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California's Covered Bridges

John Robinson

If you were travelling by horse and buggy in 19th century America, chances are you would, sometime in your journey, cross a waterway via a covered bridge. This chance would become almost a certainty if you were riding through New England. Of the estimated thousand of these protected wooden spans that once traversed rivers and creeks, two-thirds of them were in the northeastern states. The remainder were scattered throughout the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest (particularly Oregon, which boasts 53), and northern California.

The rationale for these unique water-spanning edifices was a matter of both economics and craftsmanship. Lumber was plentiful and easy to obtain, and Americans of that era were well versed in carpentry. Furthermore, there was a very practical reason for erecting covered bridges. The roofing protected the wooden spans, trusses, and flooring from the elements. Keep the underlying structure dry, and the bridge would last decades longer than an open wooden edifice.

One might suppose that many of these bridges would be hard to tell apart. On the contrary, variety was the only constant. Each bridge exhibited the unique skills of

(*Continued on Page 3*)

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The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of 3,500 words or less dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

Editor's Corner . . .

Welcome to the Spring, 2015 edition of the L.A. Westerners' Branding Iron. We start this edition off by hearing from our longtime friend John Robinson, who takes us on a whirlwind tour through California's covered bridges. Long thought to be a strictly eastern phenomenon, covered bridges did play their part in California's history, especially in the snow country of the north. As usual, John does a great amount of research and has some awe-inspiring pictures to go with it. Thanks John!

Our second article comes from Dr. Geraldine Knatz, whose research this time explores the story behind Albert Boschke. If his name isn't exactly familiar to you now, it will be as you read Dr. Knatz's article about how Boschke was the first dredging contractor for the Port of Los Angeles.

Next, Abe Hoffman and his band of merry book reviewers bring us write-ups on three new Western books for our burgeoning libraries. Time to build more book shelves!

Lastly, your humble editor has included an article about Hugh Carpenter, a man dubbed the "millionaire constable of Banning." His exploits were legendary, unless you happened to be a member of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors in the 1880s!

Please remember, the Branding Iron is now available in color on the website at www.lawesterners.org.

As always, please feel free to contact me regarding ideas for articles. I'm always looking for material to put in the Branding Iron. Luckily, several of you have come forward already and I appreciate it - but there's always room for more! Please consider putting something together that you think may interest the greater Corral as a whole.

Happy Trails!

Steve Lech
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its builder. The individual workmanship in most of these structures represents a tribute to American ingenuity.

Those who visit these covered bridges today perhaps do not realize the back-breaking labor involved in building these edifices. The 19th-century craftsmen used hand tools, a good deal of muscle power, and mules or horses to accomplish his task. The timber had to be hand-sawed, hauled to the bridge site, and crafted into the right dimensions. The wood and rock piers had to be set in a flowing river, and then the wooden spans and trusses anchored to them, no easy task in watercourses rushing down from the mountains. Often these craftsmen had to battle the elements. It took more than skills, muscle, and mules to do the job; it required heart!

Other than providing passage over a river or creek, 19th-century covered bridges served a variety of purposes. They were sometimes used for camp meetings, community entertainments, or as a drill area for local militia. They were popular hideaways for young lovers, and for this romantic aspect became known as "kissing bridges." Occasionally, thieves used the bridges to rob unwary travelers.

California, a century ago, boasted around fifty covered bridges, almost all of them concentrated in three parts of the state: The Gold Rush country of the Sierra Nevada's western foothills; Humboldt and Siskiyou counties in California's northwest corner; and the Santa Cruz area. All three of these regions possessed plentiful forests of pine, fir, and particularly redwood, which could be fashioned into timbers of almost any needed length and size.

There were thirty covered bridges remaining in the state when S. Griswold Morley wrote *The Covered Bridges of California* in 1938 (Berkeley: U. of California Press). There are fewer than ten today. Morley explained their demise: "When a covered bridge finds itself caught in the coil of a broad paved highway, it is generally doomed. That is but natural, for however solid the planking, however roomy the design judged by horse-and-buggy standards, those tunnels were not intended for the passage, side by side, of two speeding automobiles." In short, covered bridges have become obsolete, relics of a bygone era when horsepower (the real kind) ruled the roadways.

The handful of covered bridges that remain today stand as a tribute to the strenuous efforts of history-minded citizens who care about California's heritage.

Straddling the turbulent Stanislaus River, forty miles southeast of Stockton in Stanislaus County, is the Knight's Ferry Covered Bridge. It measures 330 feet from end to end, making it the longest such structure ever in California. Besides the abutments at each end, the bridge is supported by two stone caissons rising from the riverbed. William Knight started ferry service here as early as 1849, carrying thousands of miners across the dangerous river on the old Sonora Road from Stockton to the Southern Mines of Mariposa County. After Knight's death, the brothers John and Lewis Dent came into possession of the ferry and decided to replace it with a covered bridge. Stanislaus County historians claim that Lieutenant U.S. Grant designed the bridge while visiting his in-laws in 1854 (Grant's wife was Julia Dent, sister of John and Lewis). If Grant indeed designed the bridge, he blundered in placing it too low to the river. It was swept away in the great flood of 1862. The covered bridge was rebuilt on a higher level in 1864 and stands to this day. It was operated as a toll bridge until 1884, when Stanislaus County bought it and allowed free passage. The old bridge was used by wagon and then auto traffic until bypassed by a modern steel and concrete structure in the 1940s. After barely surviving several attempts to tear it down, Knights Ferry Covered Bridge was restored to its former glory in the 1960s and is presently maintained as California Historical Landmark #347. It remains a splendid example of early California craftsmanship.

Spanning the South Fork of the Yuba River in Nevada County is the magnificent Bridgeport Covered Bridge, said to be the longest single span wooden bridge in the nation (230 feet). Its large hand-hewn trusses are supported on both sides by double

Knight's Ferry bridge over the Stanislaus River. Photo by the author.

(Page 1) Bridgeport Covered Bridge, the longest single-span covered bridge in California. Photo by the author.

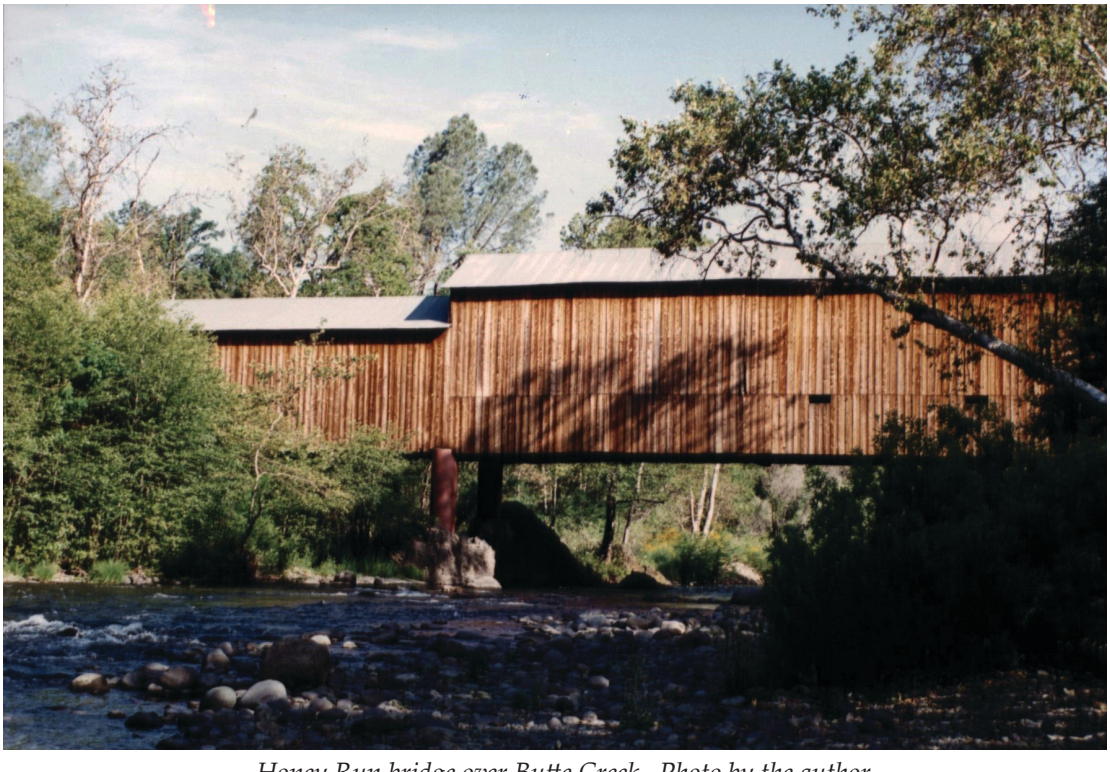
auxiliary arches extending the length of the structure, making it the sturdiest of all California covered bridges. Its roof and sides are covered with 27,000 split sugar pine shakes. David I. Wood, owner of a local sawmill, constructed the bridge in 1862. For many years it was owned by the Virginia Turnpike Company, which operated the bridge as part of a toll road that provided access to Sierra's Northern Mines as well as Nevada's Comstock Lode. Nevada County historian Clinton Lee writes, "We must remember that the Central Pacific Railroad was being built but it would be seven years before the iron horse could replace the freight wagon and the stage coach across the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The passes of Donner via Auburn, and Meyers (Echo Summit) via Placerville, were a constant stampede of pack trains, riders, men on foot, stages, wagons and teams by the hundreds, all driven by men crazed by greed and gold, all fighting time, weather and death." These primitive wagon roads over the Sierra Nevada were laboriously cut through granitic and metamorphic rock using hand tools and mule-drawn scrapers. Such was the hectic life in the mining regions when the Bridgeport Covered Bridge was built. Today the bridge is maintained as California Historical Landmark #390.

Some ten miles northeast of Bridgeport is the small Oregon Creek Covered Bridge, spanning the creek by that name just above its confluence with the South Fork of the Yuba. This bridge was part of the now abandoned Henness Pass Road, a pioneer wagon route from the Sacramento Valley to the Washoe Mines of Nevada built in 1861. The Oregon Creek Covered Bridge was hand built by one Hugh Thomas in 1871 to replace an earlier uncovered structure. It was just under 100 feet long and curved at both ends. In 1883, a diversion dam on the Yuba River gave way. Debris from the break caused a temporary rise of Oregon Creek, floating the

bridge off its abutments and carrying it 150 feet downstream. It was restored in place by using oxen and log rollers, but was turned end for end in the process. The Oregon Creek Bridge is the only covered bridge in the Sierra Nevada that still carries auto traffic. A historic plaque was commemorating the bridge was placed near its entrance by the Columbia Parlor of the Native Daughters of the Golden West in 1965.

The northernmost of the Sierra Nevada covered bridges still standing is the Honey Run Bridge, crossing Butte Creek between Chico and Paradise on the old road. The name "Honey Run" supposedly originated because bees nested in the lava rim rock above the road, and in hot weather the honey sometimes flowed downward into the creek. The Honey Run Covered Bridge consists of three wooden spans supported by four huge caissons filled with boulders and cement. The center span's roof is five feet higher than the two end spans, giving the bridge a unique split-level appearance. The original covered bridge, erected in 1886, washed out in 1894, forcing wagons to ford the creek. This led to tragedy the following year, when three school children trying to cross the flood-swollen waters in a light wagon were swept downstream and drowned. Butte County then constructed a new covered bridge in 1896. The bridge was almost torn down in the 1940s when a speeding car missed a sharp curve and plowed into the side of the structure, doing extensive damage to the latter. Interested citizens formed the Honey Run Covered Bridge Association and restored the edifice to its original glory. Today, volunteers from the Association, based in Chico, maintain the bridge.

Near the southern end of Yosemite National Park, spanning the South Fork of the Merced River, is the Wawona Covered Bridge. The deck and truss portion was built by original Yosemite guardian Galen Clark around 1857. Clark established a tourist facility in the locale known as Clark's Station, The wagon road south from Yosemite Valley to Clark's Station (present-day Wawona) and on to the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees was opened in 1875, just after the Washburn brothers purchased Clark's holdings. The



Honey Run bridge over Butte Creek. Photo by the author.

Washburns built the present Wawona Hotel and turned the area into a tourist center and, a few years later when the road from Oakhurst was built, a stage stop on the Oakhurst-Yosemite Valley run. Sometime around 1878 the Washburns covered the bridge, using lumber cut nearby at the Washburn sawmill.

There is disagreement over just why the brothers decided to cover the bridge. Was it for the same reason as other covered bridges - to ensure the structure's longevity? A Washburn granddaughter later insisted it was for sentimental reasons - the Washburns were born and raised in Vermont and they figured a covered bridge would remind them of home. A flood in 1955 extensively damaged the bridge. Its restoration was the first step in the creation of the Pioneer Yosemite History Center, maintained by the National Park Service.

In the southern foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains stands the Felton Covered Bridge. This structure served as the main entry into the town of Felton from its erection in 1892-93 until its retirement in 1937. It is said to be the tallest covered bridge in the nation. The bridge fell into disrepair and was saved only through the determined efforts of local citizens, who restored it to its former grandeur in 1987. Currently it is maintained in Felton Community Park, just east of State Highway 9, as California Historical Landmark #583.

Humboldt County is said to have three of its original sixteen covered bridges still standing (The writer has yet to visit these). Crossing Elk Creek, a few miles southeast of Eureka, are the Berta's Ranch and Zane's Ranch bridges, both less than 75 feet in length, both constructed in the 1930s. Another small covered bridge spans Jacoby Creek, several miles east of Eureka.

There are at least four metallic covered bridges along the Klamath River in Humboldt and Siskiyou counties, built in the 1920s and '30s. Made with steel trusses and covered with corrugated iron, these structures do not qualify as classic covered bridges in the "wooden" sense of the word.

Sadly, a number of beautiful covered bridges have failed to survive time's ravages and mankind's neglect. One of the prime examples of covered bridge artistry was located at O'Byrne's Ferry in Calaveras County. Built by Irishman Patrick O'Byrne in 1862 to span the Stanislaus River, ten miles upstream from Knight's Ferry, the bridge survived flood, highway relocation, and neglect for 95 years, only to fall victim to "progress" in the form of Tulloch Dam, constructed in 1957. The little triangular valley with its quaint covered bridge, said be some to be the location of Bret Harte's Poker Flat, now lies under the waters of Tulloch Reservoir. A modern steel and concrete highway bridge now crosses the upper end of the reservoir. Two hundred yards northwest of the bridge, alongside the highway, the Calaveras County Historical Society has placed a monument to the late Irishman's artistry.

The O'Byrne's Ferry Covered Bridge, although long gone, can still be seen in "The Sheepman." a motion picture starring Glenn Ford filmed in the 1950s and occasionally shown on late-night television.

Los Angeles once boasted a covered bridge which was, as far as is known, the only one in the southern half of the state. This was the Macy Street Covered Bridge spanning the Los Angeles River, erected in 1875. The story goes that vineyard owners east of the river called for its construction after some of their grape-filled wagons became mired in the muddy riverbed. Before the wagons could be pulled out, the grapes had spoiled. The Macy Street Covered Bridge lasted until 1904. Later it was replaced by a concrete multi-arch structure.

Buck's Bar, Booth Run, Crapo Creek, Moseley Slough, Sawyer's Bar – names that once graced covered wooden bridges in the Golden State - are only vanished memories now. The nine that remain stand as magnificent relics of a time when horse and buggy, mule and wagon, horseman and hiker trod the roads. That these few still stand is a tribute to people who treasure California's rich history.

O'Byrne's Ferry over the Stanislaus River, Calaveras County. Photo by Niles Werner.

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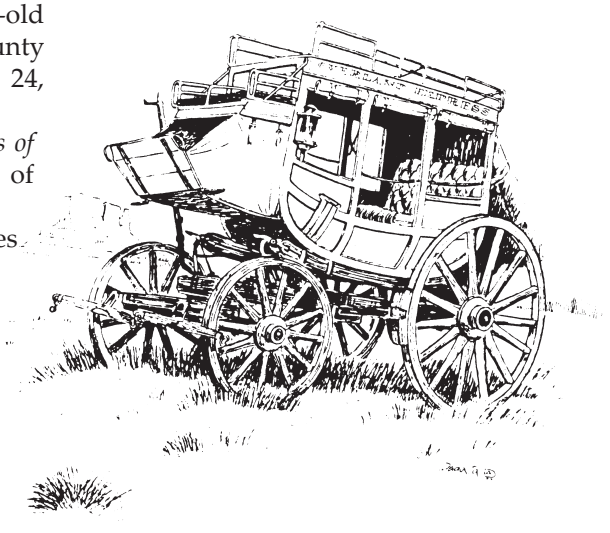


Digging Into Harbor History: Albert A. Boschke, The Port's First Dredging Contractor

Geraldine Knatz

In the early days of the Port of Los Angeles, there were several islands in the harbor. Today, where the West Basin Container Terminal (China Shipping and Yang Ming) is located in Wilmington, was an Island that was known as Smith's Island. In some late 19th century records, it was also called Boschke's Island. Much of the island was underwater at high tide and the swampy wetland area around the island was known as Boschke Slough. The island and the slough were named after Prussian-born Albert Boschke, an engineer and inventor who came to California to work on the first Army Corps of Engineers dredging project in the Port of Los Angeles.

Born in 1832, Albert Boschke began his career working for the U.S. Coast Survey office in Washington DC where he undertook surveys of many ports including New York, Brooklyn and Boston. In addition to being a surveyor, Boschke was an inventor and filed patents for improvements to dredging equipment. In 1871 the Army Corps of Engineers began to make improvements to deepen the entrance into Wilmington Harbor which at mean low tide was less than 2 feet deep. The Corps believed that construction of jetties constricting the tidal flow would scour the channel resulting in channel depth of about ten feet. The concept almost worked. Construction of the East Jetty naturally deepened the channel to nearly 6 feet deep. But the natural action of the tides was insufficient to remove the sand bar that constricted vessel access.

On July 23, 1874, a contract was given to Mr. A. Boschke for dredging a channel across the sand bar. Boschke was to mobilize his equipment and start removing the bar on September 15th, 1875. After two time extensions, he started his sand pumps on October 16, 1875. But the project was troubled by equipment failures. An 1875 Army Corps report states "He worked along doing little or nothing for about a month when he broke down entirely and took off his machinery." Beset by difficulties in removing the bar, Boschke decided to build a new dredge. He resumed dredging on Feb 5, 1876 and worked slowly and steadily to deepen the channel.

Boschke and his wife Martha had moved to California from Massachusetts with his two sons Albert and George from a previous marriage. The 1880 census shows Boschke living with his wife Martha in Wilmington along with George and two additional children born to Albert and Martha named Benjamin (or Guy) and Ida. Harbor Department records of old agreements show a transaction between Joseph B. Banning and Albert Boschke for 5 and 1/3 acres "of the tract of land known as Boschke's Island," for the sum of $5.00 that sale being recorded July 22, 1895. Boschke built a home and garden on the island.

In 1890 Boschke became a director of the Harbor and Canal Dredging and Land Company which was capitalized with 1 million in stock. The Boschke-designed improvements for dredging equipment helped him build a reputation in the dredging field. The Boschke Rotary Steam Shovel Dredger was designed so when a hard substrate was encountered, rather than smashing the shovels, the machinery was released. In addition, the hub of the wheel of the dredge was stationary so it would avoid tangling with submerged grasses.

In 1891, when Albert was in Northern California on business, the oil lamp in Ida's bedroom exploded. Ida was seriously burned

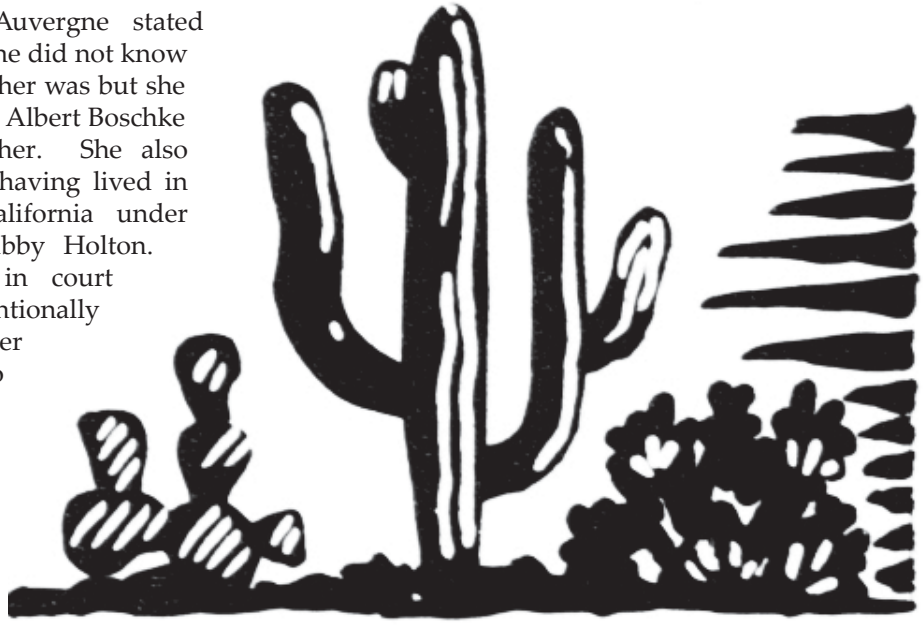
on the face and arms and Martha Boschke's mother, Mrs. Henderson, was killed. The fire department was unable to get their hose cart on to the island as the only access was via railroad trestle and their house on the island burned to the ground.

In the year 1900 Albert Boschke was 78 years old and living in Alameda County with a 47 year old widowed daughter, Auvergne Astor, and two boarders. Census records for that year indicate that he was a widower but wife Martha was still alive! She also listed herself in the 1900 census as a widow living in Wilmington. One might surmise they had marital difficulty!

Albert Boschke died in the year 1910. At the time of his death, Auvergne Astor was named executor of his estate which consisted primarily of patent rights and stock in companies organized to build and operate dredges. His son Albert Boschke, the chief engineer for the Oregon railway, said at his father's death that the estate was worth more than a million dollars. Martha, now qualified to call herself a widow, her step-children Albert and George, and children Guy and Ida filed a legal objection to Auvergne Astor as executor. Albert and George charged that Auvergne Astor was not Boschke's daughter and a fellow engineer testified that he had seen Astor threaten Boschke with a dagger. Auvergne stated under oath she did not know who her mother was but she always knew Albert Boschke was her father. She also admitted to having lived in Oakland, California under the name Abby Holton. She stated in court she intentionally concealed her identify so not to upset Albert's wife Martha. Despite the testimony that Astor may have been a fake, paternity does not play a role in determining a will's executor and the court ruled in favor of Astor. In 1920, Auvergne Astor was living alone in Oakland, California and working as a secretary for a dredging company. Martha Boschke moved to Terminal Island and stayed there until her death in 1928 at the age of 86.

Albert's two sons, Albert Lincoln and George, followed their father's footsteps into engineering. Army Corps records for the Wilmington Harbor work show that in 1884 Assistant Engineer Albert Boschke relieved Assistant Engineer A. J. Smith. George continued in his engineering career working for the Southern Pacific Railroad. After the devastating hurricane of 1900 killed approximately 8000 thousand residents in Galveston, George was selected to build the seawall at the Port of Galveston.

There is nothing today that remains of the 1870's Corps project in Los Angeles and there is no monument to Albert Boschke at the Port of Los Angeles. George Boschke is, however, memorialized by the Port of Galveston for the seawall that is still standing.



Down the Western Book Trail . . .

***88 DAYS IN THE MOTHERLODE**: Mark Twain Finds His Voice.* 70-minute documentary DVD, by This 'n That Films, 2015. $20.00 including tax, available from Amazon.com, ThisNThatfilms.net and the Tuolumne County Historical Society, 158 Bradford Street, Sonora, CA, 95370, or directly from their web site: tchistory.org. Reviewed by Brian Dervin Dillon

Mark Twain is, by far, my favorite American author. He is as fresh and entertaining today as a century and a half ago. I memorized *Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences* long before ever reading Cooper himself. When I finally did, Twain's indelible sarcasm turned ponderous Eastern drama into side-splitting Western comedy. "Suddenly, a twig snapped" was a favorite joke on our California school playground back when Kennedy was in the White House, and even more so on Boy Scout hikes, when we would go miles out of our way just to step on dry twigs.

Mark Twain was our best-ever humorist, and our best-ever humanist. At the time of his death he was the world's most famous American, rivaled only by Teddy Roosevelt. A windmill-tilter from a comparatively young age, his writings changed our national attitudes towards race, culture, equality, self-identity, and even the ebb and flow of history. I firmly believe that he was more influential than any other native-born writer. Surprising no one more than himself, late in life, Mark Twain became the unofficial conscience of America.

What set him on this path was his time out west in Nevada, California, and Hawaii, but especially the 88 Days he spent up on Jackass Hill in Tuolumne County. This was the most educational semester of Samuel Clemens' life. It was his full-immersion, crash course, in California gold miner culture, which transformed him into Mark Twain. The persona Clemens/Twain later chose to present to his international audience was the one he so carefully studied in the California gold country in late 1864 and early 1865. Not just an alternative personality, it was a complete metamorphosis. The new documentary film *88 Days in the Motherlode: Mark Twain Finds his Voice* reveals how the Missouri caterpillar became a brilliant California Blue Morpho. The ease of personal reinvention way out West gave wings to Clemens' imagination and self-confidence. Samuel Clemens' transformation into Mark Twain would have lasting repercussions for American literature and even American history, yet personal metamorphosis was the name of the game in California, and nothing too out of the ordinary.

88 Days portrays Clemens as a young man, on the brink of his 30th birthday, not the more familiar, Holbrookian, white-haired elder statesman. The film, by John C. Brown and Bert Simonis, strikes a perfect balance between historical reenactment and scholarly interpretation. Interviews with ivory tower experts from the Bancroft Library, the University of Hawaii and USC are juxtaposed with those of local historians from Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties. The presentation is chronological, with constant reference to historical photographs, contemporary newspapers, maps, and helicopter footage of the beautiful country Clemens called home for just under three months. Actors portraying Twain and his cohorts never strain credibility. The narration from his most beloved western work, *Roughing It,* and from his unpublished notebooks makes you feel like he is sitting beside you, recounting a favorite anecdote.

Were it not for the California Gold Rush, there would never have been a Mark Twain. The humorous gospel he promoted for more than half a century was learned from aging 49'ers as they honed their delivery and refined their timing. Five generations back, one of my own ancestors was typical of the orators practicing the art of self-entertainment around various Motherlode campfires. Sam Clemens, metaphorically the small boy in the corner watching his elders spin their tales, had his notebook in hand. In the years following, he took the California

old-timers' message and style, which he had made his own, to the rest of the world.

88 Days is not the first Mark Twain documentary. That honor goes to the multi-part, 220-minute-long Ken Burns PBS film that originally aired in 2002. Burns' documentary revealed aspects of the great author's life that many fans, myself included, were previously unfamiliar with. Unfortunately, like everything the Brooklyn-born documentarian does, his 2002 film had a decided Easterly tilt, as if Twain's destiny was inexorably aimed towards Connecticut, his early years out west simply prologue, to be sketched in briefly before the true story unfolded on the Eastern Seaboard. The chapter missing from the Ken Burns 2002 documentary is the in-depth look at the time the ex-newspaperman spent nesting with a flock of raconteurs in the Mother Lode.

This transformative chapter, by all accounts the most important of Twain's life, fortunately, is presented in splendid detail by This 'n That Films in their compelling and entertaining documentary *88 Days.* To many Californians, myself included, Connecticut is just one more little state out there somewhere east of Nevada. What we care about, and are inordinately proud to learn from *88 Days*, is how Twains' time, holed up in a miner's cabin on Jackass Hill on the Tuolumne/ Calaveras county line, was critical to his transformation from the mildly interesting, obscure southerner Samuel Clemens (1835-1865) into a completely different person, the fascinating world citizen Mark Twain (1865-1910).

Nobody could turn a phrase like Twain, nor better interject wry humor into what less perceptive observers could only describe in mundane, pedestrian terms. Most of his contemporaries have been reduced, over the passage of time, to literary molluscs, mere historical footnotes. Their works are inert, gathering dust, while Twain's still go through printing after printing. *88 Days* does our most inspired and beloved author justice. It is a delight to watch, and beautifully illustrates an important part of our Western heritage. This new film will be of as much interest to Twain scholars and California historians as to the general public. I expect it to appear in California schools as part of the standard curriculum.

Every person proud to call himself or herself an American should watch this outstanding DVD. And anyone who still believes that one person can change the world through thought, speech, and writing, should own it.

CONTEST FOR CALIFORNIA: *From Spanish Colonization to the American Conquest*, by Stephen G. Hyslop. Norman: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2012. 448 pp. Maps, Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Cloth, $39.95. Reviewed by Abraham Hoffman.

I have no doubt there are people who believe that the spread of the United States across the North American continent was motivated by a desire to bring civilization, enlightenment, and education to the savage, ignorant, and dark. This innocent if rather racist view of history has created stereotypes that linger long after anyone with an understanding of history would think was long since banished. California is especially susceptible to stereotypical images. Consider portrayal of kindly mission padres with congregations of grateful neophytes; Californio rancho owners strumming guitars in splendid idleness; and Manifest Destiny integrating former Mexican provinces into the nation with liberty and justice for all.

Stephen Hyslop's powerful narrative, well documented by his research into sources at the Bancroft Library and Yale's Beinecke Library, along with published recollections by Californios and Anglo Americans, refutes the tired stereotypes. His book traces not only cycles of conquest but also internecine rivalry and strife. This book tells a story of Franciscan padres at odds with Spanish soldiers, Natives objecting to the surrender of their cultural and religious beliefs to the doctrine of the Catholic faith, and severe punishment for neophytes who dared run away from the missions. Ever wonder why there were twenty-one missions in Alta California but only two pueblos (three, if you count the failed Branciforte) established

during the Spanish period? Few people at the time were willing to go to such a remote region. Consider also the fact that Father Junipero Serra and his fellow Franciscan padres were concerned with saving heathen souls, and the trinkets they gave away to lure prospective converts to the Catholic faith meant little to Natives who thought beads and mirrors too high a price to pay for the loss of their culture. To make the missions work required continued replenishment of the neophyte population as Indians died from European diseases.

Californios became disillusioned with a Spanish empire that lacked the resources to subsidize and support remote colonies. When Mexico fought for its independence, the Californios were not involved. They became unhappy with unstable Mexican governments that sent soldiers recruited from prisons and that offered nothing in the way of material support. Left largely to their own devices, Californios argued over possession of former mission lands and how to deal with foreigners, some of whom married eligible daughters and converted to the Catholic faith while others lived in the province strictly for trade purposes. Still other foreigners—fur trappers, Protestant pioneers—showed up expecting land to be for their taking, full of misconceptions about Mexicans and the bothersome detail that California was a province of Mexico. Meanwhile, rancho owners combined with soldiers as posses chased after Indians who had never accepted, or at least had rejected, the Catholic faith, and who stole horses, mules, and cattle in periodic raids on the ranchos.

Into this turbulent mix of Californio rivalries and Indian hostilities came an increasing number of English-speaking, Protestant Americans, an odd mixture of innocents believing democracy had sent them as its missionaries to the West, and Indian-hating, arrogant racists who despised the Mexican Californios as degraded people who didn't deserve to keep their lands or their allegiances to a remote Mexico. When the U.S.-Mexico War began, drunken frontiersmen ran up the bear flag and declared California an independent republic; after three weeks the United States Navy showed up to declare California occupied territory. American officers, most notoriously John C. Fremont, made a mess of the occupation and ignited a latent patriotism that cost an unnecessary loss of life on both sides. When the shooting stopped, the hypocrisy began. Americans claimed that Mexican Californians (Indians not included) who accepted American citizenship would have the same rights as other Americans, a promise broken almost immediately after the words were uttered by Commodore John Sloat.

Needless to say, Hyslop's narrative should shake anyone who reads it into an awareness of the messiness of California history prior to the Gold Rush. However, Hyslop isn't the only historian to turn over the rock to expose the state's historical underside. Hubert Howe Bancroft had harsh words for the so-called pioneer heroes, and Josiah Royce indicted Fremont and others for their racism and incitement to unnecessary violence. Unfortunately, Bancroft's views are buried in his massive *Works* volumes, and Royce's *California: A Study of American Character*, first published in 1886 an still in print, isn't exactly on any best-seller lists. But early on the California legislature must have realized that Anglo frontiersmen had feet of clay, or mud, or manure: it didn't get around to making the Bear Flag the official state flag until 1911, after the Bear Flaggers were safely in their graves. If you want a book with a fast-paced narrative, excellent writing, and a no-holds-barred account of California's history, this is the one to read.

***DANCE FLOOR DEMOCRACY**: The Social Geography of Memory at the Hollywood Canteen*, by Sherrie Tucker. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 384 pp. Map, Photographs, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Hardbound, $94.95. Paperback, $26.95. https://www.dukeupress.edu/Dance-Floor-Democracy/. Reviewed by Paul McClure.

The Hollywood Canteen, most famous of the patriotic home front nightclubs where civilian hostesses fed, socialized, and danced

with enlisted men, operated from 1942 until 1945. The club offered entertainment, swing music, and an opportunity for soldiers to both mingle with and bask in the appreciation of Hollywood stars and starlets. Memory and legend of that era were perpetuated and enhanced by the movie *Hollywood Canteen*, released at the end of 1944.

Author Sherrie Tucker has opened another door to that history with "Dance Floor Democracy." Using oral histories with both civilian volunteers and military men who ate, danced, socialized, and enjoyed entertainment at the Hollywood Canteen, her book presents a first-person perspective of that history. Not surprisingly, the interviewees made a simple historical narrative impossible. Some recalled racism, sexism, and inequality on the nightclub's dance floor; others recalled no such thing.

As Tucker explained, "This book is my improvisation on swing culture as war memory as a feminist jazz studies scholar who has managed to dance with [interview] 60 members of a generation whose moves now affect the way I see and hear the music I study."

In 1942, Bette Davis and John Garfield discovered an abandoned building at the corner of Cole Street and Cahuenga Boulevard, then led an industry campaign to "remodel the old barn into a suitable and proper place in which to entertain Uncle Sam's service men." There are reports that on opening night crowds were so thick that Bette Davis had to enter through the bathroom window to give her welcome speech.

Fire regulations limited capacity to 500 guests. Military members lined up outside, when their turn came they were admitted for one hour of entertainment and dancing, then shuffled out so the next 500 could have a turn. Up to 3,000 per night were rolled through adding up to more than two million served during the lifetime of the club.

The dance floor was small, so visiting the Hollywood Canteen may have been more for the experience and bragging rights than actual dancing.

"The Hollywood Canteen hostesses were not only a proxies for the girls back home," writes Tucker, "but a touchstone to the stars, starlets, and famous bands that could transform [each soldier] momentarily into…a beloved member of a special community." This extraordinary pairing of an otherwise inaccessible Hollywood beauty to a lowly private (not to officers), offered by a grateful nation, led the *Los Angeles Times* to praise the place "where Joe Dogface can dance with Hedy Lamarr."

"Good girls" danced with "our boys" within a system of chaperones and rules against meeting outside the club. In her oral interview one former hostess recalled, "The cute young fellas were all scared, they were going away from home for the first time… it took their minds off what was going to happen later," says Tucker.

Author Tucker's oral interviews sought out perceptions of how gender, race, and sexual orientation may have affected expectations, access, behavior, and finally memories of the Hollywood Canteen. Observations ranged widely. Tucker used these accounts and others to describe the complex social geography of both the Hollywood Canteen and wartime Los Angeles.

Most memories—no doubt influenced by movies—include a tapestry of the Hollywood Canteen, the Stage Door Canteen, and various USOs. The Hollywood Canteen operated at 1451 Cahuenga Boulevard, Hollywood from October 1942 through November 1945. There is the 1944 Warner Bros. *movie* titled "Hollywood Canteen," a 2012 *book* by Lisa Mitchell and Bruce Torrence with that title, and at least two record albums with Hollywood Canteen in their titles.

The Stage Door Canteen, was in the basement of the 44th Street Theater in New York City, also from 1942 through 1945. Tucker explained that USO clubs blanketed the Los Angeles area and varied greatly according to their places in the city's social geography. For example, volunteers from the Eastside USO supplied black hostesses to far-flung clubs where black soldiers arrived but black people did not reside.

If the Hollywood Canteen had a theme song, it would be the Andrews Sisters singing

"Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," with jitterbug as the signature dance. Movies of this "Greatest Generation" genre usually featured energetic dancing, great swing music, self-congratulatory patriotism, and a dance hostess that breaks the rules for some lucky homespun soldier. Tucker had her hands full helping interviewees distinguish between their own memories of the Hollywood Canteen and what they remembered from those patriotic Canteen films.

The Hollywood Canteen evokes heart-warming memories of patriotism against a backdrop of great music and dancing. A rich, famous, and/or beautiful starlet standing in for the dream girl back home could make each soldier a hero, at least until his turn was up and the next 500 soldiers were allowed through the door. *Dance Floor Democracy* describes that era through the eyes of and with the recollections from those who either enjoyed or provided hospitality at the Hollywood Canteen.

***OUT WHERE THE WEST BEGINS**: Profiles, Vision & Strategies of Early Western Business Leaders,* by Philip F. Anschutz. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. Hardcover, 392 pages, $34.95, www.oupress.com. Reviewed by Abraham Hoffman.

Philip Anschutz provides biographical sketches of some fifty prominent businessmen who in some way influenced the development of the West, arranged in seven topical categories. Anschutz culled his selection from a very large list, but his final cut omitted women, not even Elizabeth McSween, the "Cattle Queen of New Mexico," who would have qualified for the Agriculture and Livestock section. While it might be argued that Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, and J.P. Morgan had at best an indirect influence on Western history, other selections were of people who made their homes in the West. Each biography ends with a brief bibliography, a rather odd list that includes books more than a century old along with recent works. Entries include men who could be classified as robber barons, but Anschutz finds something nice about all of them, such as their charitable and philanthropic donations. The subtitle of "Early Western Business Leaders" stretches the definition quite a bit as some of the men lived well into the 20th century. It's an easy read that somewhat simplistically profiles notable entrepreneurs.

Monthly Roundup . . .

March 2015

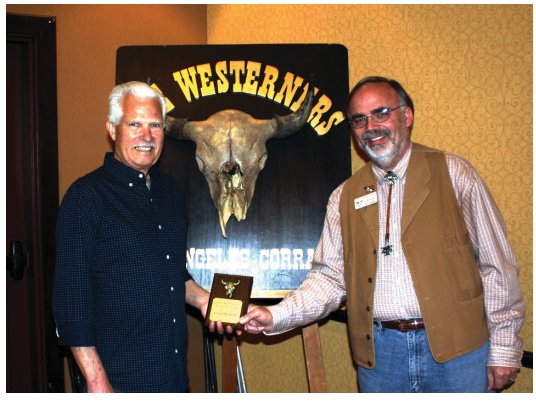
Brian Dillon

Dr. Brian Dillon is an archeologist who attended the University of California Berkeley where he earned a PhD in Maya Archeology, and has published over 100 books. This month at the Westerners, Brian gave a talk about Alice Chong, a famous Chinese-American during World War II and her relation with Claire Chennault and Minnie Vautrin. War broke out between China and Japan in 1937. Claire Chennault was an American general and leader of the famous Flying Tigers squadron in China. An innovative and effective general, his 14th Air Force was the most successful air unit in all of Asia. Minnie Vautrin was an American missionary woman teaching at the Ginling Girls School in China. Standing her ground during the Rape of Nanking in 1937, she guarded the school and saved the lives of over 10,000 woman and children.

Alice Chong was a Chinese-American born in Honolulu. Graduating from the University of Honolulu in 1933, she left to teach school in China. After a short period she returned to Honolulu to only leave back for Shanghai in 1937. The war in China was raging, and the Japanese had blockaded entry to Shanghai, so Alice's ferry was forced to detour to Hong Kong. Once on land, she traveledto Shanghai to evacuate the Ginling Girls School from the Japanese. With the help of Minnie Vautrin she evacuated the entire school and the entire library where it was reestablished 2500 miles away in south coast China. All the while, she wrote letters and her own articles titled "Behind Enemy Lines" for newspapers. She described the horror and suffering of the war she was witnessing, including her friends being killed.
During this time Alice unfortunately developed breast cancer. She continued to teach at the Girls School and during her summers off, being the anthropologist she was, she interviewed people. After her cousin enlisted to fight in the war, Alice decided to leave teaching behind, and in 1943 worked for Claire Chennault in the special services branch at Kunming. While there she assisted with problems and Chinese translations. Being one of the few women on the base, she was asked to dance nearly every night. Later in 1945 over 1000 OSS agents were sent to China from the United States and would not let Alice stay without proper clearance, even though she had been there for two years. At this point, with the war coming to a close, she decided to head back home.

She continued to teach school in Honolulu until she died in 1973 from her breast cancer. After her death the 14th Air Force conducted a special memorial service for her in Honolulu.

--Patrick Mulvey



April 2015

Jack Prichett

Jack Prichett is a member of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA) and the president of the Association's Tecopa chapter since 2009. He attended the University of California Berkeley where he earned his Master's Degree in Anthropology. His organization is dedicated to studying and sustaining the Old Spanish Trail.

The Spanish Trail is an old mule and caravan trail used from 1829 to 1848 and went from Los Angeles, California to Santa Fe, New Mexico during Mexican rule. The trail is not a straight line, but a jagged path going through many states. Part of the Spanish Trail split off to where one section was used by wagons and not mules (known as the Mormon Road). The trail was used for many purposes, transportation, migration, and communication. Traders from Santa Fe would bring woolen goods and sell them for large profits in Los Angeles. While there, they would buy cattle and take them back to Santa Fe and sell also for good profit. The trail was even traversed by John C. Fremont during his second expedition out west. The area was acquired by the United States after the Mexican-American War. The trail was also used by people coming to California from New Mexico during the Gold Rush. In 2002, the trail was designated by Congress as a national historic trail, and is protected by the National Trails System Act. It is managed by the Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service.

OSTA is a civilian volunteer association formed in 1995 to help monitor the trail. Members have been trying to locate the original mule trace on the ground with Geographic Information Systems and GPS to create overlay maps to have auto-tours for tourists to make the trail more visible.

BrightSource LLC in 2011 announced a plan to create a large solar plant in the Mojave. The plant would go through Stump Springs, which we know historically was a part of the trail. However, the official map on the National Park Services' website did not list the Stump Springs area as a part of the trail. Following the mule trace it was apparent that the Old Spanish Trail did go through Stump Springs and many other surrounding springs. With the efforts of OSTA, BrightSource suspended its plan for their solar plant.

A purposed solar plant and wind farm in the Silurian Valley threatens the Old Spanish Trail and the Mormon Road. The wind farm appears to be going nowhere as no formal application has been filed but is on the books. Aurora Solar Plant wished to build near the trail but was rejected, though they have appealed. A coalition of organizations, including OSTA, opposes these new plants. Senator Dianne Feinstein has purposed a bill known as the California Desert Protection and Recreation Act of 2015 (Senate Bill 414) and would give the Silurian Valley wilderness status and thus protecting it.

--Patrick Mulvey

May 2015

Bill Warren

Bill Warren, former Sherriff of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners, gave a talk about William W. Robinson this month at the Westerners. Bill earned his bachelor of science in Chemistry and has a great love for history as well as maps. Bill was the president of the California Map Society and has cataloged over maps 4000 at the Huntington Library in a period of 15 years.

William Wilcox Robinson was a famous author in Southern California, usually writing under the pen name W.W. Robinson. He was born in Trinidad, Colorado in 1891, and moved to Riverside California in 1899.

The L.A. Corral of Westerners' December 16, 1948 Roundup, with J. Gregg Layne speaking.

He served in World War One and graduated from UC Berkley in 1916. He moved to Los Angeles in 1919 and married artist Irene Bowen in 1923.

Will Robinson was an author of many books, and his wife Irene helped him by providing illustrations for many of them. Will worked as a title researcher for the Title Guarantee (later named Title Insurance) and Trust Company in Los Angeles. Over his many years there he became vice president of that firm. Because his job was to clarify land entitlements, he began writing pamphlets about local cities and their history. Title Insurance distributed these pamphlets for free. Much of the artwork on pamphlets was done by Irene. Together they wrote a number of children's books, and one of their earliest was The Beasts of the Tar Pits. Published in 1932, it was about animals caught in the Le Brea Tar Pits. Will also wrote many poems. Since he worked with land titles, Will wrote the book Manual for California Land Law. After writing many pamphlets about local cities, Will decided to combine them into the book Ranchos Become Cities in 1939. Of the many books written by William Robinson and illustrated by Irene, notable ones include: Forest of the People (1946) about the Angelus National Forest, The Indians of Los Angeles (1952) about the mistreatment of Native Americans, and Bombs and Bribery (1969) about the 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times Building. Other books will wrote about Los Angeles include Lawyers of Los Angeles (1959), Writers of Los Angeles (1960), Maps of Los Angeles (1966), and Tarnished Angels (1964), about prostitution in the city. Probably Will's most famous book was Panorama (1953), a picture book about the history of Southern California. Title Insurance gave them away free for anyone who wanted one, and over 150,000 copies were distributed in next few years.

Will was also a member of numerous organizations, including the California Historical Society and the Southwest Museum. He was a charter member of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners. After a lifelong successful career, William Robinson passed away in 1972, followed shortly by his wife.

--Patrick Mulvey

The L.A. Corral of Westerners visits the Placeritos Ranch in July, 1950.

Hugh Carpenter – the "Millionaire Constable of Banning"

Steve Lech

Hugh Carpenter was a fixture in early Banning, California. He was born in July, 1864 in Illinois and came to Banning with his brother Charles and their parents in 1884. Like so many others during that time, the Carpenter family had come west hoping to better their lives in Southern California.

Hugh Carpenter worked with his father Robert in the livery business the elder Carpenter had begun upon arriving in Banning. Soon, the younger Carpenter took over and brought in a business partner, Charles Hamilton. Together, the pair became inseparable businessmen and soon branched out into raising barley, which was followed by the construction and operation of a barley mill. However, it was Carpenter's years of being a San Diego County constable that earned him the nickname of the "Millionaire Constable."

Until Riverside County formed in May, 1893, Banning was split by the San Bernardino-San Diego County line. Although both families lived in Banning, the Carpenters lived in San Diego County, while the Hamiltons lived in San Bernardino County. Both Hugh Carpenter and Charles Hamilton became constables in their respective counties. At that time, vagrants, especially hobos on trains, could be arrested and charged with not paying railroad fares. Carpenter seized upon this and began the systematic roundup of many vagrants on trains throughout the San Gorgonio Pass and San Timoteo Canyon. His partner, Charles Hamilton, helped him by moving some of the vagrants from San Bernardino County into Carpenter's custody. Carpenter would then bring them to San Diego, for which he would be paid by the prisoner and by the mile. The San Diego *Union*, being particularly upset by this practice, noted that Carpenter's claims for reimbursement totaled $500 for the month of February, 1893, at a time when the average American worker was paid approximately

Hugh Carpenter, Banning's "Millionaire Constable." Author's collection

$675 per year! This outraged the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, but there was little they could do until Riverside County formed. Once that happened, the San Diego *Sun* gloated, "It is feared that H. M. Carpenter, the millionaire constable of Banning, will break into San Diego with another batch of prisoners. . . . if Riverside county is Riverside county now, then Carpenter and Banning and his prisoners and bills all belong to Riverside . . . and if he comes here he will be told to go hence!"

Hugh Carpenter continued as a constable in Banning for a few years after Riverside County was created. In June, 1893, he was severely wounded by his own revolver when it dropped to the ground and discharged, sending the bullet into his lung. He recovered from that episode and settled down afterward, choosing to go into farming in his later life. In November, 1893, he married Elizabeth Hampson in Los Angeles. One of their children was a daughter named Susan. Susan Carpenter grew up in Los Angeles and eventually married Harley Earl, the famed automobile designer who, according to carofthecentury.com, invented the field of automobile design and was the father of the Corvette.

Hugh Carpenter died April 5, 1947 in Los Angeles at the age of 83.

FROM OUR FILES

50 Years Ago
#73 June 1965

"March 10th [1965] meeting was held at Taix Cafe – [Sheriff] Erv. Strong in the saddle . . . speaker of the evening was Dock Marston, a recognized authority on the Grand Canyon, his subject was 'The Points of Embarkation of James White" who rode a raft from some point above Lee's Ferry to Callville in 1867, two years prior to Powell's epochal voyage."

(An article based on his talk was published in the December 1965 issue.)

Dr. Horace Parker, Corresponding Member, had recently been elected president of the Desert Protective Council.

25 Years Ago
#180 Summer 1990

At the April 1990 meeting Dr. Ralph Shaffer of Cal Poly Pomona spoke on "the streetcar era of Los Angeles." "This was not, however, a nostalgic look at a revered method of transportation, as Shaffer reminded his audience that there were plenty of complaints about streetcars in the 'good old days.'"

Former Sheriff John Haskell Kemble passed away February 19, 1990. Doyce Nunis provided a few words in his memory, citing his "absolute passion for the sea" and his outstanding work as a maritime historian.