WESTERNERS LOS ANGELES CORRAL
The Branding Iron

SPRING 2004 LOS ANGELES CORRAL NUMBER 235

Little Gray Inn (circa 1924). Courtesy of the author.

E.B Gray Southern California's Pioneer Mountain Photographer

By John W. Robinson

The signature "E. B. Gray" is familiar to all who collect historical photographs and post cards of the San Gabriel Mountains. From 1907 until he moved to Idyllwild in 1930, Gray booked literally thousands of photographs of Mount Wilson and its observatory, mountain camps throughout the range, portraits of mountain visitors, and novelty scenes such as children on burroback and costumed burros. He developed hundreds of his best photos into post cards which were sold in Pasadena and other valley towns, on Mount Wilson, and at the various mountain resorts.

Lugging heavy photographic equipment up and down the mountain trails was no easy task. Early in his career, Gray used a cumbersome Graflex camera with folding bellows and tripod. After about 1905, he changed to an Eastman Kodak box camera for most of his mountain shots. He also utilized, on occasion, a stereoscopic camera and a large panoramic instrument. In his later

(Continued on page 3)

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EDITOR'S CORNER

The theme of this issue deals with a part of the history of the mountains of southern California and more specifically, the San Gabriel Mountains. We found John Robinson's article on E. B. Gray particularly fascinating not just because Mr. Gray was such an amazing man, but also due to the fact that one of us lived in Idyllwild and did get to know Bob and Virginia Gray and visited their shop many times. We would like to suggest to John that he think about writing a book featuring the photographs of E. B. Gray.

Willis is constantly reminding us of what southern California was like when he was growing up. It must have been a paradise, especially for someone who enjoyed the outdoors. The Big Pines Center sounds like such a place and maybe it will be bought back to life. We have always wondered about the "Bridge to Nowhere," which is a great example of WPA architecture.

Many of us have never heard of Mount Gleason but it has an unusually rich history. What is amazing to us is the amount of money the Federal government spent on just the Nike sites at Mount Gleason alone. If we multiply that by all the missile sites just surrounding the Los Angeles basin, the total amount must be breathtaking. How long did it take to climb the Mt. Gleason Tower?

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Little Gray Inn (circa 1924). Courtesy of the author.

years he relied mostly on a trusty Speed Graphic camera for most of his mountain pictures. For long trips into the back country, or when doing work at a mountain camp where he wished to use several cameras, Gray utilized a burro or a horse to tote his equipment.

Ernest Benjamin Gray was born in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio on February 6, 1874. He grew up in Ohio and developed interests in bicycling, gymnastics, and photography, the latter which became his life's profession. He married Marguerite Weber in 1896 and a year later his first daughter, Katherine, was born. In 1899 Gray and his family pulled up stakes and moved west to Pasadena, California, where he opened a small photographic studio. Now deeply involved in photography, Gray traveled over the country on photographic assignments. He was in San Francisco during the great earthquake and fire on 1906, taking pictures that appeared in national magazines. For several years the Gray family wintered in Miami, Florida, where Ernest became a pioneer in underwater photography. Most of his underwater scenes were shot from a diving bell in the waters off Key West, Florida. Undoubtedly Gray's most daring stunt was when he performed as a "wing walker", tied to the wings of a biplane to take action photographs high in the sky. Gray was one of the leading "action photographers" of his day, and was awarded a blue ribbon for his photographic work at the 1904 St. Louis World Fair.

However, Ernest Gray's main interest throughout much of his photographic career was the San Gabriel Mountains, which loomed high over Pasadena. In the years 1907 to 1913, Ernest as his growing family (Edith was born in 1902, Ernestine in 1910, and Bob in 1913) lived most of the summer months at the Mount Wilson Hotel. Marguerite ran the hotel lunch counter and took care of the hotel cottages while Ernest took pictures of hotel guests and did photographic work for the Mount Wilson Observatory. He had a great love of hiking and was soon tramping all over the San Gabriels. He developed quite a business by taking pictures of guests at the various mountain resort camps, printing the photos at his Mount Wilson darkroom, then hotfooting it down to the camps to sell the prints to the camp visitors. He produced hundreds of post cards of various mountain scenes. (These post cards, with the "E.B. Gray" inscription, are valuable collector's items today.)

Next to photography, Ernest Gray's avo-

cation was gymnastics. Over several winters he was gymnastic director at the White Temple in Miami, Florida, and served for a time as assistant athletic director at the Pasadena and Azusa Y.M.C.A.s. He and his second daughter Edith performed a costumed gymnastic routine together in the years 1908 to about 1913. He also put little Edith through a rigorous training program as a mountain runner. "Amazing" is the best word to describe the performance of nine-year-old Edith Gray in the 1911 Mount Wilson Trail Race. She ran the 7.6-mile trail from Sierra Madre to the summit of Mount Wilson in 1 hr., 51 min., 50 sec., beating twelve men in the process. Although not an official entrant—women were not authorized to enter the race until 1929—the *Police Gazette*, which sponsored the annual event, gave her a special award.

With the United States entry into World War I in 1917, the Grays and their four children moved to San Diego, where Ernest was employed as official photographer for the U.S. Army at Camp Kearney. He also did photographic work for the Navy at their Balboa Park training camp.

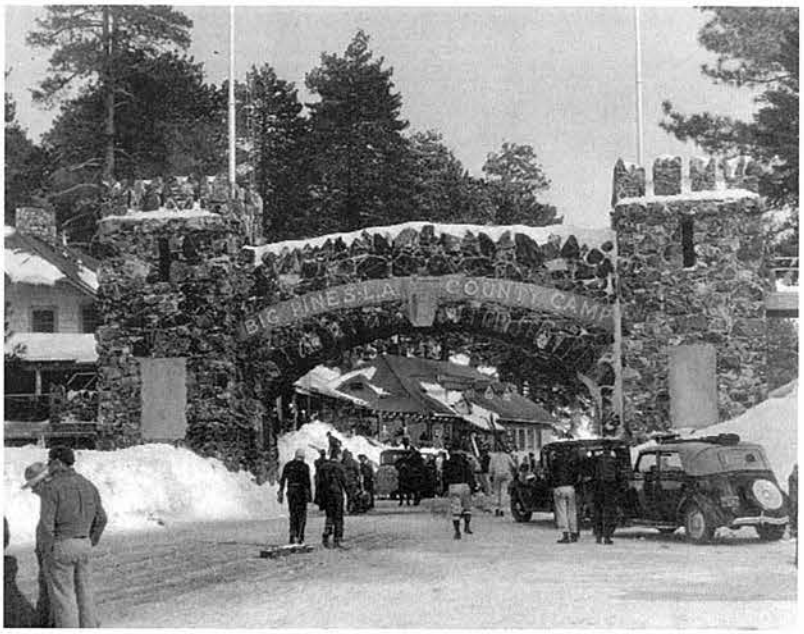
With war's end, the Grays moved back to Pasadena where Ernest resumed his mountain photography and post card business. From 1920 until it burned in 1928,the Grays built and operated "Little Gray Inn", a refreshment stand and lunch counter catering to hikers on the Sturtevant Trail between Sierra Madre and Big Santa Anita Canyon. The "Great Hiking Era" was in full flower then, and every weekend hundreds of hikers disembarked from the Pacific Electric cars in Sierra Madre to tramp the mountain trails. Little Gray Inn and the other mountain resorts catered to hordes of visitors. Weekly mule pack trains from Corum's Stable in Sierra Madre kept the resort camps well stocked with food and drink. Bob Gray, then

Katherine and Edith Gray with costumed burro. Mt. Wilson (circa 1906). Courtesy of the author.

a teenager, remembers running the three miles down to school in Sierra Madre every weekday morning, and running back up in the afternoon.

Ernest and Marguerite always had a fondness in their heart for Idyllwild in the San Jacinto Mountains. During the summers of 1904, 1905, and 1906, the Grays lived in Idyllwild, where Ernest photographed visitors at the Idyllwild Inn and produced post cards of mountain scenes, always inscribed by his trademark "E.B. Gray" in the lower left corner. With advancing age and their children mostly grown, Ernest and Marguerite made a final move to Idyllwild in 1930. They opened a souvenir and photo shop there, catering to residents and visitors. Son Bob Gray and his bride Virginia joined the elder Grays in 1934, and for several years the little shop was run by "E.B. Gray and Son," until Bob and Virginia opened their own Idyllwild photo and gift shop in 1939.

Ernest Benjamin Gray died of a heart attack at his Idyllwild home on July 2, 1940. His legacy is the hundreds of historical photographs and post cards he produced in his lifetime, so valued today by historians and collectors.



Winter, Big Pines. February 1938. Courtesy of John W. Robinson

Big Pines County Recreation Park

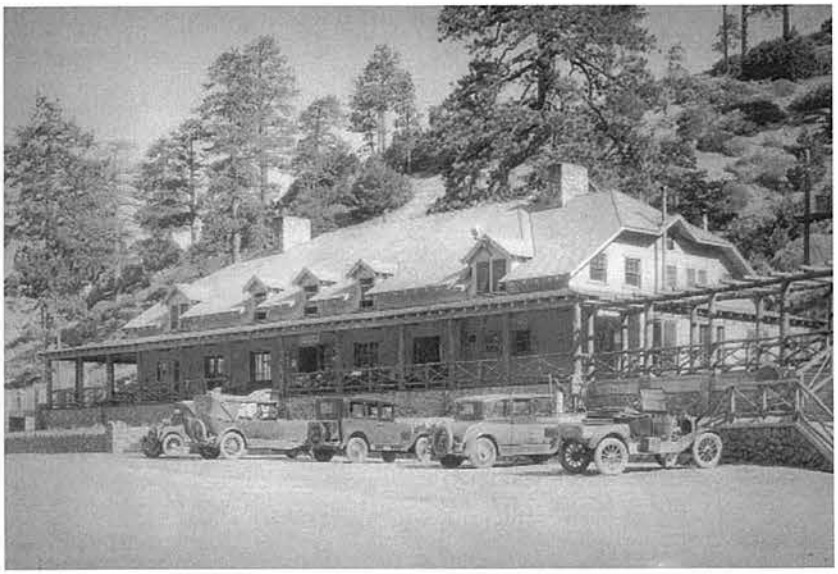
by Willis Osborn

As one drives west along California State Highway 2 about three miles up from Wrightwood, a solitary stone tower rises. It is on the right at the head of Swarthout Valley, at the point where the highway begins its descent to Jackson Lake and eventually to the desert below. Next to the tower is a large building, vacant except for a ranger station at one end. The foundation walls of another building, long gone, are near the ranger station on the same side of the highway. Across the street is a large rest room. The apparent age and the size of the structures indicate that something special must have been here at one time.

This was the Civic Center of Big Pines County Recreation Park. Operated by Los Angeles County, it was the largest recreation area in the San Gabriel Mountains from the time of its opening in 1924 through the 1930s. Big Pines was the most popular snow play area in southern California in its day and was significant in popularizing skiing in southern California. The edifice adjoining the tower, then known as The Lodge, is now empty except for the ranger station. It contained a large lounge with a cozy fireplace and also served as a post office, grocery store and it was used as a theater, a dance hall, and included living quarters. The other building, destroyed by a deliberately set fire on February 17, 1987, featured a dining room and soda fountain which once swarmed with crowds.

Near the Big Pines center were an outdoor skating rink, toboggan slides, and four ski jumps, among the world's highest. When the 1932 Olympic Games were awarded to Los Angeles, Big Pines backers, feeling that since the summer games would be held in Los Angeles, it would be proper for the winter games to also be held locally and Big Pines was the place. However, the Olympic Committee chose Lake Placid, New York, stating that snow at Big Pines would not be reliable.

Big Pines became one of southern California's most important mountain



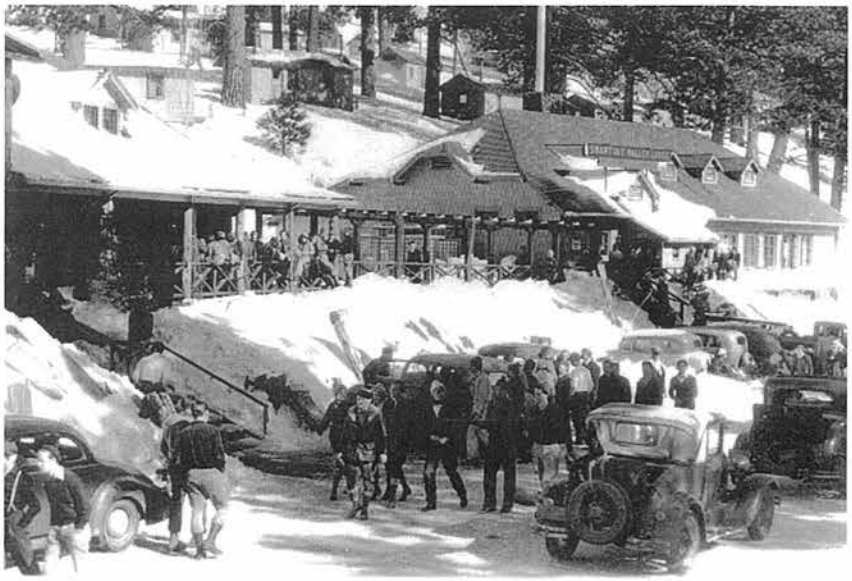
Big Pines Lodge (circa 1930s). Courtesy of John W. Robinson.

resorts following its opening in February 1924. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors purchased 760 acres of the scenic mountain area one year earlier. Construction of the Lodge and other Civic Center buildings plus cabins, camping and picnic areas began immediately. Though completed in 1923, within two years the facilities were becoming overcrowded.

To alleviate the problem the county obtained a special use permit for an additional 3, 560 acres from the forest service. Included in this addition were Jackson Lake to the west and the Prairie Fork region, an attractive but seldom visited area on the south side of Blue Ridge. To make the Prairie Fork area more accessible and the drive to the Big Pines center shorter, the county, in 1929, began construction of a road on the bottom of the East Fork of San Gabriel Canyon to Prairie Fork then up over Blue Ridge to Big Pines. After building an attractive bridge over the river at the scenic narrows, the terrible flood of March 1 -2, 1938, wiped out the road. It was never rebuilt. Today, the famous "Bridge to Nowhere" stands alone at the narrows, a reminder of that dream.

Though Big Pines was very popular throughout the 1920s and 30's, the Depression years took its toll on the county budget. 'The Prairie Fork addition was returned to the Forest Service in, 1934 and it remains today an attractive, seldom visited area of the Angeles National forest. The supervisors eventually felt they could not continue to pay the annual $80,000 fee to the Forest Service and, in 1940, Los Angeles County returned the leased land. The original 760 acres was traded to the county in 1946 for land in Castaic, which became the Wayside Honor Rancho, part of the county penal system. This ended the era of county ownership of the recreation area. Big Pines was turned back to the Forest Service with the understanding that it would continue as a recreation center.

World War II severely hurt attendance and Big Pines fell on hard times. Better times came to the region in 1956 with the completion of the Angeles Crest Highway. Today, Mountain High, and Ski Sunrise bring large crowds to the Big Pines area for winter skiing, snow boarding and snow play, but the old Big Pines Civic Center area remains rather quiet without the old dining room, the soda fountain, the cozy lounge with its large fireplace, and the nearby rental cabins. Finally, the Davidson Arch, once the symbol of Big Pines, no longer exists. The arch and



Winter at Big Pines. At top left is Lodge and dining room at far right (circa 1930s). Courtesy of John W. Robinson

the south tower were removed in 1950 in order to widen the state highway. The remaining north tower held a small jail, located on the ground level, for law breaking visitors.

Though best known for winter sports, Big Pines County Recreation Park was popular throughout the year. In an article about Angeles Forest resorts that appeared in the Spring, 1935 issues of *Trails*, an outstanding magazine about the local mountains edited by Will Thrall, the writer (not named) wrote of Big Pines and Swarthout Lodge: "It is difficult to find a more beautiful spot than Big Pines in Spring, and this forest hotel with its comfortable cabins, attractive dining room and setting of towering pines is central to all the best drives and trails."

Big Pines really became busy during the summer months. An advertisement in the Summer 1934 issue of *Trails* touted the many activities available to summer visitors. There was swimming in Jackson Lake and the Civic Center swimming pool, fishing, hiking, tennis, and horseback riding for active visitors. Evening dancing in the lodge was scheduled three times weekly along with nature programs in the open air theater. A number of cabins were set among the pines near the lodge and went for $2 per night. Campsites were available with stove, table, and water for 25 cents per day while picnic grounds were free. Swelling the number of summer visitors were the numerous youth camps in the area. A few camps remain today.

My earliest memory of Big Pines occurred about 1930. My father, an active member of the East Los Angeles business community, was the scoutmaster of a local Rotary Club-sponsored Boy Scout troop. Though we were only three or four years old, my twin brother Bill and I went along with the group. We slept in a large log cabin and ate at a dining hall a short way up the canyon. We must have become restless because we were allowed to go outside and play. Soon we found ourselves sliding down a terrifying steep slope. We tried to crawl up the slope but kept sliding back down. We screamed and cried for help. Immediately our dad and a teenage neighbor heard our cries and ran to save us from our doom.

On a recent trip to Big Pines, I recognized that same log building and the dining hall beyond. The terrifying slope is still there and its great height has shrunk to maybe ten or fifteen feet above the floor of the ravine: it

Big Pines Camp Postcard (circa 1932). Courtesy of John W. Robinson.

is not particularly steep. One's perception of things can change with the years. The camp is now a church camp known as Harmony Pines. A huge, growling canine did not allow me further exploration of the grounds.

Today, fragrant giant pines, still surround the old Civic Center area. There is a pleasant nature trail behind the lodge that begins between the ranger station and the dining hall ruins. One can look for the sites of the cabins that on the hillside. The lodge has been recently renovated, but the exact plans for its use have not been specified. The large room in the lodge has been restored but plans for its use have not been solidified. Perhaps it will be used for various special events including weddings. Additional facilities are also planned.

On top of Table Mountain is a campground with several picnic grounds nearby. Youth camps are still found in the area. Several hiking trails leave from the road and Jackson Lake is there for fishing. Though the area is crowded in winter, the rest of the year finds Big Pines less hectic. Try visiting during the week. However, don't go on a day when the San Andreas fault decides to move. Big Pines, Jackson Lake, and nearby Wrightwood are on that infamous crack in the earth.

Mount Gleason Nike Missile Administration buildings, c. 1978. Courtesy of the author.

Historic Mount Gleason

By Paul H. Rippens

In June 1853, Lieutenant Robert Stockton Williamson of the U.S. Topographical Engineers arrived in southern California. His mission was to find a route for a railroad through the mountains from the desert side of the San Gabriel Mountains to Los Angeles. Entering the mountains through Soledad Canyon, Williamson and his railroad survey party went over Soledad Pass ("New Pass" as Williamson named it) and then continued down canyon on to finally arrive at Mission San Fernando on June 30, 1853. In his report, Williamson pronounced Soledad Canyon as an ideal route for a future railroad.

Twenty-three years later, on September 5, 1876 a great celebration took place at Lang's Station. In the presence of several hundred people, Charles Crocker, President of the Southern Pacific Railroad, used a silver hammer to drive a golden spike into a prepared tie thus symbolizing the completion of the first rail connection between the southern and northern parts of California.

A geologist with the Williamson Expedition, William P. Blake, inspected the rock formation found in Soledad Canyon and in his later report called attention to exposed veins of copper ore. This set off a copper "Boom" led by Manuel Ravenna, a Los Angeles merchant, who organized the "Soledad Mining Company." A new town called Soledad City sprang up almost overnight but the name Soledad was short lived. The U.S. Post Office could not accept it since there was already a town in California named Soledad located in Monterey County. The town then became Ravenna.

A leading man in Ravenna was George Gleason. He was the first Postmaster and Superintendent of the Eureka Mine located near the present town of Acton. In 1869, Gleason built a rough road up the north side of 6,503 foot Mt. Gleason in order to bring timber down the mountain for construction of buildings and mine shoring. At the same time, Gleason's brother Tom built a cabin in a canyon south of Acton and it is said that he prepared maps of the Soledad area for a

New York museum.

In those days, it was relatively simple for mapmakers to name mountains and other landmarks after relatives or friends they felt ought to be so memorialized. Although Mt. Gleason may have been named after either George or Torn Gleason, it is generally believed that Tom Gleason named the mountain in honor of his brother, George.

From 1888 through 1896, Mt. Gleason was the center of mining activity. Some people believed that Mt. Gleason was the source of the "Mother Lode." Small mines were dug by many miners, but their efforts were mostly unrewarded. The largest mine was apparently the so-called "Padre" or "Lost Padres." It followed "color" with a 200-foot tunnel and a shaft 81 feet deep. Another mine of the north slope of Mt. Gleason was the "Mt. Gleason Mine." It was said to have possessed four tunnels, one being well over 400 feet into the mountain. It was supposed to have had a 5-stamp mill powered by steam. Mining activity, although minor, continued on Mt. Gleason until about 1930 or even a bit later.

In July of 1925, Assistant George Taylor of the Los Angeles County Forestry Department, was detailed to make a visibility map of the Mt. Gleason country in preparation of building a lookout tower. This would be the fourth tower constructed by the department-Oat Mountain above the San Fernando Valley (1923), Castro Peak in the Santa Monica Mountains (1925), and the San Jose Tower in San Dimas (1925). All the towers were constructed of steel and of the "standard departmental design."

A work camp was established at Little Gleason and work commenced on the tower. Water, cement, steel, gravel, sand, lumber, food and supplies were hauled to the end of the road at Gleason Saddle where it was loaded on mules and packed to the tower site. The tower was completed on September 25 and was dedicated on September 29, 1926. Although of standard design, the Mt. Gleason Tower differed somewhat from those previously constructed. For one thing, it was a bit higher—68' 4" overall and it cost more money—$2,046.22.

Mt. Gleason Lookout Tower, c. 1926. Courtesy of the author.

The observer's cabin, built of cobblestones, was constructed near the tower at an additional cost of $475.00.

The Mt. Gleason Tower was the first "co-op" (cooperative) tower built by the Count, within the National Forest. Mt. Islip and Sawmill Mountain Towers were to follow within the next year or so. The agreements with the Forest service stipulated that the U.S. would take care of the observers and the overall operation of the tower, while the County would maintain the tower structure and observer's cabin.

The tower served both the National Forest and the County until the late 1940's when its value in relation to lookouts on nearby peaks made it obsolete. It was dismantled in 1955 to make room for the radar equipment serving the Nike base located next to the Little Gleason plantation.

During a visit to the camp set up at Little Gleason for the firebreak crews and the Lookout Tower construction workers, County Forester Spence D. Turner suggested that several acres of brush be cleared for the planting of pine trees. On Monday, July 26, 1926, the request was sent to the Altadena Forest Nursery (located at the site of Farnsworth Park) for foresters to inspect the

Mt. Gleason area for a proper plantation site. They suggested that eight acres of brush be hand cleared at a cost of about $1,500. According to the plan, 5,000 Jeffrey pines were to be planted during the winter of 1926-27.

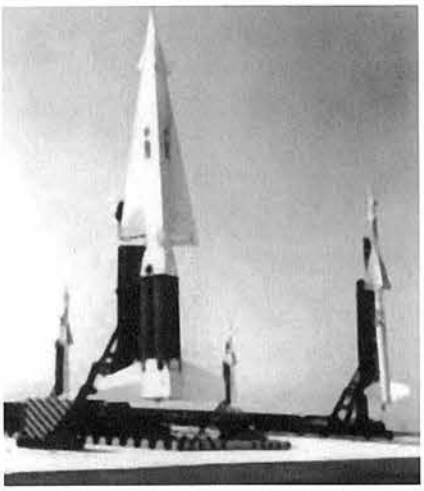
The first planting stock of 500 Coulter and 3,300 Jeffrey pines were shipped to Little Gleason in early October *"to be acclimated."* On October 6, 1926, a laborer was assigned to the Little Gleason project to care for the small trees. Water for the potted seedlings had to be hauled in from the Tie Canyon Mill by way of Aliso Canyon and the Edison Road. In December 1927, 1,574 of the original trees planted were still alive and an additional 1,200 Counter pines were interplanted.

Additional planting sites were cleared and planted during the next three fiscal years. A survival report prepared in September, 1931, stated that of the 19,193 trees planted from 1926 through 1930, only 3,464 were still living a dismal 18 percent survival percentage.

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORP crews maintained the tree plantation end surrounding firebreaks after a Spike Camp was established in the summer of 1936. Access to the area was still difficult until in 1946, the Forest Service constructed the road from Tie Summit (now called Mill Creek Summit) to Little Gleason, making access much faster and easier than coming up Aliso canyon.

The old campsite remained at Little Gleason for many years. The Forestry Department, with permission of the Board of Supervisors, allowed the Cromwell-Wilson Construction Company to occupy the Little Gleason buildings from August 31, 1954 until October 31, 1955 during the construction of the Nike Missile Site.

History of other regions points conclusively to the fact that with the advent of man into an area, wildfire has followed. It is also believed that the American Indian in California made a practice of burning the forest cover each year in order to keep the country open to travel and to make easier hunting. When the white man came, he undoubtedly hastened the destruction of the natural cover with his need for clearing land



Nike Missiles, U.S. Army Photo.

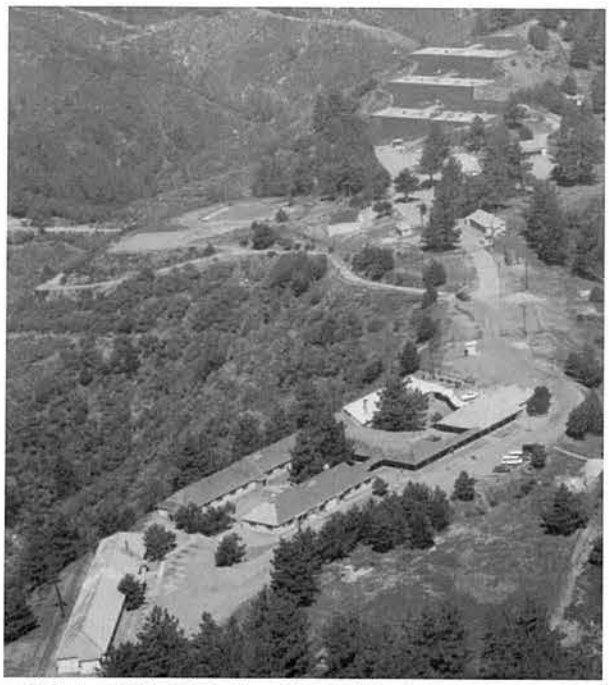
for agriculture and for grazing and pasture improvement.

Few major brush fires occurred near Mt. Gleason and Little Gleason after 1919 until 1953. The Sulpher Springs fire burned out the Little Rock Creek Drainage from Angeles Crest Highway east of Three Points north to Little Rock Reservoir including Mt. Pacifico. This fire was started when two military aircraft collided in midair, crashed and exploded upon impact.

In 1960, the Magic Mountain fire burned 27,410 acres of the southern portions of Soledad Canyon west of Mt. Gleason and north of Pacoima Canyon.

Most of Big Tujunga Canyon southwesterly from Hidden Springs on the Angeles Forest Highway was consumed and the front country went up in smoke from San Fernando to La Crescenta when flames raced over Mt. Lukens and went down slope to the city. This fire of November 22-28, 1975 consumed 47,393 acres of vegetation.

One of the most recent fires to affect the Mt. Gleason area was the Middle Fire, which covered 4,137 acres and raced up slope and into the Little Gleason experimental area. This fire was started in July of 1977 by an illegal tracer being fired into the brush near the Forest Service Monte Cristo Guard Station. The torrential winter rainstorms of 1978 caused massive runoff and erosion from this burn and nine lives were lost when a wall of



U.S. Army Nike Missile Site with missile bunkers at top of photograph c. 1978 Los Angeles County Fire Department photograph.

water and debris from a cloudburst gutted the mountain community of Hidden Springs.

During the cold war era, the United States Army constructed surface to air missile sites surrounding the greater Los Angeles area, protecting more than 4,000 square miles. There were sixteen sites with radar end missiles to protect the basin from incoming aircraft or enemy rockets.

The Mt. Gleason site was constructed in 1954-55 under a U.S. Forest Service Special Use Permit, which was issued on June 23, 1954. The cost of the buildings alone was $3,829,500. This site carried the Army identification number of LA-04-L. The site consisted of three areas—the Administration area, launch area and radar site. The administration site consisted of four buildings—two barracks buildings, the administration building, and the mess hall.

The launch area consisted of five buildings—ready room/isolation ward building, bomb shelter building, missile assembly building, warhead assembly building, and generator building, along with three underground missile storage bunkers. Each bunker could store 10 to 15 missiles. The missiles could be fired 55 seconds apart with each bunker firing a missile in rotation every 110 seconds until all missiles were fired. As far as is known, no missile was ever launched from this site.

At the time of their opening, the Nike Sites were armed with the Nike Atlas missiles. The liquid fueled Atlas had a speed of Mach 2.3 and a range of 30.7 miles. During the period 1958-1963, some of the sites, including the Mt. Gleason Site, changed to the Nike Hercules missiles. The newer, more powerful missiles had a gross weight of 10,711 pounds and a range of 96.3 miles. At a speed of Mach 3.65, the missile only had a flight time of 2 minutes. They also had the capability of being armed with a nuclear warhead.

The radar site, located on Mt. Gleason, consisted of six buildings and three radar towers, generator building, mess hall, ready room, barracks, operation building, and radar control building. The Forest Service razed this area in the summer of 1976.

In compliance with the SALT I treaty, all the Nike Missile sites were decommissioned

with the Mt. Gleason site being closed on June 30, 1974. For two years, the Forest Service, private guard company, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department guarded the site. On July 27, 1976, the Fire Department was issued a Special Use Permit to use the site for a conservation education facility. However, that venture did not work as planned and in 1978, the Department opened a Young Adult Conservation Corp (YACC) camp with 120 enrollees and a staff of 32. The camp was funded by the Federal Government and was one of the most successful YACC camp in the country until it was closed in 1980. Since that time, the State of California Department of Corrections and the County of Los Angeles Fire Department has maintained the Mt. Gleason site for an inmate camp. The inmate crews are used for various work projects and for wild land fire control throughout the state of California

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Note: Paul Rippens was the Camp Director of the Young Adult Conservation Corp camp (YACC) at Mount Gleason in 1978-79.

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton.

Donald Duke and Jerry Zorthian discussing the nuances of art at the 2003 Fandango.

Jirayr Zorthian

Artist and eclectic, Jirayr Zorthian, passed away in January at ninety-two years of age. Zorthian had been a member of the corral for several decades, and he was a standard fixture at the Rendezvous, Fandango, and special Westerners' events.

Often known for his flamboyant dress and bohemian lifestyle, Zorthian's art reflected a freedom and gaiety that was best evidenced in the annual Doo Dah parades in Pasadena. He was known to give ribald soirees at his hilltop ranch in Pasadena. Many of his friends included the rich and famous; Nobel-prize winning physicist Richard Feynmna, jazz great Charlie Parker, and artist Andy Warhol.

Zorthian was born in 1911 in Western Anatolia, Turkey. He survived two waves of Armenian massacres, and his family emigrated to the United States in 1923.

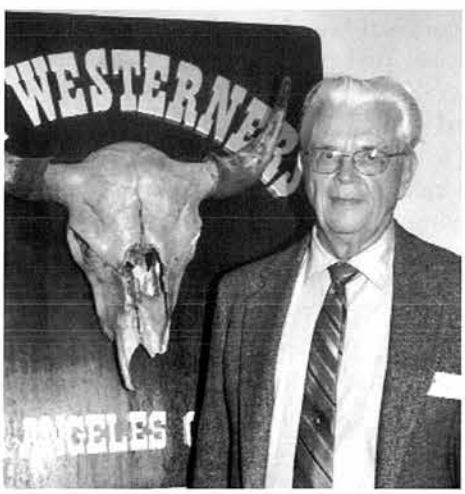
He earned a master's degree in fine arts from Yale University, and spent time in Italy studying the great masterpieces during the Depression era. He was an intelligence officer during World War II, and painted a massive mural "The Phantasmagoria of Military Intelligence Training," which he considered his finest work. After the war he married an heiress to a shaving cream fortune, Betsy Williams. In 1945, the couple moved to Altadena and settled on his nine-acre ranch at the top of Fair Oaks Avenue.

Zorthian's smile and colorful personality will be missed by Corral members, although we are sure that Jerry is "still corresponding."

THE MONTHLY ROUNDUP

JANUARY MEETING

Bob Olesen, a long-time corral member, gave an inspired discussion on walking the trails of the Death Valley '49ers. Bob has long been captivated by the beauty and serenity of the desert, and Death Valley presents some of the most austere terrain in the far West. Olesen is also a student of the old trails and overland travelers who crossed this forbidden land. Olesen and fellow Westerner, John Southworth, have made over fifty trips to Death Valley in the past three decades. Bob has recently finished a new book about the Trails of the '49ers in the Death Valley region.



Photograph by Froy Tiscareño.

January Meeting Speaker Bob Olesen.

Corral members were treated to a colorful slide presentation that featured unique rock formations, hillsides, canyons and historic landmarks. With a focus on Panamint Valley, Bob led his audience through the silent sepulchers, mud flats, and canyons that W.L. Manly identified in his overland crossing of the desert. Bob's photos also revealed in colorful detail the switchbacks, deep canyons, blossom cactus, dry lakes, sand dunes, and sand ridges that dot the expansive landscape. If anything, Bob Olesen reminded members of the great risk pioneers took coming West across this enchanting, yet unforgiving terrain.

Photograph by Froy Tiscareño.

February Meeting Speaker Art Cobery.

FEBRUARY MEETING

Art Cobery has only been a member of our corral for a few years. Yet, he has contributed articles to *The Branding Iron* and provided photographs of past Fandango and Rendezvous events. At this meeting, Art gave an insightful look at the Montrose Flood of 1934, which damaged residential communities in La Crescenta and Montrose.

With the use of historic photographs, Art highlighted debris flows that came from four separate canyons. Some of these debris flows were 1/4 mile in length and twenty feet high. Over forty people died in this natural disaster. In addition, Cobery noted that a 1933 Pickens Canyon Fire provided the unstable conditions that led to this massive mud flow, coupled with a deluge of over thir-

Photograph courtesy of Art Cobery.

Art and Annie Cobery admire the dedication plaque of the Great Flood of 1934. The dedication took place on January 1, 2004 with the support of various groups from Crescenta Valley.

teen inches of rainfall in a forty-eight hour period.

Art has also been actively involved in local efforts to memorialize this catastrophic event and remember those who were lost in it's wake. To that end, this presentation certainly elevated the awareness of all corral members to this long forgotten event.

Corral Chips

Congratulations go to former sheriff, **Glenn Thornhill**, and his lovely wife, Lori. They are the proud parents of a brown hair and blue eyed baby girl. Grace Sharon was born on January 15, and weighed 7 pounds and 7 ounces —petite, beautiful, and obviously very fortunate to take after her mother. The Corral extends best wishes to the Thornhill clan.

Corresponding member, **Gregory McReynolds**, is currently seeking photographs for his new book on the old ranches of East Pasadena. He is working on an ambitious project to document the ranch properties of Sierra Madre Villa, Kinneloa, Hastings, Chapman and other local places. You may contact Greg at quillcottage@earthlink.net.

Martin Ridge passed away last fall. A complete review of Martin's life and career will be noted in a forthcoming issue. However, the following words expressed by fellow corral member, Tom Andrews, certainly speaks highly of Martin. Tom wrote:

> *In his scholarship as in his personal contact with students, colleagues, and friends, Martin treated individuals with respect, inviting them to become his intellectual companions. He was special to so many people because he freely gave his time, energy, and counsel to all: the highly accomplished as well as those struggling as scholars. You left him sensing that you had been in the presence of an authentic human being, and believing that you had received special treatment—and indeed you had.*

Photograph by Frank Q. Newton.

Martin Ridge spoke at the March 1998 Westerners Meeting.

That Creaky Leather Saddle!

by Loren Wendt

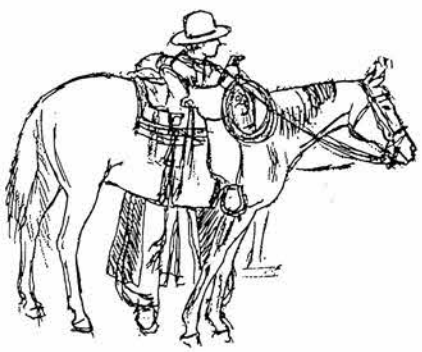
Sometimes I think it was that lousy driftin' dust
Then again, it may have been that stinkin' smell
The only trouble was, Cactus, my old friend
Got to know 'em both just a mite too well

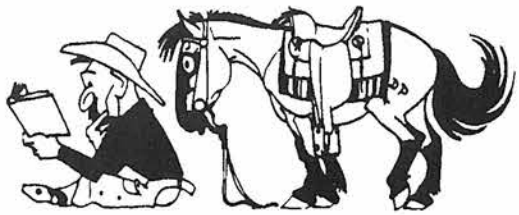
Oh, I carried a .45 and swung a wide loop
I spent my days just a-herdin' cattle
What a wasted kind of life that was
Rockin' back and forth in that creaky leather saddle

But now that I'm layin' here and sufferin' really bad
Just wisht I could get back on my hoss, Old Calico
You know somethin', Cactus, this ain't no life
And if this keeps up I'm clanged near ready to go

The only thing that keeps me goin' right now
Is thinkin' back to to them round-ups and drives
Guess I really miss 'em cuz we had a lot of fun
That's a cowboy's life, that's a life on which he thrives

So, if you happen to get a chance, Cactus, old pard
Tell the boys I miss 'em, miss the good times, too
And if the wagon master sees fit to call me
I'm ready to say "goodby" with a regret or two





DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

ADVENTURES WITH ED: *A Portrait of Abbey*, by Jack Loeffler. University of New Mexico Press. 2002. 308pp. Hardcover, $24.95. Paper, $21.95. Order from University of New Mexico Press, (800) 249-7737.

This biographical memoir by one of Abbey's closest friends is a tribute to the gadfly anarchist who popularized environmental activism in his novel The *Monkey Wrench Gang* and articulated the spirit of the West in *Desert Solitaire* and scores of other essays and articles. In the course of a twenty-year friendship Ed Abbey and Jack Loeffler shared hundreds of campfires, hiked thousands of miles, and talked endlessly about the meaning of life. This book allows the reader to share in their very personal friendship.

Edward Abbey was born and raised in Pennsylvania and came west to attend the University of New Mexico on the G.I. Bill. After earning a M.A. in philosophy he rejected academic life and worked off and on for years as a backcountry ranger and fire lookout around the Southwest. He felt this gave him time to write and his first novel *The Brave Cowboy* in 1956 launched his literary career. This book was made into the movie *Lonely are the Brave* by Kirk Douglas who produced and starred in it and is considered by Douglas as his finest work. By the 1970s, Abbey was recognized as an important, uniquely American voice. He used his talents as a writer, teacher and speaker to protest against the rape of the American West, and thus became an idol to environmentalists, writers, and free spirits.

I must admit that this is not an unbiased review. I have read and still have most of

Abbey's books. He has been a favorite of mine for the last twenty-five years and I share his views on the destruction of the American West. This book portrays Abbey the man not Abbey the writer. It shows Abbey as a man who loved the ladies and was in turn loved by them. He had a number of wives and girlfriends and as a result any number of children. He was very outspoken which got him into trouble many times, and as an anarchist he stopped just short of blowing things up. The last third of the book deals with Abbey's illness, which lasted almost the last ten years of his life and ultimately killed him in 1989 and how he, his family, and friends dealt with it. It was during this time that he never stopped living, writing and speaking out on issues that concerned him. This book is a wonderful tribute to Edward Abbey.

—Thomas R. Tefft

ANITA CASPALY *Witness to Integrity* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2003), Pp. 287.

Historians will welcome this treatise because it makes available, for the first time, the files and archives of the Immaculate Heart Community as well as the innermost thoughts of the woman who choreographed what surely constitutes an epochal chapter in American ecclesial history. It is a special act of providence that has allowed Anita Caspary to complete this book which only she could have compiled.

The election of Anita Caspary to the superiorship of the California Institute of the Sisters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1963 opened what might be called the penultimate chapter in the life of a religious community founded at Olot, Spain in 1848. For almost a century, the Immaculate Heart Sisters were among the most precious adornments of the Catholic Church in California. Founded in Cataloma's small town of Olot by Canon Joaquin Masmitja, the congregation was brought to the Diocese of Monterey-Los Angeles in 1871 by Bishop Thaddeus Amat. From their humble beginnings, the Sisters prospered and expanded until they found themselves scattered over the entire Pacific Coast. Given canonical autonomy in 1924, the community ultimately became the largest single component in the educational system operated by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. No fewer than 197 nuns taught and/or staffed twenty-eight elementary and eight secondary schools throughout the four county jurisdiction.

Caspary's book might better be classified an historical novel than a serious historical narrative. And, as is the case with every novel, there has to be a villain. Though Anita Caspary denies passing "judgment on the life and work of Cardinal McIntyre," she pretty much trashes his reputation with a series of selective and nuanced observations many of which are couched in such vague remarks as "the cardinal was reported to have said ..." One doesn't get far into the text without realizing that the author is frozen in a time warp of the heady 1960s. And, unhappily, none of her convictions has mellowed or matured with the passage of four decades.

Caspary was generous enough to spread some of the blame beyond Cardinal McIntyre. It was not he alone, "who forced us to abandon canonical status in the Catholic Church," but "a vast ecclesiastical system that for centuries has used every ploy to keep women beholden to its curiously antiquated rules and regulations. Bishops, cardinals, priests have inherited the legacy of domination over women, especially over women religious, who by built-in dependencies of their lifestyles were made subservient to male clerics. "

In many respects, this treatise is more memorable for its omissions than its contents. The author, for example, appears to be totally unfamiliar with *Magnzficat. The Life and Times of Timothy Cardinal Manning* which takes up the story of the IHM controversy in the years after McIntyre's retirement. Admittedly with McIntyre off the scene, the Sisters lost their villain and were reduced to arguing their case on its own merits and that

proved a hard sell to the rank and file Catholics of southern California, to say nothing of the Sacred Congregation of Religious in Rome. Also, despite all the affection Anita expresses for Mother Eucharia Harney, she fails to state (did she know?) that her predecessor's vows were renewed on her deathbed by Cardinal Manning. William Coulson gets only a paragraph despite his subsequent and quite accurate role in what he called the "destruction of the Immaculate Heart Community."

Sadly, but understandably, Anita Caspery remembers and emphasizes only what strengthens her case. Quotations are taken out of context and, not infrequently, her memory misfires or recalls inaccurately. This book will change few minds or recruit many followers. She is indeed an important player in one of the most controversial moments in all U.S. Catholic history. But there were no winners in the long and complicated struggle nor could there have been. However one interprets her activities and those of her cohorts, it cannot be denied that their action marked the beginning chapter in the demise of the greatest instrument of evangelization the Universal Church has ever witnessed, the American parochial school system.

—Msgr. Francis J. Weber

TAMING THE ELEPHANT: *Politics, Government, and Law in Pioneer California,* edited by John F. Burns and Richard J. Orsi. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. 28 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Index. Cloth, $65; paper, $29.95. Order from University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94709 (800) 822-6657, www.ucpress.edu.

This book is the fourth and final volume in the California Historical Society's California History Sesquicentennial Series, published simultaneously as special editions of *California History* and in book form by the University of California Press. Previous volumes include *Contested Eden: California Before the Gold Rush, A Golden State: Mining and Economic Development in Gold Rush California,* and *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California.* As noted in the subtitle of this volume, the final topic deals with politics, government, and law, mainly in the period between statehood and adoption of a new state constitution in 1879. Taken together, the volumes offer a worthy contribution to the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of California statehood. Ironically, this last book appears at a time of intense political crisis and a questioning of whether the Golden State has traded its luster for tarnished fool's gold.

Like its predecessors, the book consists of essays based largely on published studies, with end notes supplying a rich bibliographical resource. Numerous photographs and illustrations enhance the work, including fifteen color plates. The contributors have written authoritative essays providing state-of-the-art examinations of California history. The essays criticize but do not condemn, and evaluate but do not congratulate. They are meant to be read and utilized by students of California history and, hopefully, anyone who wishes to learn of the tumultuous beginnings of California under American rule.

John F. Burns, co-editor of this volume (Richard J. Orsi shared this task, as he did with the co-editors of the three preceding volumes), leads off with a survey of the creation of government and law in California. He assesses the views of earlier and more recent historians on the accomplishments and failures of the state's pioneer lawmakers. Although politicians in the new state have been criticized for their prejudices, narrow views, and personal ambitions, Burns finds they were relatively successful in establishing constitutional and legislative precedents for state government. Considering the complexities and political circumstances, they did the best they could, and what they did became an enduring legacy.

Roger McGrath examines the culture of violence that pervaded California in its first forty years of statehood. Drawing on his

research into violence in the mining town of Bodie, he observes that the Gold Rush brought thousands of young men into a frontier environment offering vice, crime, and inadequate law enforcement. Men fought duels as a point of personal honor, yet they respected women, and violence far exceeded burglary and theft. Gordon Bakken traces the development of California's legal system after statehood. In 1850 the new state lacked judicial precedents, prisons, competent lawyers, and a coherent system of laws. Although laws were passed discriminating against minorities, the courts set precedents on such issues as women's contractual rights, real estate and mortgages, and tort law, helping to establish a foundation of legal procedures.

Those racist laws are given critical examination by Shirley Ann Wilson Moore who finds that courts and laws effectively prevented people of color from testifying in court, having their children attend public schools, and other discriminatory actions. Though federal law rendered legalized inequities largely unconstitutional after the Civil War, discriminatory practices in California persisted well into the 20th century. Judson A. Grenier surveys California state government offices and agencies established in the first thirty years of statehood. The new state's government set up a stable structure that served California until a new constitutional convention was held in 1879. The state established its archives, library, board of education, and other agencies. Interestingly, only one governor served two terms during this period, and most severed less than a full term.

The efforts of women in California to obtain equal rights between 1850 and 1890 receive attention from Donna C. Schedule. She states that although the 1849 State Constitution included protection of women's property rights based on Spanish-Mexican law, the legislature restricted women's control of their own property. The restrictions led to a campaign to equalize property rights, end occupational discrimination, and gain woman suffrage. California women won the right to vote in 1911, nine years before passage of the 19th Amendment. Edward Leo Lyman traces the establishment of local government in California after statehood, examining the transition from Mexican to Anglo-American rule. Innovation and adaptation characterized local governments as they attempted to meet the challenges of creating new institutions and continuing established ones.

In the final essay, Robert J. Chandler traces the creation of federal government agencies in California from the Mexican War to 1880. The huge population influx during the Gold Rush brought demands for federal improvements in transportation and communication. Chandler finds the work of the federal government remarkably successful as everything from the mint, lighthouses, arsenals, and customs houses, to policies on Indian reservations, mining laws, and public lands had to be created almost overnight. In addition to the essays, the color plates with accompanying text by Joshua Paddison provide a pictorial description of the economic, social, and political changes in California during the early years of statehood. Paintings, drawings, and photographs show construction of the state capitol building, the continuing military presence, and various "efforts to 'tame' the frontier state."

Together with its companion volumes, this book provides an important distillation of the finest efforts in California historiography. Fifty scholars in four volumes have shared their research in excellent essays that help us appreciate the controversies and challenges facing the makers of a new state. The contributors tell a remarkable story, warts and all. I suggest readers read one essay an evening; excluding weekends, it will take two months to read them all, and it will be time well spent.

—Abraham Hoffman

SEARCHING FOR JOAQUIN: *Myth, Murieta and History in California* by Bruce Thornton. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003.

Index, Bibliography. 185 pp. Cloth $26.95. Order from Encounter Books, 665 Third Street, Suite 330, San Francisco, CA 94107-1951.

This is the best history of Joaquin Murieta in print because it is analytical, critical of postmodern multicultural ethnic cheerleading, and frank about history. Thornton argues that the search for truth that made the discipline of history great should not end in printing the legend when the truth is known. The truth about Murieta can be found in "the slit throats and bullet-riddled chests of his victims." [159] Speaking of Murieta's "accomplishments" is disingenuous because it includes "slitting the throats of innocent Chinese." [145] Moreover, "postmodern relativism thus undergirds multicultural history, which focuses on the oppression and exclusion of minorities on the part of a dominant white society that shapes history to serve its own pretensions to superiority." [145] The problem with this alleged history is that it sidesteps historical evidence to create folklore useful for Chicano Studies professors uninterested in truth although they call it history. Murieta, in their hands, is a poster boy for activism and identity.

To arrive at this conclusion, Thornton carefully filters fact, total bald-faced fiction, ethnic myth, and public festival. Murieta was part of an early California bandit culture made up of "equal opportunity thugs." [11] We cannot know all of his crimes due to the nature of the historical record, but we do know that he was fair-skinned and blue eyed. Mythmakers would turn him into a dark-skinned, brown eyed Mexican. Murieta was one of many outlaws hunted down in early California, but myth-makers would fashion a Robin Hood figure who was robbed of his land, whose wife was raped and brother wrongly executed. Murieta became a ranchero robbed of land despite the fact that most rancho claimants won their cases. He was a victim of racism in myth and a resistance fighter. These images were inventions forged after his death and marketed in dime novel form. Murieta's myth was part of a literary form, the rogue novel. Unfortunately for history, Murieta in the dime novel infiltrated early history. Hubert Howe Bancroft "uncritically repeats the formulaic mythologizing of John Rollin Ridge and other dime novelists, including the slap on the face, the rape of the wife, the lynching of his brother, and degrading whipping and the vow of vengeance." [104] None of these alleged facts have grounding in historical evidence, but they ended up in print.

Bancroft's 1888 sins against Clio should have ended the total misrepresentation of Murieta in history because of the methodological revolution of the 1960s, but recent "historians" have created greater damage. Susan Lee Johnson's Roaring Camp (2000) is one example of the total disregard for historical evidence in current "history." Her diatribe against "dominance and difference" in American history emblematic in Gold Rush California leads to "statements patently false." [146] Rodolfo Acuna's Occupied America (4th ed. 2000) "doesn't even get the myth right." [143] Fortunately, Thornton sets the record straight based on historical evidence.

—Gordon Morris Bakken