the men were heavily armed, and this western region allowed men to resort to violence when a crisis appeared. The stakes were high since they involved the homes of the settlers and legal land ownership. It was only natural the men involved in the Mussel Slough tragedy would be considered heroes, not law breakers, in the area. These men had common cause, and very few of the inhabitants of the San Joaquin Valley had not in some way suffered from the unfair policies of the Southern Pacific railroad (such as the "long" and "short" haul fiasco), and the men were mostly local citizens.

Several citizens, J.J. Doyle, James N. Patterson, J.D. Purcell, W.J. Pryor, and William Braden, who had been prominent in the settlers' struggle but had no part in the shooting, were arrested and charged with resisting a federal officer. They were convicted in the U.S. Circuit Court and sentenced to five months imprisonment. Public sympathy for them was so great that upon their return to Hanford there was a joyous celebration for them.

The settlers who gave their lives to the cause were looked upon as martyrs. The real significance of the Mussel Slough tragedy was that it started many Californians on the long march toward a political crusade which, not too many years later, resulted in the restoration of popular government to the people of the state. This was reflected in a statement made years later by a lawyer who had worked for the Southern Pacific. Hiram H. Johnson vehemently and publicly stated, "I am going to be elected the next governor of California, and as soon as elected I shall kick the Southern Pacific Railroad out of politics." This statement was made in a small San Joaquin Valley town; the world may have forgotten Mussel Slough, but the Valley never did.

At the turn of the century a young novelist, Frank Norris, wrapped up the whole harsh story of the railroad's tyranny in the novel, *The Octopus*. From its publication, the book made a very big impression. Norris did for Hanford, Visalia, and Tulare what Owen Wister did for Medicine Bow (in his novel, it was called Bonnevillle). Walton Bean contends



Tulare County in 1885. From J.L. Brown, *The Mussel Slough Tragedy*.

that *The Octopus* is not a true picture of the Mussel Slough tragedy. He maintained that by that time F. B. Norris had joined the Muckrakers of the *McClure Magazine* set and that *The Octopus* was "a propagandistic tract for the reform of the trusts." However, Bean admitted "the novel was and remains one of the most important American novels."

After President Teddy Roosevelt read *The Octopus*, he wrote his friend Owen Wister, "What I'm inclined to think is that conditions were worse in California than elsewhere." Wister developed this theme and called the Southern Pacific antics "a very oppressive tyranny." Yet later he defended the railroad and C. P. Huntington when he wrote, "This [the Southern Pacific] put the State [California] on the map of reality instead of the map of romance."

Wallace Smith in *Garden of the Sun* claims that Rudyard Kipling was visiting San Francisco during the period of the Mussel Slough trial, and when he returned to England, he had the event in mind when he wrote the poem, "The Settler". In the poem Kipling wrote, "That we may repair the wrong that was done. To the living and the dead."

For several years after the Mussel Slough tragedy the San Joaquin inhabitants made an annual pilgrimage to the place where their heroes lay. The *Visalia Times* graphically described the event of remembrance:

*The fourth anniversary of the Mussel Slough tragedy of the 10th of May, 1880 was appropriately observed by a large portion of the people of Mussel Slough on Saturday. Over five hundred people assembled at the Grangeville cemetery at the appointed time with a profusion of flowers with which to decorate the graves of the martyrs. Impromptu speeches were made by Major McQuiddy and H. F. Eagle and a prayer by Rev. J. W. McKelvey. After the floral tributes had been placed upon the graves of Iver Knutson, Archibald McGregor, and Edwin Haymaker, [they] proceeded to the Hanford Cemetery where the same solemn ceremony was performed upon the graves of John Henderson and James Harris, the immortal five who laid down their lives at the behest of corporate power.*

The citizens of the Mussel Slough area did not forget what happened there.

(Monthly Roundup Continued from page 2)

place is found, the pen is used to sketch the area and photographs bring out details and help the memory later. Also a *Thomas Guide* is helpful in locating the place and getting a feel for the natural terrain.

Once an object is located, it is necessary to delve into old records and newspapers to find the information. Local Chamber of Commerce publications can frequently give information about the area. Local history organizations can also provide information.

In addition to giving hints on how to find important but forgotten sites, Dr. Pomeroy discussed what she calls "Transformations." These are buildings and other objects that survived because their usage was changed. She showed slides which depicted the places in their original and present status. Several of the older buildings survived because they became the headquarters for a local history organization and/or local museums. Others became local cultural or senior centers.

Among the many examples she showed and discussed were the San Dimas Railroad station which now serves as a transportation center. Another was the Mount Washington Hotel which is now the Self Realization Fellowship Center. The Penny House which was once a hotel is now a restaurant. One of the oldest structures, El Molino Viejo has gone through several transformations becoming the headquarters of the California Historical Society, other local organizations and the home of the California Arts Club. One of the greatest transformations is a surplus Saberjet that has been converted into a child's climbing venue at a West Covina park.

Dr. Pomeroy's lively talk presented a new way to look for and at structures and could serve as a guide to help save old, historic buildings from destruction.

#### APRIL 2001 MEETING

Corresponding member Michael Patris is a third generation native Californian who has always loved local history. After being intro-



Photograph by Froylan Tiscareño

April Meeting Speaker Michael Patris

duced to Mount Lowe, he became fascinated with its history and founded the Mount Lowe Preservation Society, of which he is president. In addition to his Mount Lowe activities, he has written *The Culinary Repair Manual* after producing a cooking show for CBS.

Thaddeus Lowe was born into a large family which could not afford to keep him; so he was bound out to a neighboring farmer. He was unhappy with this form of slavery and at the age of 10 ran off to Portland, Maine, where he joined a brother. There he heard a medicine man and became so enthralled with some of his science (tricks) that he joined the troupe.

This youngster who had only a fourth grade formal education (in spite of this, he held over 200 patents) conceived the idea of building a balloon and sailing across the Atlantic Ocean. His "City of New York," 200 feet in diameter, helped prove Joseph Henry's theory of a west to east wind or "jet stream." Although they proved its existence, they did not know exactly what it was. Unfortunately, his flight carried him over South Carolina where he was forced down. The Civil War had just started and he was captured and charged with being a spy. The president of the University of South Carolina spoke up for him and finally he was freed. After returning north, he was able to convince the Army, with the help of Joseph Henry and Abraham Lincoln, that his bal-

loons would be useful in reconnaissance; however, he refused to consider bombing. All of his service in the War was as a civilian contractor, and after the war, he realized he had no future in the Army and left it. He moved to near Valley Forge where after a very successful business career he retired at the age of 58 and moved to California.

He became fascinated with the idea of building an inclined railroad up Mount Lowe and developing a resort there. He was unable to arrange outside financing and decided to finance it himself. A series of photographs showed the difficulties and hardships of building the incline. In places, the grade was 60%, so steep animals could not be utilized and all equipment and supplies had to be lugged up by manpower.

Patris traced the history of the incline and various hotels and other endeavors through slides. But disaster after disaster finally led to the abandonment of the incline. In spite of many patents and successful ventures Lowe died nearly penniless.

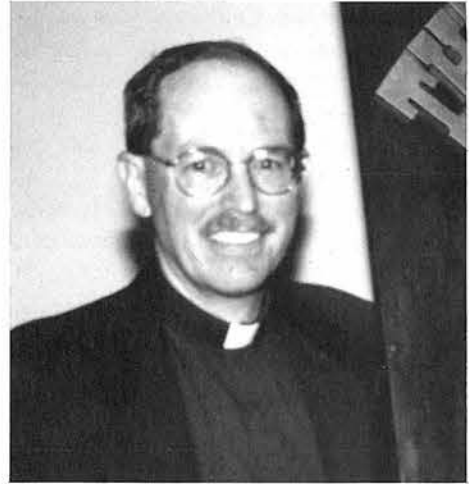
The speaker commented that he had interviewed many who had ridden the incline many years ago. They almost all said it was scary; the slides proved that they were not being dramatic but realistic.

## MAY 2001 MEETING

Father Michael Engh, associate professor of history at Loyola Marymount University, introduced the Corral to the lesser known Workman—William Henry "Uncle Billy".

Father Engh, a third-generation Angelino, received his college education at the University of Wisconsin where he earned a degree in history. In addition to his teaching, Father Engh helped found the Center for the Study of Los Angeles and co-founded the Los Angeles History Seminar at the Huntington Library for scholars to discuss works in progress. He is also a popular lecturer on Los Angeles and the author of *Frontier Faiths*.

William H. Workman was born in Missouri where his father was a saddle maker. His father apprenticed a young man named



Photograph by Froylan Tiscareno

May Meeting Speaker Father Michael Engh

Christopher Carson. Young Carson departed to become the famous "Kit" Carson. The elder Workman indicated a deep desire to have him returned; he offered a reward of one cent.

The family renewed its westward trek and moved to California. After crossing the plains, they finally arrived in Los Angeles in 1854 after their business had burned out in Sacramento.

Like many businessmen in Los Angeles, Workman started investing in real estate. His greatest development, Boyle Heights, was named for his father-in-law. To make it easier for his clients to travel downtown, he installed a horse-drawn streetcar, though it was never a financial success.

In spite of this, he became interested in railroad development and promoted several roads. He was among the leaders who brought the Southern Pacific into Los Angeles and was instrumental in the passage of the bond issue to pay for it. Workman convinced the railroads to build levees to protect the city from floods of the Los Angeles River.

He became one of the main boosters for Los Angeles' future. Early, he was predicting that the city would within a life time become a metropolis of 1,000,000. He was correct. In the 1900s, he and an unlikely ally, Harrison Gray Otis, became two of the most ardent boosters of the city through the Chamber of Commerce.

During the 1870s, he decided to enter politics and ran for the city council. He served as mayor in 1886-1888. As mayor of Los Angeles during the "Boom of the 80s" he was able to have the main streets, Main Spring, Hill, and Fort, paved. After his term of office, he actively promoted the public library, education, and, above all, the Los Angeles water system. He also served as City Treasurer, 1900-1906.

In 1905, he celebrated his fiftieth anniversary of his arrival in Los Angeles with a small party of 600 of his closest friends. He expressed the opinion that he would rather have the esteem of his friends than the wealth of the Rockefellers. His fiftieth wedding anniversary just a few years later was as large an affair.

Upon his death in 1918, his body lay in state in the new City Hall for which he was responsible. He was honored for his boosterism, business successes, civic improvements, but most of all for being every one's "Uncle Billy."



## Corral Chips

**JOHN ROBINSON** made a presentation to the Altadena Historical Society on "El Camino Viejo: North from Los Angeles."

**MSGR. FRANCIS WEBER'S** newest tome, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* was recently released by Arthur H. Clark Co.

**GLORIA LOTHROP'S** newest work, *Feeling the Pressure: The Italian American Experience in California* was also released by Clark. As was **POWELL GREENLAND'S** *Hydraulic Mining in California: A Tarnished Legacy*.

**ANDY DAGASTA'S** work was featured at the San Dimas Festival of Art.

**NICK CURRY** made the Marie Northrop Lecture for the Los Angeles City Historical Society on "Rescuing Los Angeles Heroes."

**GARY TURNER** made the Patton Lecture on Kachinas for the Docent Council of the Autry Museum.

## Directory Changes

### New Members

**John Crandell**

10809 Lindbrook Drive, #C  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

**J. John and Sally A. Eisenhower**

4730 Castle Road  
La Canada, CA 91011

**Elliott B. McGrew**

25422 Via Dona Christa  
Valencia, CA 91355

**Marjorie Rennett**

P.O. Box 7224  
Northridge, CA 91327-7224

**Margaret Sharma**

414 E. Alhambra Road  
Alhambra, CA 91801

**Laron B. Terrell**

72 Oak Meadow Place  
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

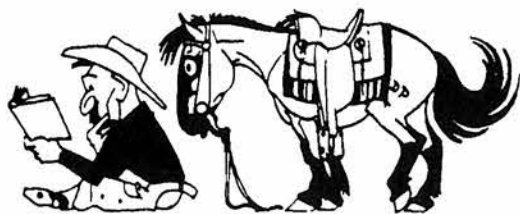
**Alan K. Weeks**

5242 Mt. Helena Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90041 -1524

### Address Changes

**Richard Thomas**

P.O. Box 552  
Tujunga, CA 91043



## DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL ...

*A librarian is a conjurer of sorts, with access to some of the greatest mysteries: the novels, biographies and history books on the shelves.*

—Alice Hoffman

**WORKIN' MAN BLUES:** *Country Music in California*, by Gerald Haslam. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. 380 pp. Illustrations, Bibliographic Essay, Selected Bibliography, Song Index, Subject Index. Cloth, \$29.95. Order from University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720, (510) 643-5036.

Fans of country music, and even those who are not fans, will enjoy the work of Gerald Haslam in his new book about country music in California. *Workin' Man Blues* relates the struggles and accomplishments of many of country music's best artists who just happen to be from California. Haslam knows first hand about many of those artists as he grew up in Oildale just north of Bakersfield and attended school with Merle Haggard, one of the best the state has produced.

If you grew up listening to country music as I did, you will enjoy Haslam's chapters about many of the artists from early years (1920s) to current stars (1990s). Names like Gene Autry, Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, and Spade Cooley bring back many pleasant memories of days when my family would listen to music throughout the evening and later watch many of the same artists on television. As Haslam tells about the 1960s through the 1990s, names like Buck Owens, Merle Haggard, and Dwight Yoakam appear with stories of their beginning and

their continued success in the field of country music. The book is expertly written and is interrupted occasionally by a "Musical Interlude" that makes you feel a part of a concert or an evening at one of the numerous country western establishments in the Bakersfield area. It also relates the struggles that country music artists from California have had to overcome to succeed. Nashville, Tennessee, is still considered the capital of country music even though many of the best artists and most memorable music originated in California.

Haslam tells of many musical artists not usually associated with county music and the impact, both negative and positive, their music has had on country music. Although some of these stories seem to drag on, they are all part of the story of a brand of music that traces its roots back many years to what was referred to, and sometimes still is, *Okie* music.

An interesting and seldom seen aspect of the book is the Bibliographic Essays, Selected Bibliography, and the Song Index. A nice touch to a wonderful book.

I found *Workin' Man Blues* to be interesting, informative and most of all entertaining. If you are interested in country music or in the history of music in California, you will enjoy *Workin' Man Blues: Country Music in California*.

—Paul H. Rippens



**TREASURE FROM THE PAINTED HILLS:** *A History of Calico, California, 1882-1907*. By Douglas Steeples. Westport. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999. 143 pp. Maps, Illustrations, Notes, Appendix, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, \$49.95. Order from Greenwood Publishing Group, 88 Post Road West, Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881, (800) 225-5800.

*Treasure From The Painted Hills* provides a glimpse into the life and times of Calico in terms of mining, people, events, dates and some statistics which serve the reader well. Of interest is the fact that Calico gave rise to

the leverage business expansion technique used by Borax Smith in order to catapult him into the category of the rich of the time. Along with this is the true story of the highest and best use of real estate in that one of the semi-caves of the area was converted into a hotel by the name of The Hyena House complete with use of wheel barrows to transport customers to and from the more refined modes of transportation. This hotel even boasted separate rooms with walls courtesy of barrel staves. Assuredly, the saving grace of the establishment was that breakfast consisted of beans and whisky. One wonders if the place was touted as being air conditioned?

At any rate the living Calico was much larger than that seen today with large mills and several railways. The mills and machinery were dismantled and went to other mining locations along with many of the town buildings. Apparently much of the activity ceased during the summer periods. Also pointed out is the fact that even though the economy of the local area was driven by silver mining and prices, borax was the cash cow which permitted the ascendancy of Borax Smith.

Although rails ran from the mines to the mills and eventually to Daggett, the early ore and equipment hauling was done by 20 mule teams. Even an early steam tractor, appropriately named Old Dinah, was experimented with for ore hauling, but it consumed 2,500 pounds of coal per round trip. That lasted a year, then the 20 mule teams returned until rails supplanted them in 1898. Old Dinah now resides in Death Valley at the Death Valley Ranch.

The Calico school enrollment was 58, but average attendance was 15. Can you imagine it, the kids walked to school and back? As with all western mining towns worth their dust, Calico had a newspaper first issued July 12, 1882, which was evidently widely read because the editor, Johnny Overshiner, managed to get into crusty debates with other editors some distance away. Some issues are still extant (the paper not the arguments). The *Calico Print* did move several

times though, to Daggett and back and now the press resides in Knott's Berry Farm.

This is a concise, interesting and entertaining book, which includes many facets of Calico, that succeeds in relating the essentials but not detailed to infinity. It tells a well balanced story of a unique western mining town which eventually evolved into a true ghost town, then was brought back from complete oblivion by Walter Knott to be made into a replica Ghost Town, and thence transformed into a State Park where yearly events bring many visitors to see the colored hills and enjoy the mild winter climate. Calico indeed has nine lives. An entertaining book with a wealth of references and source documents which deserves to be read. Well done.

—B.G. Olesen



TOMBSTONE, A.T.: *A History of Early Mining, Milling, and Mayhem*, by Wm. B. Shillinberg. Spokane: Arthur H. Clark Co. 1999. 400 pp. Cloth, \$39.50. Order from Arthur H. Clark Co., P.O. Box 14707, Spokane, WA 99214-0707, (800) 842-9286.

Folks who have been awaiting a solid history of Tombstone will be delighted and disappointed in this production. The opening third is breakthrough material, as the author uncovers new material on the founding and early controversies of this silver settlement, summarizing and interpreting documents and memoirs that have eluded previous historians. His information on the big three—Ed and Al Schieffelin and Dick Gird—coupled with the sad tale of Thomas Bidwell, presents data and angles that force us to rethink the origins of this unusual mining settlement.

Shillinberg in a dozen or so places indicates that to stress the Earps in the saga of this community is a disservice, as they were only present for a few years, and their impact then and later was modest. Then, unhappily, the author does what most other historians have done: he spends the last two thirds of the volume refighting the "shoot-

out," trying to find new slants on motivations, the background of the participants and what became of them in the following decades. This is truly a wasted effort, because not only does Shillinberg offer nothing new, but his sources on the "shoot-out" and its aftermath suggest he is completely unaware of the dozen or so major books on Tombstone, the Earps and Cochise County that have been published in the last twenty years. Furthermore, in this Earpiana section, he is often wrong on the facts, has amazing and contradictory interpretations, and cites as his main sources documents and "interviews" that are unavailable to other historians.

What the reader has, therefore, is two slants on the history of Tombstone. The prospecting, discovery, early mining, milling, and claim controversies make this an outstanding work, even though such material takes up only the first portion of the book. Those looking for shoot-out material, or new light on the Earp crowd, should look elsewhere.

—Don Chaput



**SINS OF THE CITY:** *The Real Los Angeles Noir*, by Jim Heimann. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999. 158 pp. Illustrations. Paper, \$18.95. Order from Chronicle Books, 85 Second Street, Sixth Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 537-4257.

If the proverbial picture really is worth a thousand words, then the 200+ photographs in this book should tell a 200,000 word story about Los Angeles. However, Jim Heimann gets a bare ten pages for his introductory essay. He describes the Los Angeles of the late 1920s - late 1950s period as a city enmeshed in vice, mayhem, scams and all-around bad

taste. The City Hall served as a haven for civic corruption; criminals of both major and minor league status ran gambling dens and houses of prostitution. Fortune tellers and religious cultists scammed gullible suckers. The police failed to solve some of the most vicious murders in the city's history. Hollywood provided opportunities for star-struck fans to learn about the seamier side of the movie industry.

The main attractions of the book, of course, are the photographs. Heimann combed through the *Daily News* file at UCLA; the *Herald-Examiner* collection at the Los Angeles Central Library; the USC Regional History Center photo archives; and several other important local repositories, public and private. The photographs document crime scenes, night clubs, gambling dens and seedy hotels; quotes from the writings of Nathanael West, Raymond Chandler, and other noir writers provide some context beyond the photo captions.

Heimann argues that the era ended around 1960 through the growth of suburbs, the mobsters' move to Las Vegas and a sense of civic coming of age, factors that inadequately explain why noir Los Angeles came to an end. He makes no attempt to assess the noir elements of the 1990s—the O. J. Simpson trial, the 1992 riots, the Rodney King beating, Heidi Fleiss, the Night Stalker, the Belmont Learning Complex scandal, cocaine users on the Los Angeles City Council, or Griffith Park and the Angeles National Forest as favorite dumping grounds for corpses. One wonders if a similar book published in 2049 about these current happenings would show a Los Angeles much different from what Heimann's photo essay depicts.

—Abraham Hoffman