WESTERNERS
LOS ANGELES CORRAL
The Branding Iron
J. GOODMAN

FALL 2016 LOS ANGELES CORRAL NUMBER 284

"Only Memory Goes Back"

Roscinda Nolasquez (1892-1987)

Phil Brigandi

In more than forty years of researching local history in Southern California it has been my pleasure to know many fascinating old timers. All of them have been helpful and supportive. A few have even become my friends. But none of them was as remarkable as Roscinda Nolasquez.

Roscinda was the last of the line, a final connection to a time and a place, and a way of life that will never return. She was the last of the old Cupeño Indians who had lived at Cupa, their central village. She was the last native speaker of the Cupeño language, and struggled for years to preserve her people's language, history, and culture. Knowing her opened up a whole new world for me, and changed my life forever.

Roscinda was born at Cupa in April 1892, the daughter of a respected tribal leader, Salvador Nolasquez. Her mother, Candelaria Chutnicut, died when she was only three years old, and she was raised

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The Branding Iron

Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners

Published Quarterly

Winter - Spring – Summer – Fall

For subscription information: Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners, P. O. Box 1891, San Gabriel, CA 91778
www.lawesterners.org

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Editor's Corner . . .

Welcome to the Fall, 2016 edition of the L.A. Westerners' Branding Iron. This time, our leading article comes to us from one of our most frequent contributors, Phil Brigandi. Phil tells us about his research with Roscinda Nolasquez, the last of the Cupeno Indians who actually lived in the village of Cupa. As always, the article gives us a fascinating look into a nearly-forgotten piece of local history!

Secondly, we hear from Abe Hoffman telling us why John Muir avoided Mono Lake - why you may ask? It's not what you may have thought - Read on!

The Corral celebrated its 70th anniversary in Pasadena in October, and we have some great photos from that memorable event.

Lastly, this is the last Branding Iron that I will be putting together. It is time for someone else to take the reins. I've enjoyed my stint, and thank you all for your support during the last almost 4 years! I'll still be in the Corral, though!

Steve Lech
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by her grandmother, Mercedes Nolasquez, who had been born around 1833. It gave her an even deeper appreciation of her people's past and culture.

In the 1890s, Cupa was one of the last traditional Southern California Indian villages. Scores of other villages had been run off by Mexican or American settlers. A few more fortunate ones had been set aside as government reservations. But Cupa was simply there, where it had always been, beside the waters of Warner Hot Springs, in northeastern San Diego County.

But that meant Cupa was vulnerable. American law refused to recognize any native land rights – a village was no more different than a stray cow if a white man wanted the land one government official once said. So it was not long after Roscinda's birth that John Downey, former governor of California and the owner of the Warner Ranch, brought suit to evict the Indians. Gone were the days when armed men simply ran off the Indians at the point of a gun. Oh no, now attorneys with pressed suits and clean fingernails calmly debated the Indians' fate.

(Above) Roscinda Nolasquez in 1981 on a visit to Lost Valley where she had traveled for the acorn harvest before 1900. She called the valley Woyeahonit, *a geographical term for a valley that pinched in the center. The older Cupeño knew it as* Wiatava, *the place of the oaks.*

*(Page 1) Roscinda Nolasquez reminiscing atop Hot Springs Mountain (*Su'ish Peki*) on her final visit to the summit in 1983.*

It took nearly ten years for the Warner Ranch case to work its way through the courts. The Indians were well-represented by attorneys provided by the government, but the result was almost a foregone conclusion. In the end, the United States Supreme Court ruled in 1901 that the Indians had to go. (See my previous article, "Law But Not Fact, Land Tenure and Legal Fiction on the Warner Ranch," *The Branding Iron*, Fall 2010, for more on the legal fraud perpetuated by Downey's attorneys.)

In May 1903 eleven-year-old Roscinda Nolasquez joined her people on their own trail of tears as they were marched off to the new reservation at Pala. That's where I first met Roscinda, nearly 75 years later.

On a warm August afternoon in 1977 I drove down to the Pala Indian Reservation looking for the past.

A few months before, I had begun reading about the Cupeño people as part of my research into the history of a place called Lost Valley which had once been a part of their territory. It was not long before I discovered Jane Hill's invaluable book *Mulu'Wetam: The First People*, published by the Malki Museum Press. It was there I first saw Roscinda Nolasquez, smiling gamely in a photo on the back cover. She had been Hill's "principal informant" (as the old anthropologists used to say) for this remarkable collection of Cupeño stories, language, and grammar.

The brief biography under her photo said Nolasquez "as a child was removed with her people from Cupa to Pala." Clearly, this was someone I needed to meet. But was she even still alive? The book had been published in 1973, and she was already an old woman then. I checked the current phone book, and found that she was still listed; but rather than call, I decided to drive down and see for myself.

After a little hesitation, I went into the store across from the old mission chapel and asked if anyone knew where Roscinda

The government school at Cupa in 1898. Teacher Josephine Babbitt is in the back row, center; Roscinda is the shy little girl, fifth from the left in the front row.

Nolasquez lived. Someone gave me directions down the road to "the last white house on the left before the creek." I drove down there and knocked on the door.

At first, I didn't think Roscinda was going to let me in, as she peered at me through the screen door; but I explained my interest, and when I told her I spent my summers at Lost Valley, she brightened up and invited me inside.

We talked about all sorts of things, from place names to bedrock mortars; but what I have never forgotten was what she said about the removal. "We lost our land, our homes, our water." She talked about how the old people didn't want to go, about how hot it was during the three-day trek to Pala and about how thirsty she was. There was no malice, no anger, she was simply reciting the facts. After an hour or so, I left with an invitation to come back again.

Up until then, my interest in the Cupeño had been purely mechanical; just another part of my research into Lost Valley's history. But hearing Roscinda talk about life at Cupa, her childhood, and especially the removal, put a human face on everything. Her stories were so compelling, I wanted to know more.

I started visited Roscinda when I could, often several times a year. Each time she opened up a little more. I was fascinated with everything she had to say, and she was grateful as I shared my other research with her.

In 1981 we made our first trip together back to her homeland to visit Lost Valley (*Woyeahonit*, as Roscinda called it) in the mountains above Warner Hot Springs. This had been an important acorn-gathering site for centuries, and Roscinda had accompanied her grandmother there in the 1890s.

The acorn harvest in October was the busiest time of the year for the Cupeño. The acorns had to be harvested before the winter rains came. Everyone had a job to do. Young boys would climb the trees to shake down the acorns; they fell easily when ripe. Women and their daughters would gather them, crack the shells with a stone and spread them out to dry in the sun. Later the dried acorns would be ground in stone mortars and the flour rinsed with water again and again to remove the bitter tannic acid. And as the women worked, the men and their older sons would hunt for rabbits, squirrels, and sometimes deer.

I took Roscinda to the biggest grinding rock on the east side of the valley. She approached it tentatively, ran her hand along it, and cautiously sat down. She remembered this place. Remembered sitting with her grandmother. Remembered the women talking and joking and singing as they worked.

Roscinda called Lost Valley a "sacred" place. A friend of mine asked her what she meant. She said it was place that was a part of their world, a part of their history, and though her people no longer visited there, they still carried it in their memories.

Notice, please, that is a completely secular definition. And also a concept which we really don't have a word for in English. Memorable really doesn't capture it. And using sacred instead gives an unwarranted religious tinge to the idea.

(I was explaining this to a grad student one time about how we don't always have English words for native concepts. "Wow," he said, "that's really interesting. Who did you study under?" I smiled and said a 90-year-old Indian friend.)

Another friend of mine once asked her, if she could, would she like to go back and live at Cupa again? "No," Roscinda replied, "only memory goes back."

Other times we just sat in her little house at Pala and talked. She tried to teach me a little of her language, but I could never quite pronounce things to her satisfaction. In return, sometimes she would ask me to explain English words she didn't understand. Those dual desires to teach and to learn were among her many strengths.

But she had her limits. Until a few years before, she had taught language classes on the reservation, but she had stopped, saying the children no longer seemed interested. Some of the boys were especially disruptive. I've met some of those boys who are men now and regret they didn't care enough them to want to learn everything Roscinda had to teach them.

Roscinda's grandmother, Mercedes Nolasquez (ca 1833-1916), who raised her after her mother's death in 1895.

Only rarely did we talk about the removal, and I never pushed her. The memories were still too painful. But she would tell the story sometimes, so that it would not be forgotten. And she wanted the story told right. It truly offended her when people would say things that weren't true. Like saying the soldiers came with guns to march them off.

Her father had gone with the government agents to look at possible reservation sites. Wherever they visited their answer was always the same – we want to stay in our homes. We want to stay at Cupa. The people of his generation hardly ever spoke of those sad days.

Other times we talked about her school days, both at Cupa and (after the removal) at the new Sherman Institute in Riverside (where harsh punishments for speaking in her native tongue were matched by nighttime raids on the adjoining orange groves).

Sometimes we talked of the old ways, like basket making. I always hoped to get Roscinda to give me a lesson or two. She also told me some of the traditional stories of the history of her people, sometimes struggling to find the right words in English for the stories she knew so well. Other stories were just for fun – *silyichi*, bedtime stories, she said. Several involved that old trickster, coyote.

Whenever I could get my hands on photographs from the removal I would bring them to her so she could tell me the names of all the people in them. Once or twice she

could even point out herself. Or we'd talk about things like place names. It frightens (and humbles) me that there may be a few little bits of Cupeño lore that I am now the last living person who knows them.

In 1983 I made my most remarkable trip back to her homeland with Roscinda. She was 91 then, and knowing I had a 4x4 she asked if I would drive up to the top of Hot Springs Mountain (*Su'ish Peki*, overlooking the village) one last time. One of her grandsons agreed to join us (I never could have brought myself to make the trip alone) and we got Roscinda into the backseat of my open-topped Landcruiser and headed up the mountain.

We went clear to the top – the highest peak in San Diego County. Roscinda sat on the steps of the abandoned fire lookout and named all the adjoining peaks for me one by one. She said she had last been up the mountain more than half a century before, when she was working as a maid at the Warner Hot Springs resort (which made a show in those days of hiring Indians from Pala – as if that somehow made up for their eviction that made the resort possible). She said some of the old men had chastised her for going up this sacred mountain, but now that she was an elder she had decided to return.

We also stopped at Cupa where Roscinda showed me her childhood home (long since converted into a vacation cabin). On the path down to the hot springs she showed me a good-sized granite rock which was an old doctor woman who had lay down beside the trail one day and turned to stone. Yet the old people continued to visit her, seeking cures. As a child, Roscinda admitted, she used to laugh at that. But now she saw it differently, and I stepped back as she spoke softly to the rock and gently rubbed her arthritic hands on it.

"They're going to miss us," she said.

On the way down the mountain we were caught in a little rainstorm and her grandson and I threw every jacket we had over Roscinda to try to keep her dry. She always teased us about that later – we were so worried, like she was going to melt, she said. But it meant more than that. Teasing me meant we were friends.

Better still, one day we were sitting on the porch of her house talking when a car drove past. They honked and waved and Roscinda waved back – she knew everyone on the reservation, even if she could no longer see far enough to know just who it was. But she also knew how some people on the reservation talked about me, and as she settled back into her chair she began to mock them:

"Oh, there's Roscinda talking to that *white boy* again!"

She paused.

"But I don't care."

It's still one of the nicest things anyone has ever said to me.

Roscinda also had a sly sense of humor. I was sitting with her once at Corpus Christi, the biggest fiesta at Pala each year, when a woman newspaper reporter came over to interview her. She asked the most elementary questions – what did you wear? what did you eat? Roscinda answered them all very patiently.

"Oh, we ate rabbits," she said, "we ate squirrels, we ate woodrats . . . ."

"*Woodrats*?" the woman gasped – and that was Roscinda's cue.

"Oh *yes*," she said enthusiastically, "they're very good, not as greasy a chicken. What you do . . . ."

And she then proceeded to describe in full (and historically correct) detail how you hunt, catch, clean, cook, and eat woodrats (what others call packrats). And while the other old gals sitting around stifled their laughter, and the woman reporter turned green around the gills, Roscinda just looked up at her, wide-eyed and innocent as a little girl, loving every minute of it.

It's not the only time I saw her pull that on someone if she knew she could get a rise out of them.

Almost to the end of her life Roscinda remained bright, and cheerful, and interested in what was going on. My last visit was about four months before her death, and I read for her a talk on the removal I was going to give later that month. As always, she encouraged

me to tell the story, and told me she trusted me to be honest and to tell the truth – high praise, but also a grave responsibility.

(You can find a little of that story on my website: *www.socalhistoryland.mysite.com*)

Roscinda Nolasquez died in February 1987 at the age of 94, and I was honored to be invited to attend her funeral. It was, I am sure, as traditional a funeral as could be held in Southern California in the 1980s, and probably one of the last. (I was with Roscinda one time when some men came to ask her about how to put on a traditional funeral for one of their relatives. Now, she too was gone.) Her services were a seamless mix of Cupeño and Catholic traditions.

On a rainy evening I drove down to Pala once more. The ceremonies began with a Catholic rosary, followed by an all-night Indian wake in the tribal hall. Singers accompanied only by a rattle filled the room with their close harmony as people of all ages moved in and out all night long. A word I could recognize here and there, like *ashwet* (eagle) told me these were traditional funeral songs.

Everyone was fed that night. And not some little buffet line, but full, sit-down meals, a few dozen of us at a time. There was even acorn mush, set up with gelatin (I presume) in little cubes. There was more singing, too; Mexican melodies mixed with the native songs.

And Roscinda was there the whole time, in her open coffin. It was amazing how natural it seemed after a while. Everything seemed to move naturally, as if everyone knew their place. I don't suppose there were a dozen white people there.

Two of Roscinda's grandchildren invited me to their homes that night, if I wanted to get some sleep. I ended up at her grandson's, where one of the great-grandchildren gave up their bed for me.

The next morning dawned bright and clear. At the tribal hall the wake had continued all night, the singers still singing. After a few more hours we walked to the mission-era chapel nearby as the old bells tolled. Six priests, from reservations throughout Southern California, preached a full Catholic Mass. Then we got into our cars and made the drive back to Warners, reversing the very route of the removal 84 years before.

In the old village cemetery at Cupa, where Roscinda's mother lay buried, hundreds of people gathered beside a freshly dug grave. There was more singing as a hawk circled overhead. Roscinda's coffin was lowered into the earth, and we buried her. No token handfuls of earth. There were shovels, and we all took our turn.

When the job was done, the mourners stepped back and the family stepped forward and covered the fresh mound of earth with small gifts, tokens of appreciation for guests who had come for Roscinda's funeral – a tradition as old as time among the Cupeño.

I hung back, not wanting to overstep my welcome. But one of Roscinda's great-granddaughters came over to me.

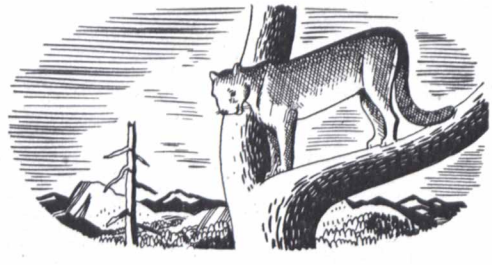
"You were a friend of Gram's, right?" she asked earnestly.

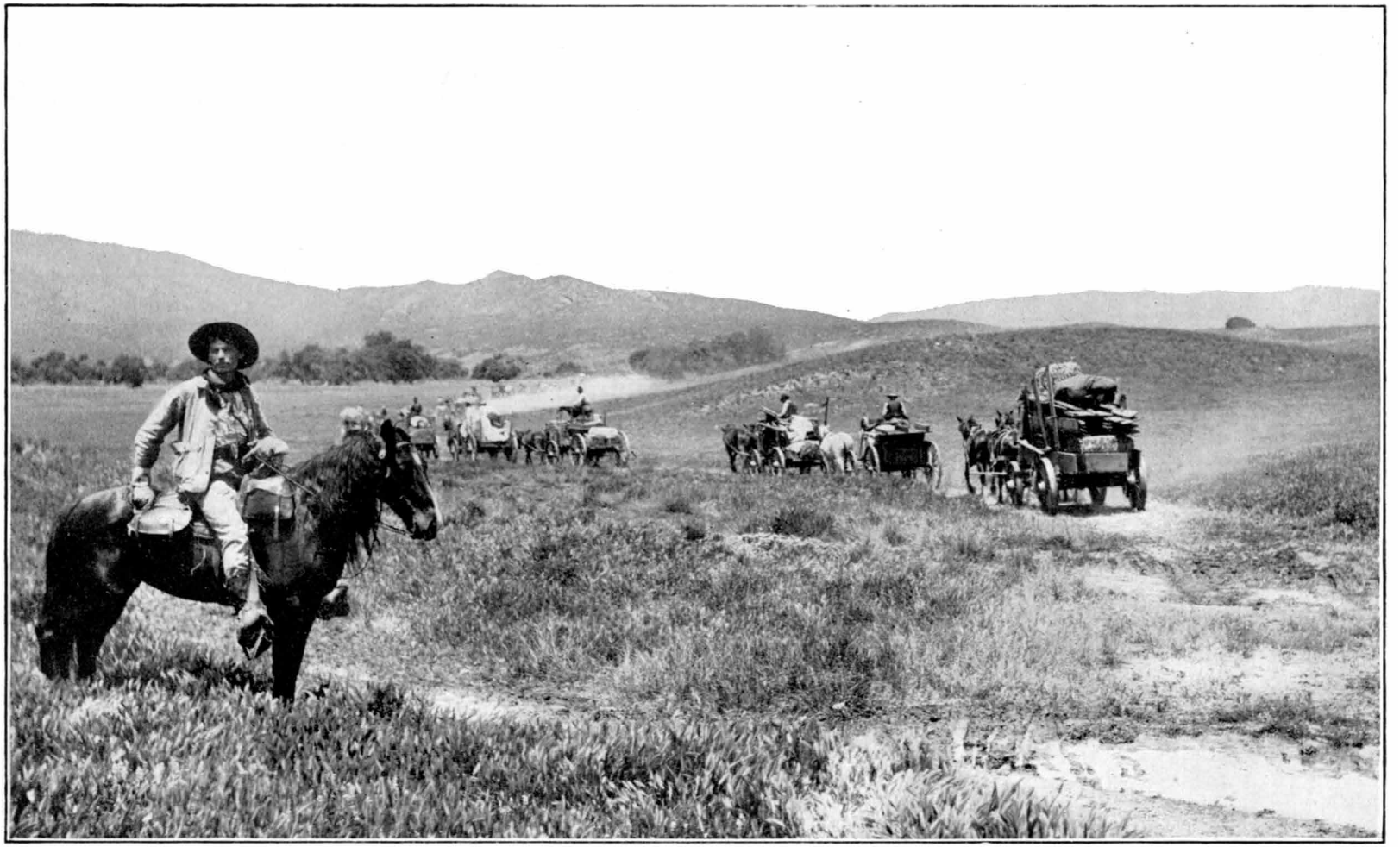
And when I told her I was she said wait here, and went and got me a gift off the grave – a potted plant.

"Here," she said, "Gram would want you to have this."

Then it was back to Pala for another meal for everyone at the tribal hall. I drove home that afternoon. The services were going when I got there and still going when I left. These were people willing to spend time with their grief.

From her memories, Roscinda Nolasquez did all she could to keep alive the history, language, and culture of her people. She wanted others to remember as well, and I shall always count myself fortunate that I was able to be one of her students – and her friend.





05 – The Crying Road (as Roscinda called it); the Cupeño begin their sad trek to the new reservation at Pala, 1903.

70th Anniversary Meeting

The Westerners gathered at the University Club of Pasadena to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Los Angeles Corral. As lunch was served, we were treated to the musical stylings of guitarists Michael Ryan and Ken Sunderland. After lunch, Jerry Selmer and Elizabeth Pomeroy gave presentations on two of the founding members of the Los Angeles Corral.

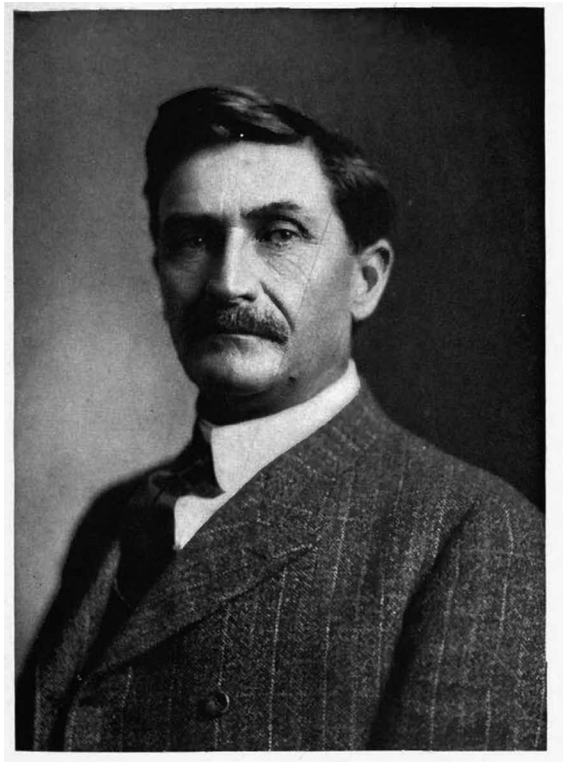
Jerry Selmer told us the story of Homer Britzman and the founding of the Los Angeles Corral. Trail's End was the home of Charles and Nancy Russell, finished in 1927 just months after Charles's death. In 1941, after Nancy died, Trail's End went up for sale and was bought by Britzman (who was a fan of Russell's artwork). In 1944, Britzman took a trip to Chicago and attended a Westerners meeting there. When he returned home, he decided to put together a Corral of his own and did so in December of 1946. The Los Angeles Corral became the fourth Corral in the Westerners organization and has been thriving for seventy years.

Next, Elizabeth Pomeroy talked to us about Glen Dawson. Glen was born in California in 1912. He was a mountaineer of the highest order. At only eighteen years old he had climbed five mountains over 14,000 feet high. When Glen graduated from UCLA in 1935, he had a choice to make: Study with one of his professors to get his Ph.D., or go on a trip around the world completely financed by his father. Glen chose the latter. During the trip, Glen cultivated relationships with booksellers he had met when he and his father travelled through Europe earlier in his life. When he returned from his trip, Glen became a partner at Dawson's Book Shop. When Homer Britzman was organizing the Los Angeles Corral, he happened to be in Dawson's Book Shop discussing it with another future member. Of course, Glen was there, and he became one of the founding members. In 1959, he became Sheriff of the Corral. Glen Dawson was a man who knew his passions and excelled at them all. Throughout his 103 years on this planet he lived a life that was full of books, mountains, friends, and, of course, the LA Corral.

Our featured speakers for the day.

(Continued)

Many members enjoyed the event.



PAT F. GARRETT
The most famous peace officer of the Southwest

Trivial Western History

Jerry Selmer

Each corral or posse of The Westerners is headed by a president whom we call "Sheriff." We know that in the Old West the Sheriff was a very important person. He was the chief law enforcement officer for each county. Many were honest and skilled in their job – some were not. When The Westerners organization was formed it seemed only appropriate that our leader bear the title of that most important figure from our Western past. But, where did that word "sheriff" come from? Some of you may know. For the benefit of those who don't, a brief explanation follows:

In old England under Saxon rule, the country was divided into counties. Each county was called a "shire." The King then appointed an official to represent him in each shire and to enforce the King's laws. This official bore the title "Reeve." The Reeve of the Shire substituted for the King on the local level and in time was known as the Shire Reeve. That term, as time went by, was shortened from Shire Reeve to Sheriff.

A few famous Sheriffs of the Old West were:

Efego Baca (NM), Johnny Behan (AZ), Morgan Earp (KS & MT), Virgil Earp (AZ & CA), Wyatt Earp (AZ), Camillus S. Fly (AZ), Pat Garrett (NM), Bat Masterson (KS) and Bill Tilghman (OK).

Why John Muir Avoided Mono Lake

Abe Hoffman

John Muir didn't ignore Mono Lake in his voluminous writings as a pioneer environmentalist. He just didn't want to go back there again, either physically or in his many books or articles. Muir found living in what became Yosemite National Park to be a safer place.

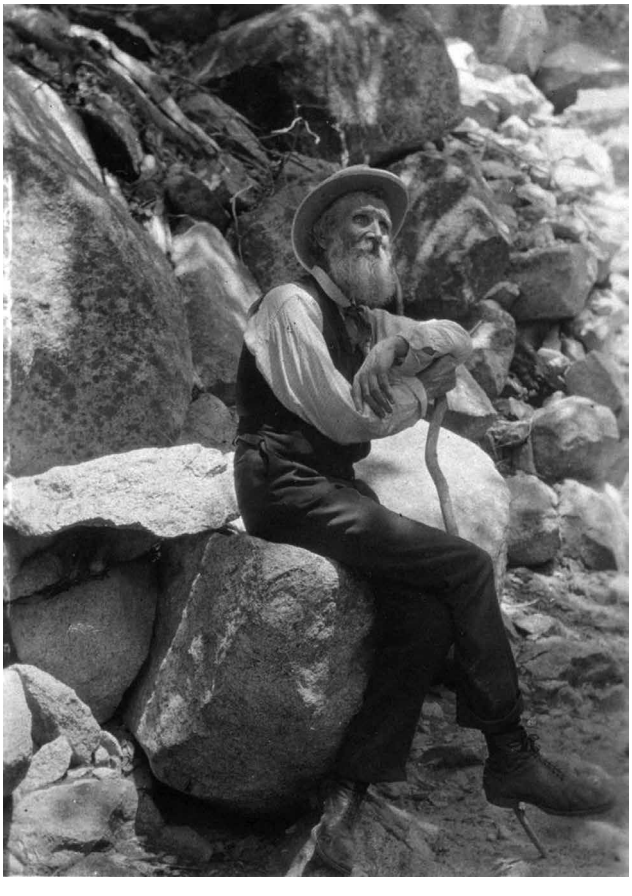
For Mono Lake had tried to kill him.

Had the lake, in a remote area of the Eastern Sierra Nevada Range, succeeded, there would be no Muir Woods, no Muir Glacier, no schools or parks or streets named for him, no books that remain in print more than a century after his death in 1914.

For John Muir, visiting Mono Lake had been a near death experience, one he didn't care to repeat.

Born in Scotland in 1838, Muir came to the United States with his family and as a young man essentially self-educated himself, dropping out of the University of Wisconsin before receiving a degree. After several years of traveling he came to California and almost immediately set out for the Sierra Nevada Range where he made his home for many years.

In 1870 scientist Joseph Le Conte accompanied a party of Berkeley students on a two-week camping trip into the Sierra Nevada Range, culminating in a visit to Mono Lake. John Muir, by then recognized as an expert on the Sierra, served as a guide for part of the trip, but left the group shortly before it arrived at the lake shore. Like his predecessors, Le Conte expressed admiration for the volcanic cones near the lake, complained of the swarms of flies, and tested the lake's waters. "The water is very buoyant, but the bathing is not pleasant," he observed. "The shores are flat and muddy, and swarm with flies. These do not trouble one, but their appearance is repulsive." He remarked on the thousands of birds that fed on the flies, concluding that the flies were the main attraction for the birds; Le Conte said nothing about the brine shrimp in the lake. Lacking a boat, the party was unable to visit the islands that Le Conte understood were "the resort of millions of gulls, which deposit their eggs there in immense quantities."



Meanwhile, John Muir eventually got around to making his own inspection of Mono Lake. In June 1875 Muir, already famous as a naturalist and proponent of the wonders of Yosemite, made an extended camping trip through the Sierra Nevada Range. As a sometime columnist for the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin*, Muir sent in periodic dispatches for a "Summering in the Sierra" series for the paper. Muir's party, including educator John Swett, artist William Keith, and J.B.McChesney, came through Tuolumne Meadows to Mono Lake; and while there Muir and his three companions decided "to sail its heavy waters and visit the islands." They borrowed a boat and set sail. "The lake was calm, lying like a sheet of molten metal--a dead sea in every sense,"

Muir wrote, though he and his companions would shortly learn how deceptive such an appearance could be.

After about two hours of rowing the party arrived at Paoha Island and wandered about the island, looking at the hot springs and vegetation. Then dark clouds gathered, and by noon the waves on the lake were cresting. Muir and his friends tried to row back to the mainland, but the boat became waterlogged before they had gone a third of the way. They returned to the island and spent a miserable time in the cold without food or blankets.

Swett, Keith, and McChesney took stock of the situation and decided to try for the mainland again, overruling Muir who felt "the only danger lay in seeking to leave the island." When the wind lifted slightly shortly after midnight, Muir agreed to take the chance. They were very, very lucky. "The wind howled, the waves broke repeatedly, and we had to bail to keep afloat," recalled Muir. "I sat with shoes unlaced, ready to swim, and feared not for life, as the water was not cold, though the dashing of bitter spray would be trying to the eyes." Muir seems to have minimized his danger, for had the boat sunk their chances of survival would have been slim. Guided by brush fires lit along the shores by Indians hunting rabbits, the party finally managed to reach the mainland. After recovering from their arduous experience the men continued on to Owens Valley.

A dozen years later Muir returned to the topic of Mono Lake in a magnificent volume, *Picturesque_California and the Region West of the Rocky Mountains, from Alaska to Mexico*, for which he served as editor and principal author. The book was published in 1888 and contained many chapters covering the attractions of California. In "The Passes of the High Sierra," the book's first chapter, Muir devoted several paragraphs to describing the lake and vicinity. Like his predecessors, Muir noted the use of Mono Lake's resources by the Indians, especially the brine fly larvae, and the special properties of the lake. "The lake water is as clear as the snowstreams that feed it, but intensely acrid and nauseating from the excessive quantities of salts accumulated by evaporation beneath a burning sun," he observed. "Of course no fish can live in it, but large flocks of geese, ducks, and swans come from beyond the mountains at certain seasons, and gulls also in great numbers, to breed on a group of volcanic islands that rise near the centre of the lake, thus making the dead, bitter sea lively and cheerful while they stay."

Muir noted that the Indians no longer seemed to visit the islands as the result of a major storm which had caused a number of Indians to drown, a tragedy he could well appreciate; but his assumption was probably incorrect. According to Muir, the Indians now preferred eating brine fly larvae to risking their lives rafting across a potentially dangerous lake to obtain gull eggs. Perhaps he was projecting his own near-disastrous experience on others. Nevertheless, Muir believed the Indians enjoyed the region, "a paradise full of all the good things of life."

Muir described the joys of sailing on the lake, leaving it unclear whether this excursion for the 1888 book was hypothetical or if he had repeated the experience since 1875. He took pleasure, he wrote, in the sights of "natives along with curving shores seen against so grand a mountain background; water birds stirring the glassy surface into white dancing spangles; the islands, black, pink, and gray, rising into a cloud of white wings of gulls; volcanoes dotting the hazy plain; and, grandest of all and overshadowing all, the mighty barrier wall of the Sierra, heaving into the sky from the water's edge, and stretching away to north and south with its marvelous wealth of peaks and crests and deep-cutting notches keenly defined, or fading away in the soft purple distance..." Muir thus had the best of all possible worlds when he visited Mono Lake, for in doing so he remained within saluting distance of his beloved Sierra.

In writing of Mono Lake and its surrounding area, Muir demonstrated his understanding of the Basin's ecosystem, but of the lake itself he found little to praise. He ignored the brine shrimp in the lake as a food source for the birds that came there. And the 1888 book said nothing about his close call with the choppy waves of Mono Lake and a cold, miserable night spent on the island. At the last, Muir pronounced Mono Lake a dead sea, attractive for its scenic values but as remote as Lapland or Labrador, and he devoted his time to study and praise—and publish prolifically—the western side of the Sierra Nevada Range.

A Field Trip to the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners Archives at USC

by Joseph Cavallo

On September 17, 2016, several Westerners enjoyed a field trip to the beautiful University of Southern California campus, Doheny Library Special Collections. It is there that the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners' archives is housed. Fifteen members of the Los Angeles Westerners were treated to a special viewing of the Corral archives. Since the collection is so big, only about one third of it was on display.

But on view, what an excellent display it was: photographs, awards, original documents, the entire Brand Book collection, memorabilia, early memoranda, many unique items, the very first Corral Directory, and an excellent representative portion of the John Robinson collection of maps, photographs and notes. John is a celebrated author and has written many books on Southern California, its mountains, hiking trails and history.

Before entering the beautiful and spacious display area, there is a nicely-designed exhibit case available to the visiting public, showing many items of note from the Westerners' collection including the artistic, limited-edition tiles made over the last 30 years, photos of some celebrity members of the Corral, books, and many colorful artifacts. For several months, this special exhibit has been and will be viewed by all who visit the USC library Special Collections, including new student tours and all campus tours in general.

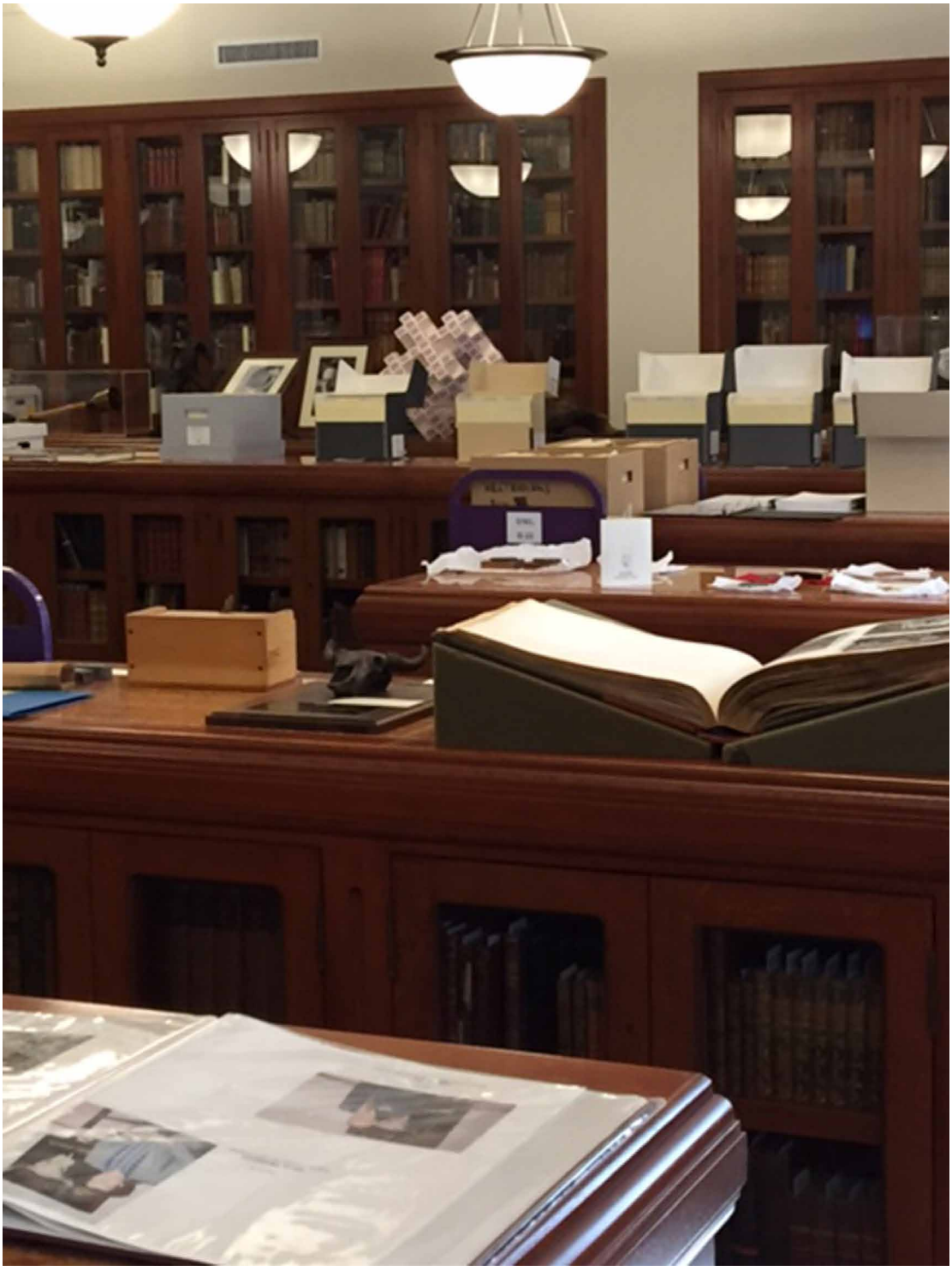
A packet of information on the collection was given to all attending the event; it included a finding aid to the entire Westerners' collection, an excellent published article about the Westerners' collection by USC archivist Jacqueline Morin, plus other mementos of the event. One member in attendance expressed how helpful it is to actually see our collection first-hand to help understand what historical information is available and where it is, for his own research.

The Los Angeles Corral of Westerners has had a history of its own since 1946 with membership including historians, authors, professors, business people, and students of Western history. The Corral has published a large body of articles on many local history subjects specializing in the minutiae of history which often go overlooked by the major works of history.

The archives also contain the original manuscripts of the Branding Iron, the quarterly publication of the Corral which is now available electronically on the Corral website, lawesterners.org. But besides its own history, this Archives repository has now become a significant place for notable individual members and authors like John Robinson to have a permanent place for their material. Organized and easily made available for researchers, the Archives is now being used as reference material by researchers who are writing new material on Western history.

The USC Special Collections archive is truly an excellent resource not only for the Los Angeles Corral but also for several other history organizations. The storage facility is climate-controlled, secure, and protected from potential disasters like fire. The finding aid or index to this material can be viewed on the USC Libraries website as well as that of the Online Archive of California.

It has been said that we study history to better understand our future and to hopefully learn to not make mistakes of the past. The Los Angeles Corral of Westerners' archives preserves some of that history and is a place to study for future students, authors, and enthusiasts of our Western history.



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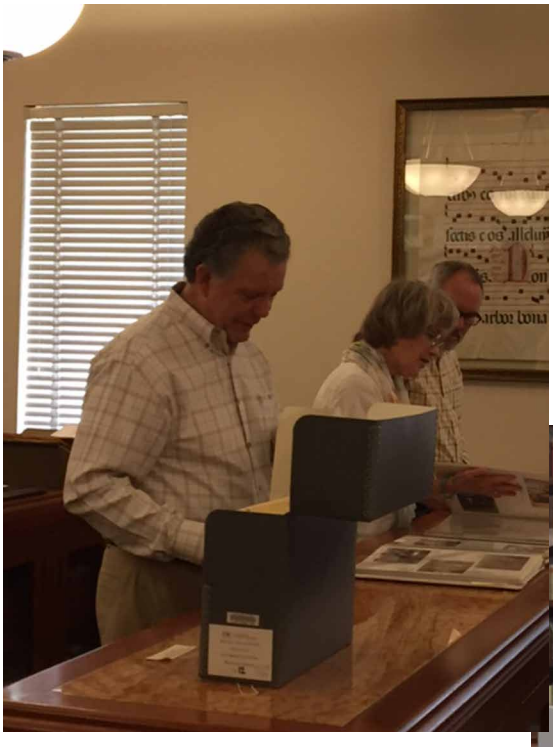
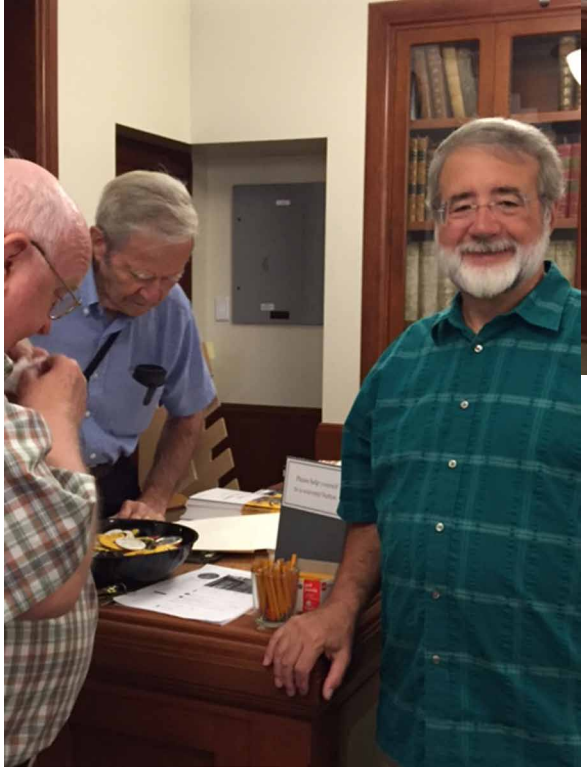
"Iron Eyes" Cody Peace Medal, 1984





Monthly Roundup . . .

September 2016

Phil Brigandi

With the 70th Anniversary of the Los Angeles Corral fast approaching, Phil Brigandi gave us a look back at the talented wordsmiths among its members. His talk at the September Roundup was a verbal bibliography of Los Angeles Westerners authors. Twenty-two of the vast number of authors in the Corral were discussed; and, like a bibliography, Phil discussed them in alphabetical order. First came the author's name and a small bit of biographical information. Phil then recommended a book or books that had been written by the author. A veritable cornucopia of books on Western history that, if placed on a bookshelf, would make any bibliophile salivate to think about.

Not content to just add to our already extremely long reading lists, Phil wanted to let the authors teach us some lessons. The first came from UCLA professor and activist John Walton Caughey. The lesson to be learned from Caughey was to never let your politics seep into your work as an historian. You are writing history, not editorials, and John Caughey understood that. The next lesson to be learned came from railway historian, publisher, and book designer, Donald Duke. That lesson being: Make sure your books and papers are taken care of after you die. Donald Duke's collections were donated to the Huntington Library.

More than just a list of authors and their books, this talk was a reminder of the astonishing breadth of talent in the Corral. At the end of his talk Phil was asked how many other authors there were in the Los Angeles Corral. The answer was another two dozen at least if you limited yourself to just books. There is an uncounted number of authors who published newspaper and journal articles. With this astonishing number of authors comes the equally astonishing range of subjects that they wrote on. A person could read a different Westerners author every day and find very little overlap in subject matter. The legacy that the men and women of the LA Corral have established with their various works is inspirational to say the least.

-Aaron Tate

No
Picture
For
November

November 2016

Matthew Boxt

The Great White Fleet is justly famous for carrying the U.S. flag to such exotic locales as Australia, Japan, and Ceylon in the world's first circumnavigation by a steamship navy. Less well known is the grand fleet's extended and eventful layover in a destination much closer to home, Mexico. Guest speaker and archaeology Ph.D Matthew Boxt shared a pictorial history of this visit in his presentation for November's Westerners Roundup, "The U.S. Naval Presence in Baja California, 1846-1909."

A hobby for antique postcard collecting brought Dr. Boxt from his familiar digging of prehistory to an altogether different sort of digging into the history of turn-of-the-

century U.S.-Mexican tourism. The Mex-ico of Porfirio Díaz's long presidency was an energetic host of equal parts rapid economic growth, social unrest (culminating in the Revolution of 1910), and throngs of European and U.S. tourists. Fittingly, it is through such past touristic mementos that he encountered the Great White Fleet's then-celebrated, now-obscure visit to Magdalena Bay, Baja California, from March 12th to April 11th, 1908.

Magdalena Bay provided the only deep-water harbor large enough for President Roosevelt's sixteen "Big Sticks" to berth between Panama and San Francisco. Here, the battleships and escorts made an ex-tended stop on their journey around the Americas from the east to west coasts of the United States, to re-supply and conduct gunnery and torpedo exercises. Crews competed for the highest accuracy scores, but competition for recreational activities was just as fierce. Each ship hosted boxing and fencing contests onboard, although ultimate bragging rights were onshore for the fleet's best baseball team, a title that would go to the U.S.S. Nebraska. Yet between the hubbub of military drills and sports, sailors and visiting journal-ists alike were able to appreciate the local, sleepy community and the raw, stark beauty of Baja California – the "last place the Lord made," in the words of one officer. The Great White Fleet would have stayed at Magdalena Bay longer were it not for the illness of its Admiral, Robley D. Evans. The great ships finally steamed for San Francisco after one month at anchor in Mexico.

Sadly, the U.S. Navy would return to Mexico six years later on its opposite shore and under un-happy circumstances for the occupation of Veracruz. But, for the time that Roosevelt's fleet visited in the last years of pre-Revolution Mexico, relations between the two North American sister republics were one of camaraderie. The Great White Fleet is a reminder in today's political climate, that the U.S. military can, and should, be as much a symbol of international cooperation as one as national strength. The Los Angeles Cor-ral of Westerners extends its thanks to Dr. Boxt for this engaging talk.

Burton Frasher photo of the desert near Desert Center and the Palen Mountains, circa 1935.

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

A WAY ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN: Joseph Walker's 1833-Trans-Sierran Passage and the Myth of Yosemite's Discovery, by Scott Stine. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. 320 pp. Hardcover, $39.95. oupress.com.

Joseph Walker looms large in Western "Mountain Men" canon as the first Anglo-American to surmount the formidable Sierra Nevada range from east to west, and set eyes upon the magnificent Yosemite Valley on October 23, 1833. Walker's discovery of California's greatest natural treasure is a fitting–and convenient–climax to his epic expedition across the Sierras, and has only recently come under scholarly scrutiny. Geomorphologist Scott Stine bucks this long-accepted wisdom and reconstructs Walker's original route in a 2015 cross-disciplinary study, A Way Across the Mountain: Joseph Walker's 1833 Trans-Sierran Passage and the Myth of Yosemite's Discovery.

According to Stine, Walker's presumed Yosemite visit was an economic, logistical, geographic, and documented impossibility. Joseph Walker's large fur-trapping expedition of fifty-eight men and two hundred horses could ill afford a time- and supply-consuming detour to Yosemite's grand vistas when easier routes were available. Given calculations for the average pace for horses and men over rough terrain, Walker's party also could not have visited Yosemite within the unrealistic route and timeframe previous historians have given to incorporate the assumed feat. Stine's background in geomorphology particularly shines in his analysis of the topography, hydrology, and biology of the Yosemite approach, which he argues do not adequately match the records of Walker's brigade clerk, Zenas Leonard. Finally, Joseph Walker never claimed to have seen Yosemite at all–this story only circulated and became accepted after his death due to an erroneous obituary and headstone.

Rather than trace Walker's journey backwards from his "canonical" Yosemite visit as previous histories have done, A Way Across the Mountain reconstructs a different course based upon a day-by-day reading of Zenas Leonard's expedition journal, matched to the physical geography of likely sites in the Sierra Nevada. Stine's research is impeccable and transparent. He outlines his project's methodology and uses footnotes liberally. Abundant maps and photographs provide visual comparisons for each proposed stopping point along Walker's journey. Rounding this off, a well-stocked appendix includes the full text (for the trans-Sierran crossing) of The Narrative of the Adventures of Zenas Leonard and highlights the disparities between its original 1839 printing and later editions. Among many conclusions for other dates, Stine deduces that Walker's position on October 23, 1833 was at Deadwood Highland–a site with features that could be mistaken for Yosemite's, but in a far more practical location.

A Way Across the Mountain is an impressive and persuasive work, but also a dense one. Stine's geomorphological analysis dominates the book, and overshadows a comparatively underdeveloped discussion of the Yosemite legend's genesis and popularization–the main impetus behind his research. His focus on each individual segment of Walker's journey is also so narrow that it becomes easy for the reader to lose track of the larger picture. A smaller-scale map illustrating the entire trans-Sierra crossing, with date markers at key points, would have been a valuable addition.

These quibbles, however, do not greatly detract from A Way Across the Mountain's value as a (excuse the pun) pioneering piece of scholarship that charts new ground in familiar territory. Although it peels away the misattributed mythos surrounding Joseph Walker, Stine's thorough journey reconstruction highlights the huge difficulty of the east-west Sierra crossing, making Walker's real accomplishments all the more impressive and worthy of the annals of the West's "Mountain Men."

--John Dillon

FOOD CONTROL AND RESISTANCE: Rations and Indigenous Peoples in the United States and South Australia, by Tamara Levi Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2016. 232 pp. Figures, Maps, Tables, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Paper, $39.95.

This is not a book of general interest. It is, instead, a *minutely* detailed account of the methods (similar and otherwise) used by the United States and South Australia to control native peoples through rationing food supplies. Both countries spring from the British models of colonialism. Although there are a number of differences in the details, the overall philosophy is generally the same. The British in Australia try to make their programs appear more humane and sophisticated than the American approach, but in the end, both are attempts to achieve the same result. That result is the subjugation of aboriginals and the taking of their land for the benefit of white settlers.

If one were doing a dissertation on the subject, this would be a great source for information. As a footnote to history it will have little if any appeal to the average history buff. I admit that I did quite a bit of skimming as I tried to read through this material. Despite that, I think my comments are fair.

One gripe I have is that nowadays university presses are doing everything they can to save money. The result is an inferiority of product. Many of the books are now only in paperback (in order to save binding costs), the type is quite small (in order to save space) and the ink is much more faint than even a few years ago (in order to save on ink costs). Unfortunately my tired old eyes find this poor level of printing a real effort to read. I have no answer to their problem, but I do not do well reading with a magnifying glass.

------- Jerry Selmer

JUNIPERO SERRA: *California's Founding Father*, by Steven W. Hackel. New York: Hill and Wang, 2013. 325 pp. Maps, Illustrations, Notes, Further Reading, Index. Cloth, $27.00. www.fsgbooks.com.

Beatified and venerated, now a saint in the Catholic Church, his statue one of two representing California in the Senate Rotunda of the nation's capital, Junipero Serra continues as an icon of California history. Children in the fourth grade dutifully construct missions out of Styrofoam, and nine of the state's 21 historic missions owe their founding to him. Serra has been the subject of numerous biographies, starting with his disciple Francisco Palou through the hagiographic work of Zephryn Engelhardt to Father Maynard J. Geiger, Msgr. Francis J. Weber, and other mainly Catholic authors who stress Serra's accomplishments over his shortcomings.

Over the past forty years, scholars and polemicists have challenged the laudatory view of Serra and the Missions, among them Berkeley demographer Sherbourne F. Cook and polemicists Rupert and Jeannette Costo, Robert H. Jackson and Edward Castillo, and other critics. Was Serra the kindly, dedicated Franciscan padre who brought the Catholic faith and agriculture to pagan, childish, barbaric Indians? Or did he exploit the Native people for their labor, blindly overlook the connection between arrival of Europeans and the spread of epidemic disease among the Indians, and ignore Native culture because he saw no value in the different beliefs of other people?

Steven Hackel enters this mix with a modern biography that utilizes a vast array of primary sources along with judicious use of secondary accounts. He takes the reader from Serra's birth on Mallorca, providing fascinating background on the island's history, to Serra's arrival in New Spain and his rise in the Franciscan Order as an apostolic missionary. Serra was dedicated to the idea of going to a region where he could bring Christianity to Native people. He was dissatisfied with his situation in Mexico and Baja California where it had become rare finding "new" people to convert. The ouster of the Jesuits in 1767 gave Serra the opportunity he had hoped for: to go to an area where the Native people had no previous encounters with Europeans—Alta California.

Hackel describes a Serra who knew that the best way to gain the confidence—and control—of the Indians was through language. Most of the Natives initially baptized were children, and they quickly acquired the Spanish language, becoming interpreters for Serra in his preaching to their parents. Serra had more difficulty in communicating with the military side of the Sacred Expedition, getting into arguments

with Pedro Fages, Fernando de Rivera y Moncada, and Felipe de Neve. The Serra of this biography seems unaware, or just blind, to the political big picture of the colonization and settlement of Spaniards in Alta California. With Russians making their way down the northwest Pacific Coast, and French and English scientific expeditions sailing around the Pacific, and Carlos III receptive to Enlightenment ideas, Serra's focus on conversion made him oblivious to what was going on outside California.

Carlos III gave the Franciscans the opportunity to become the leading apostolic missionary order in New Spain when he evicted the Jesuits from all areas under Spanish control. This was not done on the whim of a king. Carlos objected to Jesuit ultramontanism, a political view that owed more allegiance to Rome than to Madrid. It also happened that Carlos III was receptive to at least some of the Enlightenment ideas emanating from France and England. Voltaire (1694-17888), Rousseau (1706-1778), Montesquieu (1689-1755), and Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) were all contemporaries of Serra, yet Hackel finds no evidence that Serra was ever aware of their ideas and writings. Historians accord Carlos III, Catherine the Great of Russia, and Joseph II of Austria as "enlightened despots," cognizant of modern developments on the world scene. Isolated in Alta California, Serra seems stuck in the Middle Ages, unenlightened about Rousseau's depiction of the noble savage or the possibility that the Indians he considered his "children" might have had their own cosmology.

Hackel notes that Serra constantly feuded with military and political officials who were under orders to create Alta California as a colony and to let the Russians know that California was Spanish turf. His fixation on converting Indians verged on religious fanaticism. At his death in 1784 he bequeathed nine struggling missions, several thousand neophytes, and a historical legacy that merits the assessment and objectivity Hackel provides in this important biography.

--Abraham Hoffman

FROM OUR FILES

50 Years Ago
#79 – December 1966

The annual report of retiring Sheriff E.I. (Eddie) Edwards was published on page one of the Branding Iron. During 1966, two keepsakes were published, the Range Rules revised, and the Corral's archives at the Southwest Museum were organized.

At our November meeting at Taix restaurant, Corresponding Member Doyce Nunis spoke on "The Legal Side of Isaac Graham."

Paul Bailey supplied an obituary for Corresponding Member Paul Wellman (1895-1966), a novelist and Western historian. "He was a gifted writer, and one of God's gentlemen. He is, and will be, sorely missed."

25 Years Ago
#186 – Winter 1991-92

At our May 1991 meeting, "Active member Bill Warren demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Corral that California absolutely, positively is not an island, despite the most imaginative efforts of cartographers in the 17th and 18th centuries to prove otherwise." In November, Kevin Starr spoke on "Historians and the Writing of California History."

This issue of the Branding Iron featured articles on Hugo Reid by Ron Woolsey and Thaddeus Lowe by Abe Hoffman.