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Ben de Crevecouer
A Real Western Sheriff

Steve Lech

The life of Ben de Crevecouer is one which is inextricably linked with the Pass and Desert regions of Riverside County, and law enforcement therein. Known for always being able to "get his man," Ben served in several capacities and was involved in two of Riverside County's most infamous cases.

Benjamin de Crevecouer was born on May 14, 1876. His parents, Hans and Margaret, had recently settled in the Morongo Valley, and in fact, Ben was the first white child born there.

His career in law enforcement began in 1897 at the age of 21. He was appointed deputy constable in Banning, only to succeed the then constable Hugh Carpenter when he resigned. Ben was re-elected to the post several times. In 1908 he became a special agent of the United States, which meant that he had to travel extensively throughout California, Nevada, and Arizona. The traveling must have gotten to him, because 8 years later he gave that up to return to Banning and settle down.

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Editor's Corner . . .

Welcome to the Fall, 2015 edition of the L.A. Westerners' Branding Iron. I realize that this edition is a bit thin, but quite honestly, I've not exactly been inundated with articles to print. In fact, I no longer have *any*, nor any prospects. So, if you are interested in keeping the Branding Iron going and having quality research/writing to read and enjoy, now (*not* later) would be an excellent time to "put your money where your mouth is" and submit article(s) for publication.

This edition starts off with the story of one of my favorite characters, Ben de Crevecouer, who was a true western sheriff deputy at the end of that most famous of eras. Ben has been immortalized by his great-granddaughter Zoe Erickson in her book *Caught Dead to Rights.*

Our second article comes from Walt Bethel and is the conclusion to his article focussing on the geographical history of railroads in the Bay Area. This article concentrates on the interurban lines. We're indebted to Walt for his great research into this topic!

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

Steve Lech
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Law enforcement still called to him, and he again became a constable in Banning. In the early 1920's he became involved in the County prison camp, gaining the title of Camp Superintendent in 1926. Finally, in 1928, Sheriff Clem Sweeters made him a full Deputy Sheriff, and Ben was put in charge of the Sheriff's substation in Indio.

While Ben's life was one of service to law enforcement in Riverside County, he is best known for 2 episodes - that of the Willie Boy manhunt in 1909 and the trial of Gordon Stuart Northcott in the late 1920's.

Willie Boy was a local Indian who was accused of murdering the father of the girl he loved, then fleeing with her. When she couldn't keep up with him, he killed her too. While fleeing throughout the Morongo Valley/Twentynine Palms area, he was pursued by two Sheriff's posses, the second of which was led by constable Ben de Crevecouer. Willie Boy was eventually found, and killed himself with a single gunshot wound to the head. The local papers credited Ben with being the one who discovered Willie Boy, but that is in doubt. Suffice it to say, though, that Ben was there, and probably exchanged gunfire with the cornered Indian.

Some 20 years later, Gordon Stuart Northcott and his mother were tried for the murders of several young boys at their chicken ranch in Wineville, east of Riverside. Eventually it was found that the two had lured young men to their farm, savagely killed them, and buried them in their chicken coop. The "Chicken Coop Murders" brought nationwide attention to the little hamlet of Wineville, and Ben represented the Sheriff's Department at the trial, giving testimony as to what apparently had happened and what the Department had found in its investigation. When all was said and done, both of them were found guilty, and Mrs. Northcott was sentenced to life imprisonment, while her son received the death penalty. His case was upheld on appeal, and Gordon Stuart Northcott is supposedly the last man to be hanged in the State of California. Because of all the press that the town of Wineville received, the townsfolk voted to rename their town to Mira Loma, as it is known today.

In 1946, Ben's life was chronicled for a local newspaper, and while the reporter mentioned that old Ben must have had quite a few notches in his old .44, Ben said that he was proud of the fact that he had been able to bring so many men to justice without killing anyone. If this is true, then he truly does deserve the title of a "Real Western Sheriff."

A Geographical History of Bay Area Railroads - Part II

A. C. W. Bethel

Author's Note - This article paints the history of Bay Area railroads with a broad brush. Over time many of the railroads discussed here underwent bewildering changes of ownership and name. Some railroad companies were incorporated only to construct lines for a parent company and never operated under their own names. Other railroads were never built even though their promoters filed maps and obtained charters. In a survey article it would be impractical to detail them all. The same is true of some public agencies.

The article also omits small, obscure, industrial railroads, and railroads that existed only very briefly and offered only marginal service. (An example of the first would be the South San Francisco Belt Railway, a three- to five-mile-long line that switched cars for about a dozen industries. The Southern Pacific absorbed it in 1940. An example of the second would be the narrow-gauge California and Nevada (1883-1898), which built north from Emeryville to San Pablo, then turned south down an interior valley to a point beyond today's Orinda. The road had only two locomotives and two coaches. Winter storms frequently washed out the line, and the hastily rebuilt track was so uneven that derailments were frequent, and passengers sometimes assisted rerailing the cars.)

Where place names have changed, this article uses the modern ones unless noted otherwise, and sometimes more familiar geographical locations are used rather than more exact but obscure ones. Numerical values of costs, distances, populations and patronage are usually rounded off.

Interurban Electric Railroads

At the start of the twentieth century, interurban electric railways, which linked rural towns and urban centers, seemed to be a promising niche market. Interurban cars were based on proven streetcar technology but capable of speeds of 50 miles per hour or so. Interurbans were less expensive to build and operate than steam railroads, and they could provide more frequent, convenient service, often using trains of only a single car. But interurban electric railways developed just as Henry Ford's Model T (1908) was revolutionizing rural transport, and few of them had even a brief period of prosperity. Most interurban railways also offered freight service, and some survived as freight haulers after abandoning their passenger business.

The Peninsular Railway

The Peninsular Railway (PR) was an electric interurban railway that connected San Jose and Santa Clara with Los Gatos, Saratoga, and Palo Alto. Local capitalists began building what they called the San Jose and Los Gatos Railroad in 1904. The SP quickly acquired it, and improved it by opening further, more direct routes. The PR eventually operated 68 route miles of track. Many of the early lines were built cheaply on rights of way next to highways; later highway improvements forced some abandonments. The railroad had an electric locomotive and a motorized box car, but it never developed much freight business. Operating deficits began in 1919, perhaps due in part to SP's distant, disinterested management. Excessive capitalization and heavy interest payments further injured the railroad's economic performance. Except for a short freight line, the system was abandoned by 1934.

San Francisco's San Mateo Suburban Line

What became the 40 line to San Mateo began as the San Francisco and San Mateo Railway (SMR), San Francisco's first electric streetcar company, which began service in 1892. Its tracks soon included a line to the cemeteries south of San Francisco at Colma. John and Adolph Spreckels purchased and upgraded the financially distressed SMR in 1896, renaming it the San Mateo Electric Railway (SMER). Then in 1901 a Baltimore syndicate bought the SMER along with many other San Francisco urban transit properties and merged them all into the new United Railroads (URR).

Prior to United Railroads ownership, rival San Francisco streetcar lines had

blocked SMER's access to direct alignments along major streets, but having bought the competing companies, the URR was able to rationalize the SMER's route. Then in 1903 the URR extended the former SMER's track from Colma to San Mateo, 20 miles from its San Francisco terminus. After In a 1921 reorganization, the URR successor Market Street Railway (MSRY) found that its 40 line to San Mateo earned good net returns. The Municipal Railway of San Francisco (Muni) purchased the MSRY with a bond issue in 1944, and abandoned the 40 Line in 1949 after converting the streetcar lines that it used downtown to trolley bus.

The 40 Line never extended south of San Mateo though in 1919 MSRY and PR management discussed a PR project to close the 12-mile gap between Palo Alto and San Mateo. For a time the alignment was included on street maps. It would have created an electric interurban railway connection between San Jose and San Francisco.

The Sacramento Northern Railway

The Sacramento Northern Railway (SN) was the longest interurban line in the United States: its mainline extended about 183 miles between Chico and Oakland. The SN began as two separate interurban lines. Starting in 1905, the Northern Electric (NE) built south from Chico, where it had its offices and shops, through Yuba City and Marysville, and entered Sacramento in 1907. Branches served Oroville (1906), Colusa (1913), and Woodland (1912). The Woodland branch included a massive swing bridge across the Sacramento River at M Street, which NE also used to reach its freight yard in West Sacramento. Today's Tower Bridge replaced it in 1935.

The demand for construction materials consequent upon the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906 drove up the NE's construction costs, which the NE's management also inflated. Frequent flood damage required expensive regrading and rebuilding. The financial panic of 1907 made it hard to find additional financing. By 1914 the NE was in receivership, and the Western Pacific acquired it in 1925.

The southern part of what would become the SN began in 1909 as an electric interurban line to give Oakland a direct connection with communities to the east of the Oakland Hills, which the steam railroads hadn't provided. The challenging terrain required major cuts and fills, steep grades, and a 3,200-foot-long tunnel connecting two canyons. East of the Oakland Hills the line turned north through Walnut Creek and Concord and then ran east along the south shore of the San Joaquin River to Pittsburg. Called the Oakland, Antioch and Eastern (OA&E), it never built the additional four miles or so to tap potential ridership at Antioch. In Oakland, the OA&E's terminal at 40th Street and Shafter Avenue was remote from downtown, though a connection to Key System tracks enabled OA&E trains to continue to the Key System's ferry terminal. After the Bay Bridge opened, SN trains would run all the way to San Francisco's Transbay Terminal. Thus the SN served the San Francisco market better than it served the East Bay, which potentially could have been an important source of revenue.

Like the NE, the OA&E built its physical plant to a high standard, and like the NE it was in financial trouble early. After a 1911 reorganization brought new financing, management began construction north to Sacramento, and the OA&E's trains entered the city over the NE's M Street bridge in 1913. A railroad-car ferry across Carquinez Strait between Mallard in Contra Costa County and Chipps in Solano County served in lieu of a bridge. In 1954, the Coast Guard condemned the ferryboat, sundering the two parts of the system.

In 1920, a new company, the San Francisco-Sacramento Railroad (SF-S) acquired the OA&E in foreclosure. The WP bought the SF-S in 1928, then combined it with the former NE to create a unified

SN. The WP saw this system primarily as a potential originator of freight traffic, but advanced funds for the construction of an architecturally-impressive renaissance-style Union Station in downtown Sacramento in 1925. (Stockton-based Central California Traction was a third tenant.)

That the new SN had three different types of current collection complicated combining the two railroads. The NE used a third rail in the country and trolley poles in the city, but the more up-to-date SF-S used pantographs, which require a different wire profile and a different alignment of overhead wire on curves. The voltages were different too: the NE used 600 volts, but the newer SF-S used a more efficient 1,200 volts. Since cars wired for 1,200 volts could operate at 600 volts (but not conversely), ex-SF-S cars were fitted with trolley poles and contact shoes so that they could operate over the entire system, and some cars ran through from Oakland to Chico. To attract patronage, the SN operated name trains that included parlor cars and meal service.

The SN ended its passenger rail service in 1940-41, but because the WP used the SN for a feeder line, SN electric locomotives still hauled freight trains after passenger service ended, and some SN electric freight operation lasted until 1965. What remains of the now-fragmented system is dieselized.

The Napa Valley Line

In Napa County, the San Francisco, Napa and Calistoga Railway (SFN&C) operated an electric interurban line that paralleled the Napa Valley Railroad from a ferry terminal in Vallejo to Callistoga. Passenger service began in 1905. The line was unusual in using 3,300-volt, 25-cycle alternating current technology, which eliminated the need for expensive current-converting substations but required heavier cars that accelerated slowly. The SFN&C retained the outdated technology even when it was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1932. Passenger service ended in 1938 after the railroad's San Francisco ferry connection ceased operation. A truncated electric freight operation served the Mare Island Navy Yard until dieselization in 1942, and the Navy acquired the last remnant of the railroad in 1956.

The Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railway

From 1904-05, the Petaluma and Santa Rosa Railway (P&SR) provided rural electric freight and passenger service connecting Petaluma, Sebastopol, Forestville and Santa Rosa.

The CNW, which also served Petaluma, Santa Rosa and Sebastopol, rightly anticipated that the electric interurban would capture a significant share of the region's agricultural traffic, chiefly eggs (Petaluma was then styled "The Egg Capital of the World"), dairy products, grain and fruit. For two months beginning in January, 1905, the CNW used a combination of legal injunction and physical confrontation to prevent the P&SR from crossing the CNW's tracks in order to enter Santa Rosa, though in March the courts ruled in favor of the P&SR, ending the impasse.

Freight was always important to the PS&R's business plan. The railroad had nine electric locomotives and its own fleet of boxcars. It ingeniously shipped freight directly to San Francisco by steamboat from the wharfs at Petaluma, a service that CNW couldn't match. The service continued until 1950, when its sternwheeler *Petaluma* was the last on the coast. A tug and barge replaced her. In 1922 the P&SR built spur lines through Petaluma that switched warehouses along Petaluma Creek.

Though the P&SR did a brisk business, financial difficulties led to foreclosure and reorganization in 1918, and to purchase by the NWP in 1932. P&SR passenger service ended in 1932, and electric freight operation ended in 1947, but dieselized freight service continued until almost all of the P&SR's rails were taken up in 1984.

A Failed Attempt: The Ocean Shore Railway

One of the most ambitious Bay Area railroads was never completed. Called the Ocean Shore (OS), it was to have been a high-speed, two-track electric line west from near San Francisco's Civic Center then south along the coastline to Santa Cruz. Unstable seaside bluffs at Pedro Point complicated construction. Starting in 1906-07, electric locomotives did haul OS trains from the San Francisco station to the city limits, where steam locomotives took trains as far south as

Tunitas, beyond Half Moon Bay and about 38 miles from San Francisco. This ended the isolation of San Mateo County's seaside communities, and the OS hoped for a real estate boom that would enhance the road's passenger traffic, while agricultural products and redwood timber would generate freight revenues.

At Santa Cruz, the unfriendly SP built a spur to block the OS, whose tiny depot remained on a bluff, cut off from access to yards and wharfs. The OS vainly sought legal remedies. Nevertheless, the OS did operate steam-powered trains about ten miles north from Santa Cruz to Swanton. Financial difficulties prevented construction of the 26 miles of track that would have connected the two ends of the OS for a through route, though construction would have been easy. The bankrupt road was dismantled in 1921.

Urban Transit

Most California cities once had electric streetcar lines, and some have them again, but only San Francisco retained them during a long period when the technology seemed moribund. Today what is now called light rail flourishes in San Francisco, and San Jose, which replaced its streetcars with buses in 1938, has built an extensive new system of light-rail lines and operates restored vintage streetcars on a downtown loop. The regional high-speed BART system remains unique in California.

San Francisco's Cable Cars

San Francisco wire-rope engineer Andrew Hallidie introduced cable car technology in 1873, and public transit companies adopted it worldwide for heavily-used lines that could justify the high capital costs. San Francisco had almost 53 miles of cable railway, more than any other city. Electric streetcar technology, which Frank Sprague perfected in 1888, was less capital intensive, easier to install and maintain, and more reliable than cable, which it quickly supplanted. Today cable cars survive only in San Francisco, where their ability to climb steep hills effortlessly enables them to outperform trolley cars and buses.

When in 1947 San Francisco Mayor Roger Lapham announced his determination to eliminate cable cars altogether, socially prominent Friedel Klussmann organized the Citizens' Committee to Save the Cable Cars and campaigned for a ballot measure that wrote their continued operation into the City Charter. But in 1954 a second, less-friendly and seemingly duplicitous ballot measure cut some routes back and realigned others. Today's five-mile long cable car system got a major and much-needed renovation in 1982-84. A museum at the operating powerhouse explains the technology.

San Francisco's Streetcar Lines

The Pacific coast's first street-railway line began service on San Francisco's Market Street in 1860. As an alternative to using horses, a small steam locomotive was built into the front of its coach. In following decades, various entrepreneurs crisscrossed the city with other horse car, steam-hauled, and cable car lines. In 1893 the SP consolidated many of these lines into the Market Street Railway (MSRY).

In 1902, a Baltimore syndicate purchased the MSRY and other San Francisco lines and consolidated them as United Railroads (URR). After the 1906 earthquake ruined the elaborate, costly underground conduits that carried the cables, the URR electrified many former cable car lines for the sake of expediency and economy, despite aesthetic and legal complaints about the overhead wires. The URR had to interact with a corrupt city government and became embroiled in a bribery scandal that eventually got prison convictions for Mayor Eugene Schmitz and attorney Abraham Ruef and also damaged URR's public image. A major strike in 1907 reduced URR revenues.

After James "Sunny Jim" Rolph was elected mayor in 1911, Progressive-era enthusiasm for publicly-owned utilities was written into San Francisco's new city charter, thereby discouraging private sector investment in new lines. When the first San Francisco Municipal Railway's (Muni) line opened on Geary Street in 1912, patronage on parallel URR lines declined immediately. By the time the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition opened, the Muni had six lines in service operating over nearly 43 track-miles, and the URR's revenue declined in what should have been a highly productive year. In 1918

the Muni opened the 2.27 mile-long Twin Peaks Tunnel that gave three Muni lines on Market Street quick access to San Francisco's previously underdeveloped Ingleside, Ocean View, West Portal and Parkside districts to the southwest. The 4,232-foot-long Sunset Tunnel to the west from Market Street opened in 1928 to reach the Sunset district.

Starting in 1914, competition from unlicensed private autos, popularly called "jitneys," siphoned off revenue from both the URR and in the Muni. In 1918, a URR wreck with eight fatalities resulted in expensive damage awards, and motivated creation of a law requiring two-man crews, which increased URR's operating costs. In 1921 the financially troubled URR reorganized in foreclosure as the new Market Street Railway, which Chicago-based H. M. Byllesby & Company purchased in 1925. A bond issue enabled the Muni to purchase the MSRY in 1944.

That four of the Muni's last five lines ran through long tunnels unsuited for buses helped preserve its streetcar lines. Today most Muni lines run in a subway under Market Street then fan out to the west and south through the Twin Peaks and Sunset tunnels. The Muni's Embarcadero-Market Street line, which runs on the surface, uses historic streetcars as a tourist attraction. Muni's new T-Third line runs east and south, mostly on segregated right of way, from Market Street to Mission Bay, Hunters Point, and Visitacion Valley. Ongoing construction of the Central Subway will extend the T-Third line north to Chinatown and perhaps to North Beach.

East Bay Streetcars

On San Francisco Bay's East Shore, the Oakland Hills to the east leave a fairly level stretch of land only about three miles deep, and streets leading to hillside lots have steep grades. The Oakland Estuary complicated access to Alameda, south of Oakland, and Lake Merritt was a barrier to the east. Because the shoreline bends eastward at Oakland and Alameda, the urban settlement pattern forms an obtuse L-shape. In downtown Oakland, adjacent cities' differently-aligned street grids come together at a variety of acute angles, most notably where Broadway, San Pablo Avenue, and Telegraph Avenue radiate from 14th Street, and some Oakland streets cut diagonally across the rectangular street grid to the north. All of this impacted the development of the East Bay's transit network.

Oakland developed before other East Bay cities, and downtown Oakland became the transit nodal point where streetcar ridership was densest. Eventually transit rails stretched 30 miles from Richmond in the north to Hayward to the southeast. Long, thinly-populated lines yielded less revenue per mile than San Francisco's short, densely-populated ones. The Key System operated fewer cars than San Francisco's Muni, and carried fewer people.

In pre-automobile days, East Bay real estate promoters had to build many streetcar lines in order to market lots in their new subdivisions. Horses hauled most of these streetcars; small steam locomotives hauled a few others. Oakland's 1890 population of 50,000 people was dense enough that investors built two expensive cable car lines. The first electric streetcar line opened in 1892, and during the 1890s many of the horsecar lines were electrified. But these were not yet organized into a coherent system: they used a variety of track gauges, and while some lines were well-built, others were not. Frequently they failed financially.

By 1911 entrepreneur Francis Marion "Borax" Smith (the nickname reflects his highly successful mining career) had unified all 75 miles of East Bay streetcar lines into his Key System, the San Francisco and Oakland Terminal Railways (SF&OT). But excessive debt bankrupted his over-leveraged companies, and a 1913 reorganization forced Smith out. The reorganization did not raise new capital, however, and the SF&OT's physical plant deteriorated, burdened by the SP's competing Oakland-Alameda streetcar loop line, jitney competition from 1914, World War I inflation, city-mandated street-paving, a violent strike in 1919, and of course the fast-growing popularity of the private automobile.

In 1923 a new Key System Transit Company (KST) bought the SF&OT in foreclosure and raised money by selling unused property and issuing bonds. The KST added 95 new multiple-unit all-steel streetcars and two new ferryboats, rebuilt badly deteriorated track, extended some lines, and improved the power-distribution system. The KST carried 77 million passengers in 1925, but patronage declined thereafter. Fare hikes discouraged ridership and left the company's income stream worse off than before. The KST's first major streetcar line abandonment, in Alameda, occurred in 1928, replaced by buses because KST President Alfred Lundberg refused to invest $350,000 in paving the Posey Tube under the Oakland Estuary. Similarly Lundberg abandoned lines to Richmond (1933) and Hayward (1935) rather than repave the streets, a franchise requirement.

The Key System didn't buy any new streetcars after the 1920s. During World War II, when gasoline rationing increased demand for public transit, the KST earned high profits for the first time, but postwar patronage quickly declined. Management considered but never ordered lightweight, state-of-the-art trolley cars, and never put the trolley buses it received into service, but continued to replace streetcars with buses. In 1946 bus-oriented National City Lines bought the Key System, and took out the remaining streetcar lines in 1948. In 1960 the public-sector Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District bought the ailing bus company.

The Bay Area Rapid Transit System

California's State Legislature created the Bay Area Regional Transit District in 1957 in response to a study of long-term regional transit needs. The District included Alameda, Contra Costa and San Francisco Counties after Santa Clara, San Mateo and Marin Counties dropped out for various reasons. The District approved construction plans in 1962, and construction of the challenging project began in 1964.

The resulting Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART) opened in stages beginning in 1972; the transbay tube opened in 1974. BART now carries nearly 400,000 weekday patrons. Its cars travel over more than a hundred route-miles of track, linking San Francisco with Alameda County and Contra Costa County points and, somewhat awkwardly, with the San Francisco International Airport in San Mateo County. All of BART's tracks are completely grade-separated in subways and on fenced rights-of-way and viaducts, so the cars can safely draw power from a third rail. The system survived the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake intact despite extensive damage to the Bay Bridge and the 880 Freeway, and easily absorbed the additional demand.

Coda

Bay Area railway mileage has declined dramatically, and in many places the Bay Area railway scene is one of nostalgic archaeology. Much of the disinvestment in Bay Area railroad plant was due to lost markets and high operating costs.

The State Belt Railway closed because the port it served declined. Electric interurban railways closed because the niche markets they sought vanished. Commuter railways closed because they no longer earned money in an automotive age of publicly-funded highways and bridges. A few heavily subsidized commuter lines do survive, but their survival represents public-sector political choice rather than private-sector return on capital.

Unlike trucks and buses, railroads require very large investments in fixed plant, which makes it harder for them to earn a good rate of return. Lightly-used branch lines lack the economies of scale provided by high-tonnage, long-haul mainline trains. This has made investment in branch lines appear unprofitable to accountants, and railroads have consequently abandoned them or sold them to short-line operators.

After deregulation began in 1980, some Bay Area railroad mileage was abandoned because railroads merged and simplified their physical plant to promote efficiency. Simplifying the railroads' physical plant is a national trend.

In combination all these factors have reduced America's railroad route-mileage from about 250,000 miles in 1915 to about 140,000 miles today. But nationally America's railroads are carrying more freight tonnage now than in World War II, and they are far more efficient, reviving what had seemed to be a declining industry.

Rendezvous 2015 . . .

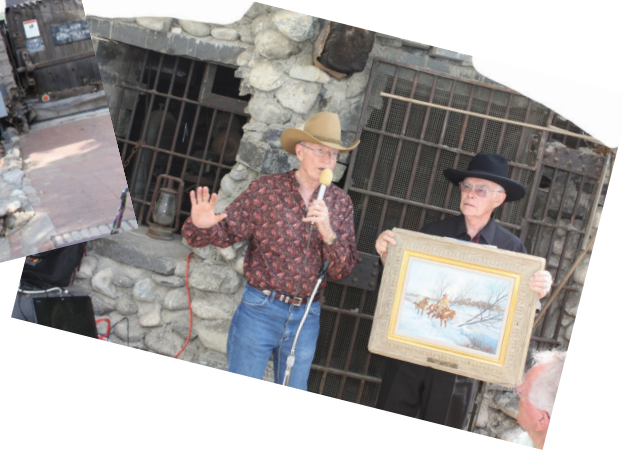
Driving through the quiet residential streets of Glendora, you don't really get the sense that there is a castle nearby. However, it is most certainly there. Hearing about the Rubel Castle and actually seeing it are two vastly different things. While you might think upon hearing it that the name is a bit of an exaggeration, seeing the castle in person immediately dispels that notion. As you walk through the front gate you are confronted with a towering conglomeration of river rocks, old liquor bottles, cement, and various pieces of machinery. The courtyard, which is guarded by a portcullis and a bottle lined gatehouse, is home to a giant clock that towers over all and makes its presence known every half hour. Just a cursory glance over the Castle is enough to make you want to learn all you can about it.

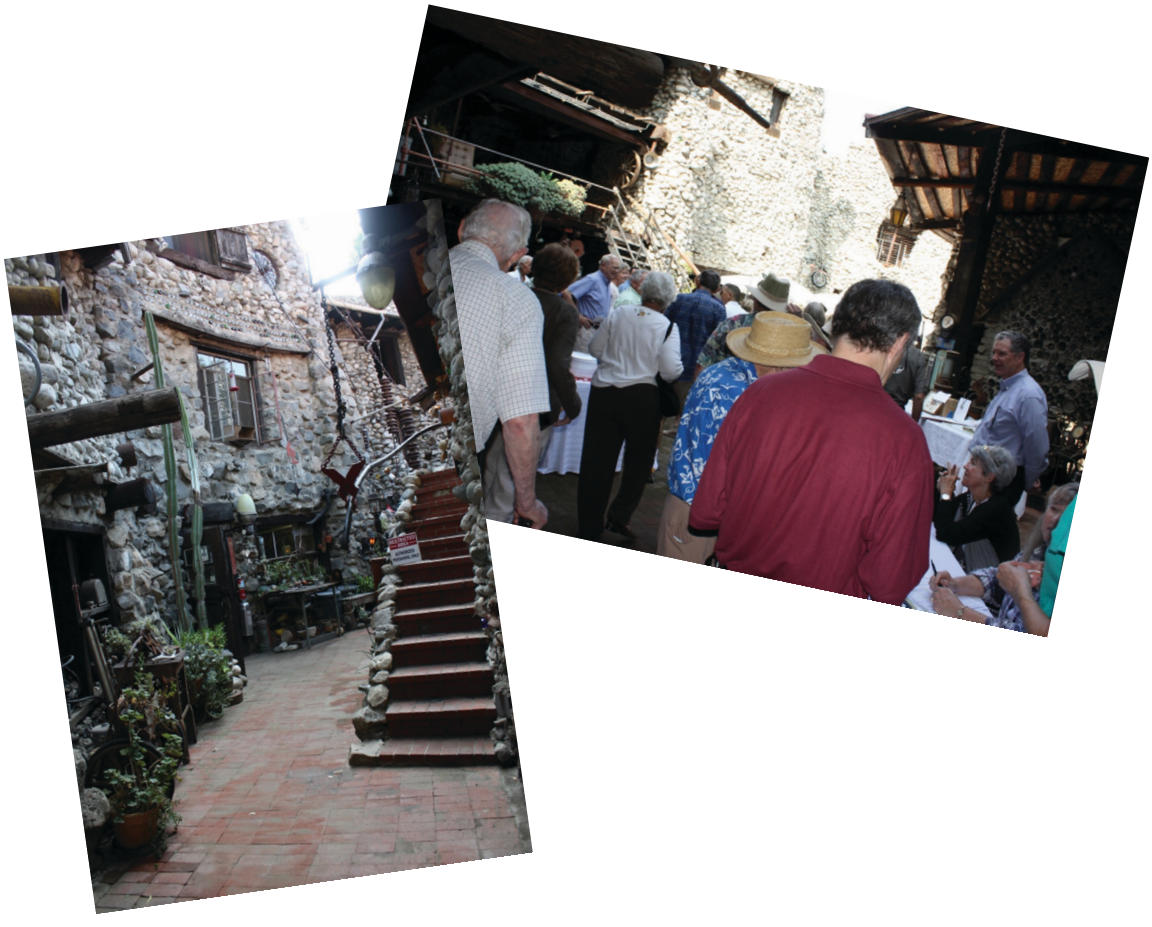
Don Green's thirty minute walking tour of the grounds helped with that. He's designed it so that you learn a lot about the Castle, but only enough to spark your curiosity so that you'll come back for the full two hour tour. Even that probably wouldn't be enough though. There are so many things to see and learn about. It's amazing.

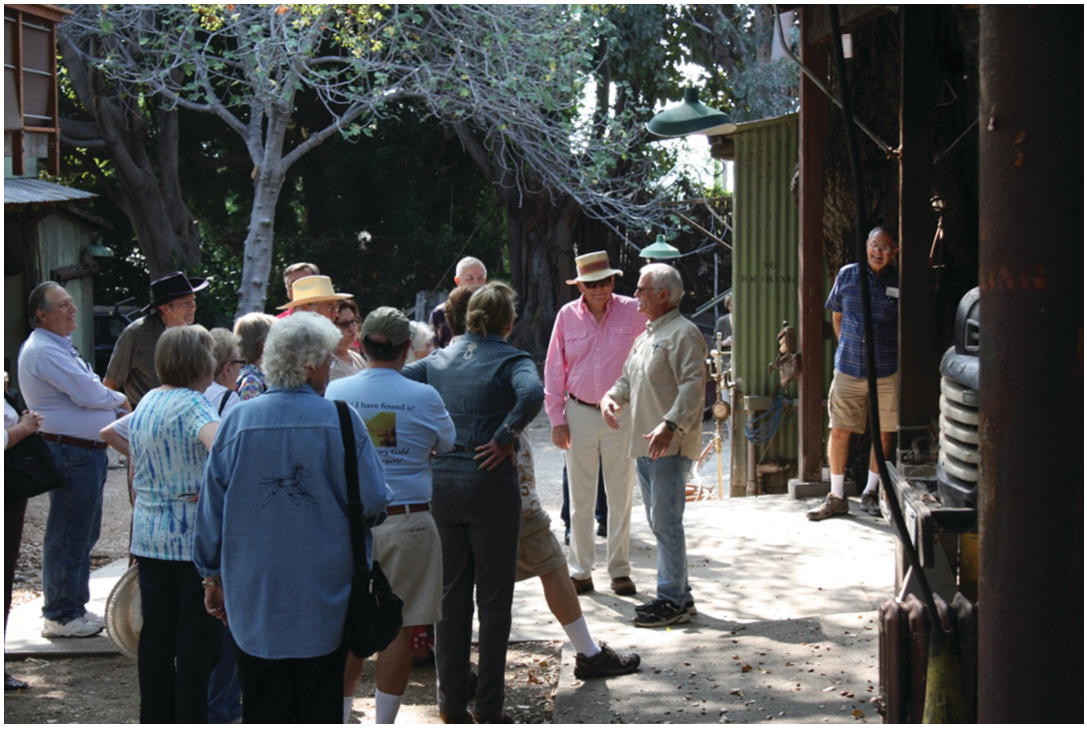
Los Angeles Corral members thoroughly enjoyed the tour and the entertainment that followed. The drinks were flowing and conversation was lively during lunch and leading into the auction. After the auction we were treated with a lecture from Don Green about the history of Rubel Castle and its founder Michael Rubel. Michael was a very interesting character. He traveled the world and held every job from cowboy to sailor before settling down in 1968 to begin building the Castle. It took twenty years and hundreds of volunteers to finish.

With the lesson complete we sat back to listen to the dulcet tones of the historical, bluegrass band, Vin Fiz Flyer. The mixture of bluegrass music with songs about historical events and figures was the perfect end to a Rendezvous full of history and fun.

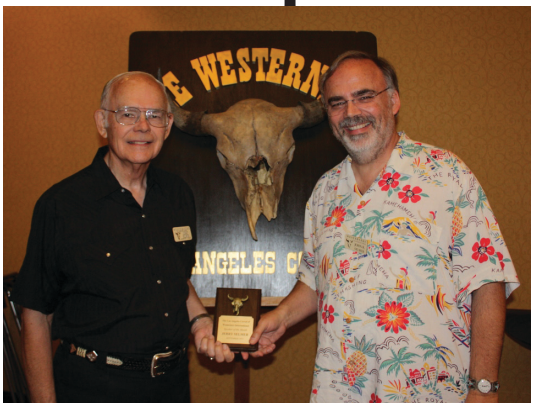
-- Aaron Tate







Monthly Roundup . . .



September 2015

Jerry Selmer

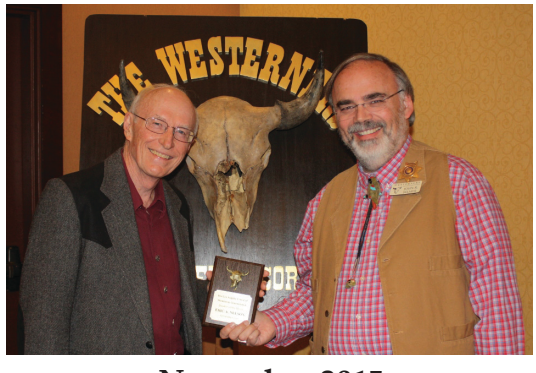
Jerry Selmer began his talk on the Penitentes by recounting his love for the "Ripley's Believe it or Not" segments in the paper when he was a boy. Indeed they could have been a segment in Mr. Ripley's column. The story of the Penitentes begins with St. Francis of Assisi creating his three orders of penance and more importantly the Third Order of Penance.

In remote villages of the Sangre de Cristo mountains of New Mexico, secret orders began forming when all of the Franciscan priests were deported after the Mexican War of Independence in 1821. These orders were headed by men and women who had been a part of the Third Order. There weren't any clergy members so a leader called the Hermano Mayor was selected to take the place of a priest and his word became law. They would meet in a building called a morada to practice their secret rites.

During Holy Week the brothers of Los Hermanos Penitentes de Padre Jesus would have a procession through the streets of their town, whipping themselves and each other, eventually making their way up to a place in the mountains they called Calvario (Calvary). A Chosen One carried a large heavy cross. When they reach Calvario the cross is laid on the ground and the Chosen One lies on top of it. His arms and legs are tied tightly to the cross and it is raised. The Chosen One hangs there, his blood unable to circulate, until the Hermano Mayor gives the order to take him down. They then take him back to their morada and nurse him back to health. They used to actually nail the Chosen to the cross but they say they stopped doing that in the late 19th century.

In 1888 Charles Lummis sought out the Penitentes. When Holy Week began, he showed up in a village with his camera. The local Penitentes were not happy about this but Lummis gained permission to photograph them. He learned that until the year before they had been nailing the Chosen to the cross but stopped when they kept dying. This raises the question of whether or not they have stopped this practice. We know that they haven't stopped in the Philippines for example. Who's to say whether or not they've stopped in New Mexico?

--Aaron Tate



November 2015

Eric Nelson

Past Sheriff Eric Nelson stepped up to the podium this Veteran's Day to talk about the San Joaquin River Delta. The Delta is formed by the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers and their tributaries. A swampland is formed by the meandering rivers. Over the years the various plants grew and died and formed a layer of peat forty feet thick in some places. Inhabitants of the island used the peat to create levees. These levees, along with natural ones, formed by the river depos-

iting sediment, didn't work as well as was needed. The center of the islands would sink over time, causing them to be ten to fifteen feet below sea level, causing flooding when the levees broke.

For almost thirty years reclamation of the swampland was done by wheelbarrow brigades. Chinese laborers would fill up their wheelbarrows with peat and take it up to the top of a natural levee and build on top of it. The peat, being biological material, would degrade and the levees would break. In the late 1870's reclamation work moved over to steam powered dredgers, and they were able to use sediment from the river that didn't have any peat in it.

The second half of Eric's talk was focused specifically on Mandeville island and the experiences that Eric had there. Mandeville's levees were completed in 1920, and it was first farmed by Chinese people who arrived in 1928. It was then purchased by Roscoe Zuckerman in the mid 1930's, and he farmed it until his death in 1959. For twenty years the property was in probate. Then in 1978 Eric purchased it for one of his clients. On the island they farmed grapes and corn. The grapes were certified, and they were able to sell the vine clippings for a hefty profit. In addition to farming there was a hunting club that would come and hunt ducks every season with permission from the owners. This stopped when one of the hunters threatened one of the farmers and the club did nothing. The hunters were not happy. The island was sold again in 1985 to a group headed by the hunters, and they were able to hunt again.

--Aaron Tate

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

CLYDE WARRIOR: Tradition, Community, and Red Power by Paul R. McKenzie-Jones. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. 234 pp. Illustrations, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Hardbound, $29.95. Reviewed by Jerry Selmer

Clyde Warrior is a name which is probably not familiar to most of us. Several decades back, in the Lyndon Johnson years, the War on Poverty and other similar Federal programs were coming out at the same time as unrest throughout the land about the Vietnam War, civil rights and other social issues. It was a time of demonstrations which were often met with force by armed law enforcement at the behest of state and local governments. Against this backdrop of general turmoil, there were many groups pushing for help and recognition.

Since the time of European colonization in the New World, the American Indian peoples have tried to maintain their homes, their way of life, their traditions and their culture. It has been a losing battle for them. The promises by the white conquerors were many. Few were kept. Slowly at first, then moving faster following the Civil War, the aboriginal people of this continent were removed from their homes or killed outright. Their children were taken away from them and sent to boarding schools where they were taught to be farmers and good Americans. Their hair was cut. Their native clothes were taken from them and burned. They were severely punished for speaking their own language. Their parents were not allowed to see them. They must conform or else!

When their homes were taken, the Indians were forced on reservations often far from their homelands. Over time those reservations became smaller as parts of that land were taken and given to the ever expanding population of whites.

All the above happened – and even more. To say that the first peoples of this continent have a few anger issues is to seriously understate and misjudge the situation.

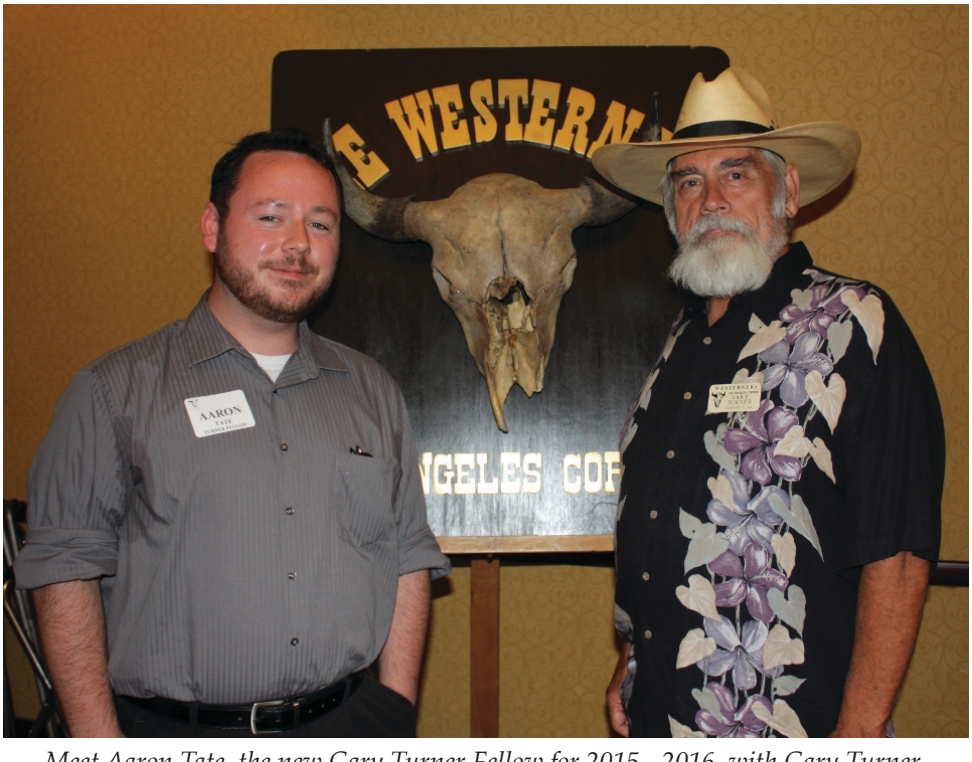
During the decades of unrest in the latter part of the 20th Century, there were several Indian groups which came into being in an effort to right some or all of these wrongs. A young man belonging to the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma rose up to become one of the important leaders in this movement. His name was Clyde Warrior. Warrior had been raised in a "traditional" home. That is, he was immersed in the history, culture and lifestyle of

his people. As is often the case, it was at variance with that of the majority population. Clyde Warrior learned the dances of his people and other related tribes. He participated frequently in powwows and won numerous prizes for his excellence in dancing.

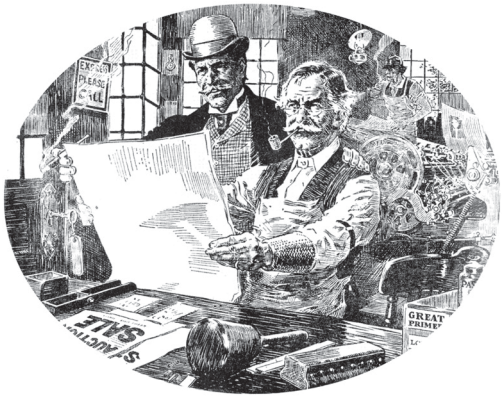
Warrior went to school in Ponca City, off the reservation. Here he met discrimination against his people. Despite this he learned much from his school. He became a good student and rather eloquent in the English language. Later, he was fascinated by the various civil rights movements throughout the country and decided that it was time for American Indians to achieve freedom to be both Americans and also American Indians. He believed both are possible. He envisioned keeping the traditional ways and at the same time learning in the white man's schools so as to be able to succeed in the non-reservation world. He wanted freedom from Federal "colonial" control as exercised by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Through his natural leadership abilities he found himself in several organizations which he then attempted to mobilize to achieve goals for his people. He called this program "Red Power". Unfortunately along the way, the pressures of both his traditional and political activities became too much for him. Like many others, he turned to alcohol. His addiction became worse over time. Despite the visions of a better future, he continued to handicap himself with the bottle. At the end his achievements were relatively small though his ideas persisted among others. He died of cirrhosis of the liver at the age of 29.

As I said earlier, most of us have probably never heard of Clyde Warrior. This book will tell you his story; however, I must say that the story is thin at best. The author surrounds what little there is to tell with a great deal of verbiage, but my reaction is that the story of his life would have made a better dissertation than a book. In fact, I think that is how it must have started out. I cannot recommend this book. I believe it would have appeal only to a very small readership.



Meet Aaron Tate, the new Gary Turner Fellow for 2015 - 2016, with Gary Turner.



FROM OUR FILES

50 Years Ago
#75 December 1965

At the August 1965 meeting ex-Sheriff Paul Bailey spoke "on a very delicate and controversial Mormon subject 'Danites and Avenging Angels fact or fiction?' Paul had a bushel basket full of facts and figures accumulated during many years of research."

A eulogy for charter member Lindley (Pink) Bynum by W.W. Robinson praised him for his wit, scholarship, talent, and love of California. "His friend, Larry Powell said of him that 'probably no other Californian of this era is better known than Lindley Bynum in the bookish mainstreams and backwaters of California.'"

25 Years Ago
#182 Winter 1990-91

The 1990 Rendezvous was held in October at the home of Al Miller in Glendale. Hugh Tolford was made an Honorary member, and the event netted $3,900 for the Publication Fund – "and a very nice way to raise it."

"Over Labor Day weekend, the 8th annual Miniature Book Society had its gathering in Glasgow, Scotland. In attendance were John Selmer, Glen Dawson, and none other than miniature book creator, Msgr. Francis J. Weber."