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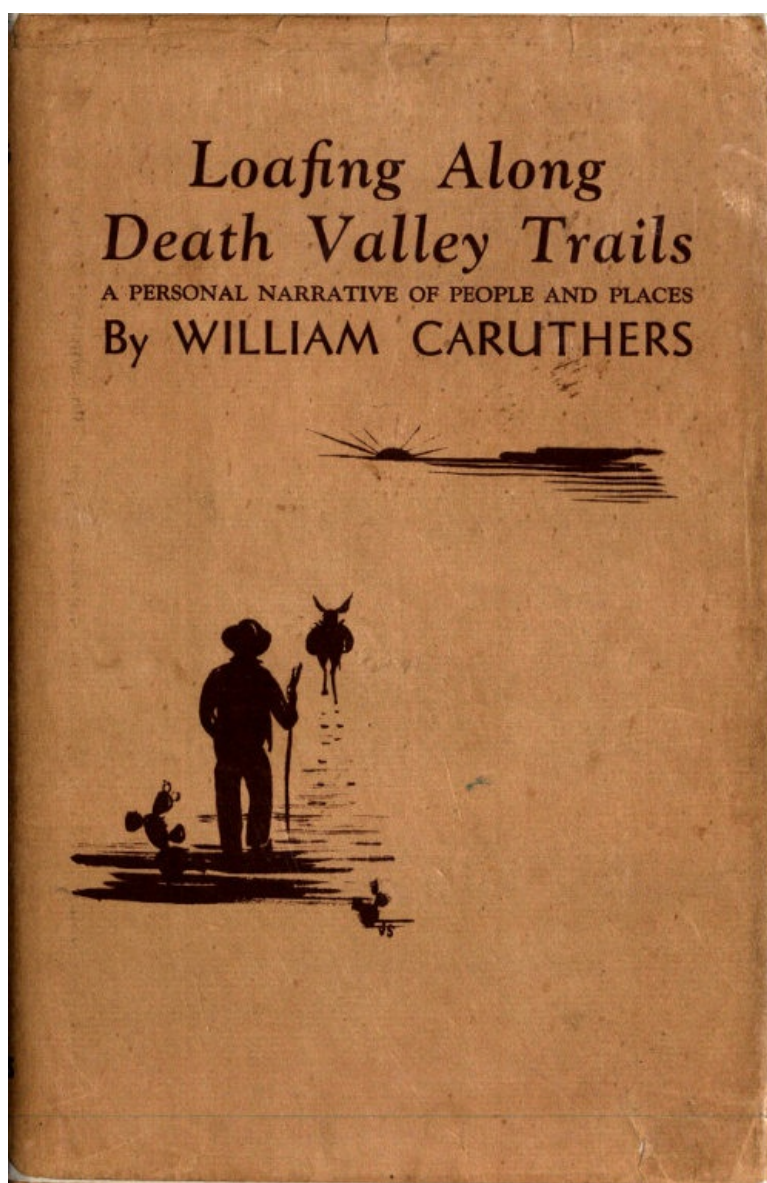
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**LOAFING ALONG  
DEATH VALLEY TRAILS**

## A Personal Narrative of People and Places

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## DEDICATION

To one who, without complaint or previous experience with desert hardships, shared with me the difficult and often dangerous adventures in part recorded in this book, which but for her persistent urging, would never have reached the printed page. She is, of course, my wife—with me in a sense far broader than the words imply: *always*—*always*.

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## THIS BOOK

This book is a personal narrative of people and places in Panamint Valley, the Amargosa Desert, and the Big Sink at the bottom of America. Most of the places which excited a gold-crazed world in the early part of the century are now no more, or are going back to sage. Of the actors who made the history of the period, few remain.

It was the writer's good fortune that many of these men were his friends. Some were or would become tycoons of mining or industry. Some would lucklessly follow jackasses all their lives, to find no gold but perhaps a finer treasure—a rainbow in the sky that would never fade.

It is the romance, the comedy, the often stark tragedy these men left along the trail which you will find in the pages that follow.

Necessarily the history of the region, often dull, is given first because it gives a clearer picture of the background and second, because that history is little known, being buried in the generally unread diaries of John C. Fremont, Kit Carson, Lt. Brewerton, Jedediah Smith, and the stories of early Mormon explorers.

It is interesting to note that a map popular with adventurers of Fremont's time could list only six states west of the Mississippi River. These were Texas, Indian Territory, Missouri, Oregon, and Mexico's two possessions—New

Mexico and Upper California. There was no Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Washington, or either of the Dakotas. No Kansas. No Nebraska.

Sources of material are given in the text and though careful research was made, it should be understood that the history of Death Valley country is argumentative and bold indeed is one who says, "Here are the facts."

With something more than mere formality, the writer wishes to thank those mentioned below:

My longtime friend, Senator Charles Brown of Shoshone who has often given valuable time to make available research material which otherwise would have been almost impossible to obtain. Of more value, have been his personal recollections of Greenwater, Goldfield, and Tonopah, in all of which places he had lived in their hectic days. 10

Mrs. Charles Brown, daughter of the noted pioneer, Ralph Jacobus (Dad) Fairbanks and her sister, Mrs. Bettie Lisle, of Baker, California. The voluminous scrapbooks of both, including one of their mother, Celestia Abigail Fairbanks, all containing information of priceless value were always at my disposal while preparing the manuscript.

Dad Fairbanks, innumerable times my host, was a walking encyclopedia of men and events.

One depository of source material deserves special mention. Nailed to the wall of Shorty Harris' Ballarat cabin was a box two feet wide, four feet long, with four shelves. The box served as a cupboard and its calico curtains operated on a drawstring. On the top shelf, Shorty would toss any letter, clipping, record of mine production, map, or bulletin that the mails had brought, visitors had given, or friends had sent. And there they gathered the dust of years.

Wishing to locate the address of Peter B. Kyne, author of *The Parson of Panamint*, whose host Shorty had been, I removed these documents and discovered that the catch-all shelf was a veritable treasure of little-known facts about the Panamint of earlier days.

There were maps, reports of geologic surveys, and bulletins now out of print; newspapers of the early years and scores of letters with valuable material bearing the names of men internationally known.

It is with a sense of futility that I attempt to express my indebtedness to my wife, who with a patience I cannot comprehend, kept me searching for the facts whenever and wherever the facts were to be found; typing and re-typing the manuscript in its entirety many times to make it, if possible, a worthwhile book.

Ontario, California, December 22, 1950

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## **Chapter I**

### **A Foretaste of Things to Come**

In the newspaper office where the writer worked, was a constant parade of adventurers. Talented press agents; promoters; moguls of mining and prospectors who, having struck it rich, now lived grandly in palatial homes, luxurious hotels or impressive clubs. In their wake, of course, was an engaging breed of liars, and an occasional adventuress who by luck or love had left a boom town crib to live thereafter "in marble halls with vassals" at her command. All brought arresting yarns of Death Valley.

For 76 years this Big Sink at the bottom of America had been a land of mystery and romantic legend, but there had been little travel through it since the white man's first crossing. "I would have starved to death on tourists' trade," said the pioneer Ralph (Dad) Fairbanks.

More than 3,000,000 people lived within a day's journey in 1925, but excepting a few, who lived in bordering villages and settlements, those who had actually been in Death Valley could be counted on one's fingers and toes. The reasons were practical. It was the hottest region in America, with few water holes and these far apart. There were no roads—only makeshift trails left by the wagons that had hauled borax in the Eighties. Now they were little more than twisting scars through brush, over dry washes and dunes, though listed on the maps as roads. For the novice it was a foolhardy gamble with death. "There are easier ways of committing suicide," a seasoned desert man advised.

I had been up and down the world more perhaps than the average person and this seemed to be a challenge to one with a vagabond's foot and a passion for remote places. So one day I set out for Death Valley.

At the last outpost of civilization, a two-cabin resort, the sign over a sand-blasted, false-fronted building stressed: "Free Information. Cabins. Eats. Gas. Oil. Refreshments." 12

Needing all these items, I parked my car and walked into a foretaste of things-to-come. The owner, a big, genial fellow, was behind the counter using his teeth to remove the cork from a bottle labeled "Bourbon"—a task he deftly accomplished by twisting on the bottle instead of the cork. "I want a cabin for the night," I told him, "and when you have time, all the free information I can get."

"You've come to headquarters," he beamed as he set the bottle on the table, glanced at me, then at the liquor and added: "Don't know your drinking sentiments but if you'd like to wet your whistle, take one on the house."

While he was getting glasses from a cabinet behind the counter, a slender, wiry man with baked skin, coal-black eyes and hair came through a rear door, removed a knapsack strapped across his shoulders and set it in the farthest corner of the room. Two or three books rolled out and were replaced only after he had wiped them carefully with a red bandana kerchief. A sweat-stained khaki shirt and faded blue overalls did not affect an impression he gave of some outstanding quality. It may have been the air of self assurance, the calm of his keen eyes or the majesty of his stride as he crossed the floor.

My host glanced at the newcomer and set another glass on the table, "You're in luck," he said to me. "Here comes a man who can tell you anything you want to know about this country." A moment later the newcomer was introduced as "Blackie."

"Whatever Blackie tells you is gospel. Knows every trail man or beast ever made in that hell-hole, from one end to the other. Ain't that right, Blackie?"

Without answering, Blackie focused an eye on the bottle, picked it up, shook it, watched the beads a moment. "Bourbon hell ... just plain tongue oil."

After the drink my host showed me to one of the cabins—a small, boxlike structure. Opening the door he waved me in. "One fellow said he couldn't whip a cat in this cabin, but you haven't got a cat." He set my suitcase on a sagging bed, brought in a bucket of water, put a clean towel on the roller and wiped the dust from a water glass with two big fingers. "When you get settled come down and loaf with us. Just call me Bill. Calico Bill, I'm known as. Came up here from the Calico Mountains."

"Just one question," I said. "Don't you get lonesome in all this desolation?"

"Lonesome? Mister, there's something going on every minute. You'd be surprised. Like what happened this morning. Did you meet a truck on your way up, with a husky young driver and a girl in a skimpy dress?" 13

"Yes," I said. "At a gas station a hundred miles back, and the girl was a breath-taker."

"You can say that again," Bill grinned. "Prettiest gal I ever saw—bar none. She's just turned eighteen. Married to a fellow fifty-five if he's a day. He owns a truck and hauls for a mine near here at so much a load. Jealous sort. Won't let her out of his sight. You can't blame a young fellow for looking at a pretty girl. But this brute is so crazy jealous he took to locking her up in his cabin while he was at work. Fact is, she's a nice clean kid and if I'd known about it, I'd have chased him off. I reckon she was too ashamed to tell anybody.

"Of course the young fellows found it out and just to worry him, two or three of 'em came over here to play a prank on him and a hell of a prank it was. They made a lot of tracks around his cabin doors and windows. He saw the tracks and figured she'd been stepping out on him. So instead of locking her in as usual, he began to take her to work with him so he could keep his eyes on her.

"Yesterday it happened. His truck broke down and this morning he left early to get parts, but he was smart enough to take her shoes with him. Then he nailed the doors and windows from the outside. Soon as he was out of hearing, somehow she busted out and came down to my store barefooted and asked me if I knew of any way she could get a ride out. 'I'm leaving, if I have to walk,' she says. Then she told me her story. He'd bought her back in Oklahoma for \$500. She is one of ten children. Her folks didn't have enough to feed 'em all. This old guy, who lived in their neighborhood and had money, talked her parents into the deal. 'I just couldn't see my little sisters go hungry,' she said, and like a fool she married him.

"I reckon the Lord was with her. We see about three outside trucks a year around here, but I'd no sooner fixed her up with a pair of shoes before one pulls up for gas. I asked the driver if he'd give her a ride to Barstow. He took just one look. 'I sure will,' he says and off they went.

"You see what I mean," Bill said, concluding his story. "Things like that. Of course we don't watch no parades but we also don't get pushed around and run over and tromped on."

In the last twelve words Bill expressed what hundreds have failed to explain in pages of flowered phrase—the appeal of the desert.

Soon I was back at the store. Bill and Blackie, over a new bottle were swapping memories of noted desert characters who had highlighted the towns and camps from Tonopah to the last hell-roarer. The great, the humble, the odd and eccentric. Through their conversation ran such names as Fireball Fan; Mike Lane; 14 Mother Featherlegs; Shorty Harris; Tiger Lil; Hungry Hattie; Cranky Casey; Johnny-Behind-the-Gun; Dad Fairbanks; Fraction Jack Stewart; the Indian, Hungry Bill; and innumerable Slims and Shortys featured in yarns of the wasteland.

Blackie's chief interest in life, Bill told me was books. "About all he does is read. Doesn't have to work. Of course, like everybody in this country, he's always going to find \$2,000,000,000 this week or next."

Though only incidental, history was brought into their conversation when Bill, giving me "free information" as his sign announced, told me I would be able to see the place where Manly crossed the Panamint.

"Manly never knew where he crossed," Blackie said. "He tried to tell about it 40 years afterward and all he did was to start an argument that's going on yet. That's why I say you can write the known facts about Death Valley history on a postage stamp with the end of your thumb."

The tongue oil loosened Calico Bill's story of Indian George and his trained mountain sheep. "George had the



right idea about gold. Find it, then take it out as needed. One time an artist came to George's ranch and made a picture of the ram. When he had finished it he stepped behind his easel and was watching George eat a raw gopher snake when the goat came up. Rams are jealous and mistaking the picture for a rival, he charged like a thunderbolt.

"It didn't hurt the picture, but knocked the painter and George through both walls of George's shanty. George picked himself up. 'Heap good picture. Me want.' The fellow gave it to him and for months George would tease that goat with the picture. One day he left it on a boulder while he went for his horse. When he got back, the boulder was split wide open and the picture was on top of a tree 50 feet away.

"Somebody told George about a steer in the Chicago packing house which led other steers to the slaughter pen and it gave George an idea. One day I found him and his goat in a Panamint canyon and asked why he brought the goat along. 'Me broke. Need gold.' Since he didn't have pick, shovel, or dynamite, I asked how he expected to get gold.

"'Pick, shovel heap work,' George said. 'Dynamite maybe kill. Sheep better. Me show you.' He told me to move to a safe place and after scattering some grain around for the goat, George scaled the boulder. It was big as a house. A moment later I saw him unroll the picture and with strings attached, let it rest on one corner of the big rock. Then holding the strings, he disappeared into his blind higher up. Suddenly he made a hissing noise. The Big Horn stiffened, saw the picture, lowered his head and never in my life have I seen such a crash. Dust filled the air and fragments fell for 10 minutes. When I went over George was gathering nuggets big as goose eggs. 15 'White man heap dam' fool,' he grunted. 'Wants too much gold all same time. Maybe lose. Maybe somebody steal. No can steal boulder.'"

The "tongue oil" had been disposed of when Blackie suggested that we step over to his place, a short distance around the point of a hill. "Plenty more there."

Bill had told me that as a penniless youngster Blackie had walked up Odessa Canyon one afternoon. Within three days he was rated as a millionaire. Within three months he was broke again. Later Blackie told me, "That's somebody's dream. I got about \$200,000 and decided I belonged up in the Big Banker group. They welcomed me and skinned me out of my money in no time."

It was Blackie who proved to my satisfaction that money has only a minor relation to happiness. His house was part dobe, part white tufa blocks. On his table was a student's lamp, a pipe, and can of tobacco. A book held open by a hand axe. Other books were shelved along the wall. He had an incongruous walnut cabinet with leaded glass doors. Inside, a well-filled decanter and a dozen whiskey glasses and a pleasant aroma of bourbon came from a keg covered with a gunny sack and set on a stool in the corner.

"This country's hard on the throat," he explained.

Blackie's kingdom seemed to have extended from the morning star to the setting sun. He had been in the Yukon, in New Zealand, South Africa, and the Argentine. Gold, hemp, sugar, and ships had tossed fortunes at him which were promptly lost or spent.

For a man who had found compensation for such luck, there is no defeat. Certainly his philosophy seemed to meet his needs and that is the function of philosophy.

It was cool in the late evening and he made a fire, chucked one end of an eight-foot log into the stove and put a chair under the protruding end. Bill asked why he didn't cut the log. "Listen," Blackie said, "you're one of 100 million reasons why this country is misgoverned. Why should I sweat over that log when a fire will do the job?... That book? Just some fellow's plan for a perfect world. I hope I'll not be around when they have it.

"The town of Calico? It was a live one. When John McBryde and Lowery Silver discovered the white metal there, a lot of us desert rats got in the big money. In the first seven years of the Eighties it was bonanza and in the eighth the town was dead."

But the stories of fortunes made in Mule and Odessa Canyons were of less importance to him than a habit of the town judge. "Chewed tobacco all the time and swallowed the juice, 'If a fellow's guts can't stand it,' he 16 would say, 'he ought to quit,' and he'd clap a fine on anybody who spat in his court.

"Never knew Jack Dent, did you? Englishman. Now there was a drinking man. Said his only ambition was to die drunk. One pay day he got so cockeyed he couldn't stand, so his pals laid him on a pool table and went on with their drinking. Every time they ordered, Jack hollered for his and somebody would take it over and pour it down him. 'Keep 'em comin',' he says. 'If I doze off, just pry my jaws open and pour it down.'

"The boys took him at his word. Every time they drank, they took a drink to Jack. When the last round came they took Jack a big one. They tried to pry his lips open but the lips didn't give. Jack Dent's funeral was the biggest ever held in the town.

"Bill was telling you I made a million there, and every now and then I hear of somebody telling somebody else I made a million in Africa. And another in the Yukon. The truth is, what little I've got came out of a hole in a whiskey barrel instead of a mine shaft.

"A few years back a strike was made down in the Avawatz that started a baby gold rush. I joined it. A fellow named Gypsum came in with a barrel of whiskey, thinking there'd be a town, but it didn't turn out that way. Gypsum had no trouble disposing of his liquor and stayed around to do a little prospecting. One day when I was starting for Johannesburg, he asked me to deliver a message to a bartender there. Gypsum had a meat cleaver in

his hand and was sharpening it on a butcher's steel to cut up a mountain sheep he'd killed.

"Just ask for Klondike and tell him to send my stuff. He'll understand. Tell him if he doesn't send it, I'm coming after it."

"I didn't know at the time that Gypsum had killed three men in honest combat and that one of them had been dispatched with a meat cleaver.

"I delivered the message verbatim. Klondike looked a bit worried. 'What's Gypsum doing?' he asked. 'When I left,' I said, 'he was sharpening a meat cleaver.' Klondike turned white. 'I'll have it ready before you go.'

"When I called later, he told me he'd put Gypsum's stuff in the back of my car. When I got back to camp and Gypsum came to my tent to ask about it, I told him to get it out of the car, which was parked a few feet away. Gypsum went for it and in a moment I heard him cussing. I looked out and he was trying to shoulder a heavy sack. Before I could get out to help him, the sack got away from him and burst at his feet. The ground was covered with nickles, dimes, quarters, halves. 'There's another sack.' Gypsum said. 'The son of a bitch has sent me \$2500 in chicken feed. Just for spite.'

"Because it was a nuisance, Gypsum loaned it to the fellows about, all of whom were his friends. They didn't want it but took it just to accommodate Gypsum. There was nothing to spend it for. Somebody started a poker game and I let 'em use my tent because it was the largest. I rigged up a table by sawing Gypsum's whiskey barrel in two and nailing planks over the open end. Every night after supper they started playing. I furnished light and likker and usually I set out grub. It didn't cost much but somebody suggested that in order to reimburse me, two bits should be taken out of every jackpot. A hole was slit in the top. It was a fast game and the stakes high. It ran for weeks every evening and the Saturday night session ended Monday morning. 17

"Of course some were soon broke and they began to borrow from one another. Finally everybody was broke and all the money was in my kitty. I took the top off the barrel and loaned it to the players, taking I.O.U.'s, I had to take the top off a dozen times and when it was finally decided there was no pay dirt in the Avawatz, I had a sack full of I.O.U.'s.

"Once I tried to figure out how many times that \$2500 was loaned, but I gave up. I learned though, why these bankers pick up a pencil and start figuring the minute you start talking. They are on the right end of the pencil."

Early the next morning while Bill was servicing my car for the trip ahead, with some tactful mention of handy gadgets he had for sale, we noticed Blackie coming with a man who ran largely to whiskers. "That's old Cloudburst Pete," Bill told me. "Another old timer who has shuffled all over this country."

"How did he get that moniker?" I asked.

"One time Pete came in here and was telling us fellows about a narrow escape he had from a cloudburst over in the Panamint. Pete said the cloud was just above him and about to burst and would have filled the canyon with a wall of water 90 feet high. A city fellow who had stopped for gas, asked Pete how come he didn't get drowned. Pete took a notion the fellow was trying to razz him. 'Well, Mister, if you must know, I lassoed the cloud, ground-hitched it and let it bust....'"

After greeting Pete, Bill asked if he'd been walking all night.

"Naw," Pete said. "Started around 11 o'clock, I reckon. Not so bad before sunup. Be hell going back. But I didn't come here to growl about the weather. I want some powder so I can get started. Found color yesterday. Looks like I'm in the big money."

"Fine," Bill said. "I heard you've been laid up."

"Oh, I broke a leg awhile back. Fell in a mine shaft. Didn't amount to much."

"I know about that, but didn't you get hurt in a blast since then?"

"Oh that—yeh. Got blowed out of a 20-foot hole. Three-four ribs busted, the doc said. Come to think of it, believe he mentioned a fractured collar bone. Wasn't half as bad as last week." 18

"Good Lord ... what happened last week?"

"That crazy Cyclone Thompson. You know him ... he pulled a stope gate and let five-six tons of muck down on me. Nobody knew it—not even Cyclone. Wore my fingers to the bone scratching out. Look at these hands...."

Pete held up his mutilated hands. "They'll heal but bigod—that pair of brand new double-stitched overalls won't."

"Well," Bill chuckled, "you know where the powder is. Go in and get it."

Bill and Blackie remained to see me off, each with a friendly word of advice. "Just follow the wheel tracks," Bill said, as I climbed into my car and Blackie added: "Keep your eyes peeled for the cracker box signs along the edge of the road. You'll see 'em nailed to a stake and stuck in the ground."

A moment later I was headed into a silence broken only by the whip of sage against the car. Ahead was the glimmer of a dry lake and in the distance a great mass of jumbled mountains that notched the pale skies. Beyond—what?

## Chapter II

### What Caused Death Valley?

When you travel through the desolation of Death Valley along the Funeral Range, you may find it difficult to believe that several thousand feet above the top of your car was once a cool, inviting land with rivers and forests and lakes, and that hundreds of feet below you are the dry beds of seas that washed its shores.

Scientists assert that all life—both animal and vegetable began in these buried seas—probably two and one-half billion years ago.

It is certain that no life could have existed on the thin crust of earth covered as it was with deadly gases. Therefore, your remotest ancestors must have been sea creatures until they crawled out or were washed ashore in one of Nature's convulsions to become land dwellers.

Since sea water contains more gold than has ever been found on the earth, it may be said that man on his way up from the lowest form of life was born in a solution of gold.

That he survived, is due to two urges—the sex urge and the urge for food. Without either all life would cease.

NOTE. The author's book, *Life's Grand Stairway* soon to be published, contains a fast moving, factual story of man and his eternal quest for gold from the beginning of recorded time.

Camping one night at Mesquite Spring, I heard a prospector cursing his burro. It wasn't a casual cursing, but a classic revelation of one who knew burros—the soul of them, from inquisitive eyes to deadly heels. A moment later he was feeding lumps of sugar to the beast and the feud ended on a pleasant note.

We were sitting around the camp fire later when the prospector showed me a piece of quartz that glittered at twenty feet.

"Do you have much?" I asked.

"I've got more than Carter had oats, and I'm pulling out at daylight. Me and Thieving Jack."

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"I suppose," I said aimlessly, "you'll retire to a life of luxury; have a palace, a housekeeper, and a French chef."

"Nope. Chinaman cook. Friend of mine struck it rich. He had a female cook. After that he couldn't call his soul his own. Me? First money I spend goes for pie. Never had my fill of pie. Next—" He paused and looked affectionately at Thieving Jack. "I'm going to buy a ranch over at Lone Pine with a stream running smack through the middle. Snow water. I aim to build a fence head high all around it and pension that burro off. As for me—no mansion. Just a cottage with a screen porch all around. I'm sick of horseflies and mosquitoes."

He was off at sunrise and my thought was that God went with him and Thieving Jack.

If you encounter scorching heat you will find little comfort in the fact that icebergs once floated in those ancient seas. It is almost certain that you will be curious about the disorderly jumble of gutted hills; the colorful canyons and strange formations and ask yourself what caused it.

The answer is found on Black Mountain in the Funeral Range. Here occurred a convulsion of nature without any known parallel and the tops of nearby mountains became the bottom of America—an upheaval so violent that the oldest rocks were squeezed under pressure from the nethermost stratum of the earth to lie alongside the youngest on the surface.

The seas and the fish vanished. The forests were buried. The prehistoric animals, the dinosaurs and elephants were trapped.

The result, after undetermined ages, is today's Death Valley. A shorter explanation was that of my companion on my first trip to Black Mountain—a noted desert character—Jackass Slim. There we found a scientist who wished to enlighten us. To his conversation sprinkled with such words as Paleozoic and pre-Cambrian Slim listened raptly for an hour. Then the learned man asked Slim if he had made it plain.

"Sure," Slim said. "You've been trying to say hell broke loose."

The Indians, who saw Death Valley first, called it "Tomesha," which means Ground Afire, and warned adventurers, explorers, and trappers that it was a vast sunken region, intolerant of life.

The first white Americans known to have seen it, belonged to the party of explorers led by John C. Fremont and guided by Kit Carson.

Death Valley ends on the south in the narrow opening between the terminus of the Panamint Range and that of the Black Mountains. Through this opening, though unaware of it, Fremont saw the dry stream bed of the Amargosa River, on April 27, 1844, flowing north and in the distance "a high, snowy mountain." This mountain was Telescope Peak, 11,045 feet high.

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Nearly six years later, impatient Forty Niners enroute to California gold fields, having heard that the shortest way was through this forbidden sink, demanded that their guide take them across it.

"I will go to hell with you, but not through Death Valley," said the wise Mormon guide, Captain Jefferson Hunt.

Scorning Hunt's warning, the Bennett-Arcane party deserted and with the Jayhawkers became the first white Americans to cross Death Valley. The suffering of the deserters, widely advertised, gave the region an evil reputation that kept it practically untraveled, unexplored, and accursed for the next 75 years, or until Charles Brown of Shoshone succeeded in having wheel tracks replaced with roads.

With the opening of the Eichbaum toll road from Lone Pine to Stovepipe Wells in 1926-7 a trickle of tourists began, but actually as late as 1932, Death Valley had fewer visitors than the Congo. A few prospectors, a few daring adventurers and a few ranchers had found in the areas adjoining, something in the great Wide Open that answered man's inherent craving for freedom and peace. "The hills that shut this valley in," explained the old timer, "also shut out the mess we left behind."

Tales of treasure came in the wake of the Forty Niners but it was not until 1860 that the first prospecting party was organized by Dr. Darwin French at Oroville, California. In the fall of that year he set out to find the Lost Gunsight mine, the story of which is told in another chapter.

On this trip Dr. French discovered and gave his name to Darwin Falls and Darwin Wash in the Panamint range. He named Bennett's Well on the floor of Death Valley to honor Asa (or Asabel) Bennett, a member of the Bennett-Arcane party. He gave the name of another member of that party to Towne's Pass, now a thrilling route into Death Valley but then a breath-taking challenge to death.

He named Furnace Creek after finding there a crude furnace for reducing ore. He also named Panamint Valley and Panamint Range, but neither the origin of the word Panamint nor its significance is known. Indians found there said their tribe was called Panamint, but those around there are Shoshones and Piutes. (See [note](#) at end of this chapter.)

Also in 1860 William Lewis Manly who with John Rogers, a brave and husky Tennessean had rescued the survivors of the Bennett-Arcane party, returned to the valley he had named, to search for the Gunsight. Manly found nothing and reported later he was deserted by his companions and escaped death only when rescued by a wandering Indian.

In 1861 Lt. Ives on a surveying mission explored a part of the valley in connection with the California Boundary Commission. He used for pack animals some of the camels which had been provided by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, for transporting supplies across the western deserts. 22

In 1861 Dr. S. G. George, who had been a member of French's party, organized one of his own and for the same reason—to find the Lost Gunsight. He made several locations of silver and gold, explored a portion of the Panamint Range. The first man ever to scale Telescope Peak was a member of the George party. He was W. T. Henderson, who had also been with Dr. French. Henderson named the mountain "because," he said, "I could see for 200 miles in all directions as clearly as through a telescope."

The most enduring accomplishment of the party was to bring back a name for the mountain range east of what is now known as Owens Valley, named for one of Fremont's party of explorers. From an Indian chief they learned this range was called Inyo and meant "the home of a Great Spirit." Ultimately the name was given to the county in the southeast corner of which is Death Valley.

Tragedy dogged all the early expeditions. July 21, 1871 the Wheeler expedition left Independence to explore Death Valley. This party of 60 included geologists, botanists, naturalists, and soldiers. One detachment was under command of Lt. George Wheeler. Lt. Lyle led the other. Lyle's detachment was guided by C. F. R. Hahn and the third day out Hahn was sent ahead to locate water. John Koehler, a naturalist of the party is alleged to have said that he would kill Hahn if he didn't find water. Failing to return Hahn was abandoned to his fate and he was never seen again.

William Eagan, guide of Wheeler's party was sent to Rose Springs for water. He also failed to return. What became of him is not known and the army officers were justly denounced for callous indifference. On the desert, inexcusable desertion of a companion brands the deserter as an outcast and has often resulted in his lynching.

It is interesting to note that apart from a Government Land Survey in 1856, which proved to be utterly worthless, there is no authentic record of the white man in Death Valley between 1849 and 1860. However, during this decade the canyons on the west side of the Panamint harbored numerous renegades who had held up a Wells-Fargo stage or slit a miner's throat for his poke of gold. Some were absorbed into the life of the wasteland when the discovery of silver in Surprise Canyon brought a hectic mob of adventurers to create hell-roaring Panamint City.

When, in the middle Seventies Nevada silver kings, John P. Jones and Wm. R. Stewart, who were Fortune's children on the Comstock, decided \$2,000,000 was enough to lose at Panamint City, many of the outlaws wandered over the mountain and down the canyon to cross Death Valley and settle wherever they thought they could survive on the eastern approaches. 23

Soon Ash Meadows, Furnace Creek Ranch, Stump Springs, the Manse Ranch, Resting Springs, and Pahrump Ranch became landmarks.

The first white man known to have settled in Death Valley was a person of some cunning and no conscience,

known as Bellerin' Teck, Bellowing Tex Bennett, and Bellowin' Teck. He settled at Furnace Creek in 1870 and erected a shanty alongside the water where the Bennett-Arcane party had camped when driven from Ash Meadows by Indians whose gardens they had raided and whose squaws they had abused, according to a legend of the Indians and referred to with scant attention to details, by Manly. (Panamint Tom, famed Indian of the region, in speaking of this raid by the whites, told me that the head man of his tribe sent runners to Ash Meadows for reinforcements and that the recruits were marched in circles around boulders and in and out of ravines to give the impression of superior strength. This strategy deceived the whites, who then went on their way.)

Teck claimed title to all the country in sight. Little is known of his past, but whites later understood that he chose the forbidding region to outsmart a sheriff. He brought water through an open ditch from its source in the nearby foothills and grew alfalfa and grain. He named his place Greenland Ranch and it was the beginning of the present Furnace Creek Ranch.

There is a tradition that Teck supplemented his meager earnings from the ranch by selling half interests to wayfarers, subsequently driving them off.

There remains a record of one such victim—a Mormon adventurer named Jackson. In part payment Teck took a pair of oxen, Jackson's money and his only weapon, a rifle. Shortly Teck began to show signs of dissatisfaction. His temper flared more frequently and Jackson became increasingly alarmed. When finally Teck came bellowing from his cabin, brandishing his gun, Jackson did the right thing at the right moment. He fled, glad to escape with his life.

This became the pattern for the next wayfarer and the next. Teck always craftily demanded their weapons in the trade, but knowing that sooner or later some would take their troubles to a sheriff or return for revenge, Teck sold the ranch, left the country and no trace of his destiny remains.

Before Aaron and Rosie Winters or Borax Smith ever saw Death Valley, one who was to attain fame greater than either listed more than 2000 different plants that grew in the area. 24

Notwithstanding this important contribution to knowledge of the valley's flora, only one or two historians have mentioned his name, and these in books or periodicals long out of print.

Two decades later he was to become famous as Brigadier General Frederick Funston of the Spanish-American War—the only major war in America's history fought by an army which was composed entirely of volunteers without a single draftee.

Of interest to this writer is the fact that he was my brigade commander and a soldier from the boots up. Not five feet tall, he was every inch a fighting man. I served with him while he captured Emilio Aguinaldo, famous *Filipino Insurrecto*.

25

## Chapter III Aaron and Rosie Winters

While Bellerin' Teck was selling half interests in the spectacular hills to the unwary, he actually walked over a treasure of more millions than his wildest dreams had conjured.

Teck's nearest neighbor lived at Ash Meadows about 60 miles east of the valley.

Ash Meadows is a flat desert area in Nevada along the California border. With several water holes, subterranean streams, and abundant wild grass it was a resting place for early emigrants and a hole-in for prospectors. It was also an ideal refuge for gentlemen who liked its distance from sheriffs and the ease with which approaching horsemen could be seen from nearby hills.

Lacking was woman. The male needed the female but there wasn't a white woman in the country. So he took what the market afforded—a squaw and not infrequently two or three. "He's my son all right," a patriarch once informed me, "but it's been so long I don't exactly recollect which of them squaws was his mother."

Usually the wife was bought. Sometimes for a trinket. Often a horse. Among the trappers who first blazed the trails to the West, 30 beaver skins were considered a fair price for an able bodied squaw. She was capable in rendering domestic service and loyal in love. Too often the consort's fidelity was transient.

"For 20 years," said the noted trapper, Killbuck, "I packed a squaw along—not one, but a many. First I had a Blackfoot—the darndest slut as ever cried for fo-farrow. I lodge-poled her on Coulter's Creek ... as good as four packs of beaver I gave for old Bull-tail's daughter. He was the head chief of the Ricaree. Thar wan't enough scarlet cloth nor beads ... in Sublette's packs for her ... I sold her to Cross-Eagle for one of Jake Hawkins' guns.... Then I tried the Sioux, the Shian (Cheyenne) and a Digger from the other side, who made the best moccasins as ever I wore." 26

So Aaron Winters chose his mate from the available supply and with Rosie, part Mexican and Indian, part Spanish, he settled in Ash Meadows in a dugout. In front and adjoining had been added a shack, part wood, part stone. The floors were dirt. Rosie dragged in posts, poles, and brush and made a shed. Aaron found time between hunting and trapping to add a room of unmortared stone. At times there was no money, but piñon nuts grew in the mountains, desert tea and squaw cabbage were handy and the beans of mesquite could be ground into flour.

Rosie, to whom one must yield admiration, was not the first woman in Winters' life. "He liked his women," Ed Stiles recalled, "and changed 'em often." But to Rosie, Aaron Winters was always devoted. Her material reward was little but all who knew her praised her beauty and her virtues.

One day when dusk was gathering there was a rap on the sagging slab door and Rosie Winters opened it on an angel unawares. The Winters invited the stranger in, shared their meager meal. After supper they sat up later than usual, listening to the story of the stranger's travels. He was looking for borax, he told them. "It's a white stuff..." At this time, only two or three unimportant deposits of borax were known to exist in America and the average prospector knew nothing about it.

The first borax was mined in Tibet. There in the form of tincal it was loaded on the backs of sheep, transported across the Himalayas and shipped to London. It was so rare that it was sold by the ounce. Later the more intelligent of the western prospectors began to learn that borax was something to keep in mind.

To Aaron Winters it was just something bought in a drug store, but Rosie was interested in the "white stuff." She wanted to know how one could tell when the white stuff was borax. Patiently the guest explained how to make the tests: "Under the torch it will burn green...."

Finally Rosie made a bed for the wayfarer in the lean-to and long after he blew out his candle Rosie Winters lay awake, wondering about some white stuff she'd seen scattered over a flat down in the hellish heat of Death Valley. She remembered that it whitened the crust of a big area, stuck to her shoes and clothes and got in her hair when the wind lifted the silt.

The next morning Rosie and Aaron bade the guest good luck and goodbye and he went into the horizon without even leaving his name. Then Rosie turned to Aaron: "Maybe," she said ... "maybe that white stuff we see that 27 time below Furnace Creek—maybe that is borax."

"Might be," Aaron answered.

"Why don't we go see?" Rosie asked. "Maybe some Big Horn sheep—" Rosie knew her man and Aaron Winters got his rifle and Rosie packed the sow-belly and beans.

It was a long, gruelling trip down into the valley under a Death Valley sun but hope sustained them. They made their camp at Furnace Creek, then Rosie led Aaron over the flats she remembered. She scooped up some of the white stuff that looked like cotton balls while Aaron prepared for the test. Then the brief, uncertain moment when the white stuff touched the flame. Tensely they watched, Aaron grimly curious rather than hopeful; Rosie with pounding heart and lips whispering a prayer.

Then, miracle of miracles—the green flame. They looked excitedly into each other's eyes, each unable to believe. In that moment, Rosie, always devout, lifted her eyes to heaven and thanked her God. Neither had any idea of the worth of their find. Vaguely they knew it meant spending money. A new what-not for Rosie's mantel. Perhaps pine boards to cover the hovel's dirt floor; maybe a few pieces of golden oak furniture; a rifle with greater range than Aaron's old one; silk or satin to make a dress for Rosie.

"Writers have had to draw on their imagination for what happened," a descendant of the Winters once told me. "They say Uncle Aaron exclaimed, 'Rosie, she burns green!' or 'Rosie, we're rich!' but Aunt Rosie said they were so excited they couldn't remember, but she knew what they did! They went over to the ditch that Bellerin' Teck had dug to water the ranch and in its warm water soaked their bunioned feet."

Returning to Ash Meadows they faced the problem of what to do with the "white stuff." Unlike gold, it couldn't be sold on sight, because it was a new industry, and little was known about its handling. Finally Aaron learned that a rich merchant in San Francisco, named Coleman was interested in borax in a small way and lost no time in sending samples to Coleman.

W. T. Coleman was a Kentucky aristocrat who had come to California during the gold rush and attained both fortune and the affection of the people of the state. He had been chosen leader of the famed Vigilantes, who had rescued San Francisco from a gang of the lawless as tough as the world ever saw.

Actually Coleman's interest in borax was a minor incident in the handling of his large fortune and his passionate devotion to the development of his adopted state. For that reason alone, Coleman had become interested in 28 the small deposits of borax discovered by Francis Smith, first at Columbus Marsh.

Smith had been a prospector before coming to California, wandering all over western country, looking for gold and silver. He was one of those who had heard that borax was worth keeping in mind.

Reaching Nevada and needing a grubstake, he began to cut wood to supply mines around Columbus, Aurora, and Candelaria. On Teel's Marsh he found a large growth of mesquite, built a shack and claimed all the wood and the site as his own. Upon a portion of it, some Mexicans had cut and corded some of the wood and Smith refused to let them haul it off. They left grudgingly and with threats to return. The Mexicans, of course, had as much right to the wood as Smith.

Sensing trouble and having no weapons at his camp, he went twelve miles to borrow a rifle. But there were no cartridges and he had to ride sixty miles over the mountains to Aurora where he found only four. Returning to his shack, he found the Mexicans had also returned with reinforcements. Twenty-four were now at work and their mood was murderous. Smith had a companion whose courage he didn't trust and ordered him to go out in the brush and keep out of the way.



The Mexicans told Smith they were going to take the wood. Smith warned that he would kill the first man who touched the pile. With only four cartridges to kill 20 men, it was obviously a bluff. One of the Mexicans went to the pile and picked up a stick. Smith put his rifle to his shoulder and ordered the fellow to drop it. Unafraid and still holding the stick the Mexican said: "You may kill me, but my friends will kill you. Put your rifle down and we will talk it over."

They had cut additional wood during his absence and demanded that they be permitted to take all the wood they had cut. Smith consented and when the Mexicans had gone he staked out the marsh as a mining claim—which led to the connection with Coleman.

Upon receipt of Winters' letter, Coleman forwarded it to Smith and asked him to investigate the Winters claim. Smith's report was enthusiastic. Coleman then sent two capable men, William Robertson and Rudolph Neuenschwander to look over the Winters discovery, with credentials to buy. Again Rosie and Aaron Winters heard the flutter of angel wings at the hovel door. This time the angels left \$20,000. Rarely in this world has buyer bought so much for so little, but to Aaron and Rosie Winters it was all the money in the world.

Despite the troubles of operating in a place so remote from market and with problems of a product about which too little was known, borax was soon adding \$100,000 a year to Coleman's already fabulous fortune.

Francis M. (Borax) Smith was put in charge of operations under the firm name of Coleman and Smith. 29

Freed from the sordid squalor of the Ash Meadows hovel, the Winters bought the Pahrump Ranch, a landmark of Pahrump Valley, and settled down to watch the world go by.

Thus began the Pacific Coast Borax Company, one of the world's outstanding corporations. Later Smith was to become president of the Pacific Coast Borax Company and later still, he was to head a three hundred million dollar corporation for the development of the San Francisco and Oakland areas and then face bankruptcy and ruin.

Overlooking the site where Rosie and Aaron made the discovery, now stands the magnificent Furnace Creek Inn.

One day while sitting on the hotel terrace, I noticed a plane discharge a group of the Company's English owners and their guests. Meticulously dressed, they paid scant attention to the desolation about and hastened to the cooling refuge of their caravansary. At dinner they sat down to buttered mignon and as they talked casually of the races at Ascot and the ball at Buckingham Palace, I looked out over that whitehot slab of hell and thought of Rosie and Aaron Winters trudging with calloused feet behind a burro—their dinner, sow-belly and beans. 30

## **Chapter IV**

### **John Searles and His Lake of Ooze**

Actually the first discovery of borax in Death Valley was made by Isadore Daunet in 1875, five years before Winters' discovery. Daunet had left Panamint City when it was apparent that town was through forever and with six of his friends was en route to new diggings in Arizona.

He was a seasoned, hardy adventurer and risked a short cut across Death Valley in mid-summer. Running out of water, his party killed a burro, drank its blood; but the deadly heat beat them down. Indians came across one of the thirst-crazed men and learned that Daunet and others were somewhere about. They found Daunet and two companions. The others perished.

When Daunet heard of the Winters sale five years later, like Rosie Winters he remembered the white stuff about the water, to which the Indians had taken him. He hurried back and in 1880 filed upon mining claims amounting to 260 acres. He started at once a refining plant which he called Eagle Borax Works and began operating one year before Old Harmony began to boil borax in 1881. Daunet's product however, was of inferior grade and unprofitable and work was soon abandoned. The unpredictable happened and dark days fell upon borax and William T. Coleman.

In 1888 the advocates of free trade had a field day when the bill authored by Roger Q. Mills of Texas became the law of the land and borax went on the free list. The empire of Coleman tumbled in a financial scare—attributed by Coleman to a banker who had falsely undervalued Coleman's assets after a report by a borax expert who betrayed him. "My assets," wrote Coleman, "were \$4,400,000. My debts \$2,000,000." No person but Coleman lost a penny.

But Borax Smith was never one to surrender without a fight and organized the Pacific Coast Borax Company to take over the property and the success of that company justifies the faith and the integrity of Coleman. 31

Marketing the borax presented a problem in transportation even more difficult than it did in Tibet. At first it was scraped from the flat surface of the valley where it looked like alkali. It was later discovered in ledge form in the foothills of the Funeral Mountains. The sight of this discovery was called Monte Blanco—now almost a forgotten name.

The borax was boiled in tanks and after crystallization was hauled by mule team across one hundred and sixty-five miles of mountainous desert at a pace of fifteen miles per day—if there were no accidents—or an average of twenty days for the round trip. The summer temperatures in the cooler hours of the night were 112 degrees; in the day, 120 to 134 (the highest ever recorded). There were only four water holes on the route. Hence, water had to be hauled for the team.

The borax was hauled to Daggett and Mojave and thence shipped to Alameda, California, to be refined. Charles Bennett, a rancher from Pahrump Valley, was among the first to contract the hauling of the raw product.

In 1883 J. W. S. Perry, superintendent of the borax company, decided the company should own its freighting service and under his direction the famous 20 mule team borax wagons with the enormous wheels were designed. Orders were given for ten wagons. Each weighed 7800 pounds. Two of these wagons formed a train, the load being 40,000 pounds. To the second wagon was attached a smaller one with a tank holding 1200 gallons of water.

"I'd leave around midnight," Ed Stiles said. "Generally 110 or 112 degrees."

The first hauls of these wagons were to Mojave, with overnight stations every sixteen miles. Thirty days were required for the round trip.

In the Eighties a prospector in the then booming Calico Mountains, between Barstow and Yermo discovered an ore that puzzled him. He showed it to others and though the bustling town of Calico was filled with miners from all parts of the world, none could identify it. Under the blow torch the crystalline surface crumbled. Out of curiosity he had it assayed. It proved to be calcium borate and was the world's first knowledge of borax in that form. Previously it had been found in the form of "cotton ball." The Pacific Coast Borax Company acquired the deposits; named the ore Colemanite in honor of W. T. Coleman.

Operations in Death Valley were suspended and transferred to the new deposit, which saved a ten to fifteen days' haul besides providing a superior product. The deposit was exhausted however, in the early part of the century when Colemanite was discovered in the Black Mountains and the first mine—the Lila C. began operations. 32

It is a bit ironical that during the depression of the Thirties, two prospectors who neither knew nor cared anything about borax were poking around Kramer in relatively flat country in sight of the paved highway between Barstow and Mojave when they found what is believed to be the world's largest deposit of borax.

It was a good time for bargain hunters and was acquired by the Pacific Coast Borax Company and there in a town named Boron, all its borax is now produced.

Even before Aaron Winters or Isadore Daunet, John Searles was shipping borax out of Death Valley country. With his brother Dennis, member of the George party of 1861, Searles had returned and was developing gold and silver claims in the Slate Range overlooking a slimy marsh. They had a mill ready for operation when the Indians, then making war on the whites of Inyo county destroyed it with fire. A man of outstanding courage, Searles remained to recuperate his losses. He had read about the Trona deposits first found in the Nile Valley and was reminded of it when he put some of the water from the marsh in a vessel to boil and use for drinking. Later he noticed the formation of crystals and then suspecting borax he went to San Francisco with samples and sought backing. He found a promoter who after examining the samples, told him, "If the claims are what these samples indicate, I can get all the money you need...."

An analysis was made showing borax.

"But where is this stuff located?"

Searles told him as definitely as he could. He was invited to remain in San Francisco while a company could be organized. "It will take but a few days...."

Searles explained that he hadn't filed on the ground and preferred to go back and protect the claim.

The suave promoter brushed his excuse aside. "Little chance of anybody's going into that God forsaken hole." He called an associate. "Take Mr. Searles in charge and show him San Francisco...."

Not a rounder, Searles bored quickly with night life. His funds ran low. He asked the loan of \$25.

"Certainly...." His host stepped into an adjacent office, returning after a moment to say the cashier was out but that he had left instructions to give Searles whatever he wished.

Searles made trip after trip to the cashier's office but never found him in and becoming suspicious, he pawned his watch and hurried home, arriving at midnight four days later.

The next morning a stranger came and something about his attire, his equipment, and his explanation of his presence didn't ring true and Searles was wary even before the fellow, believing that Searles was still in San Francisco announced that he had been sent to find a man named Searles to look over some borax claims. "Do you know where they are?" 33

Searles thought quickly. He had not as yet located his monuments nor filed a notice. He pointed down the valley. "They're about 20 miles ahead...."

The fellow went on his way and before he was out of sight, Searles was staking out the marsh and with one of the most colorful of Death Valley characters, Salty Bill Parkinson, began operations in 1872. Incorporated under the name of San Bernardino Borax Company, the business grew and was later sold to Borax Smith's Pacific Coast Borax Company.

Once while Searles was away hunting grizzlies, the Indians who had burned his mill, raided his ranch and drove his mules across the range. Suspecting the Piutes, he got his rifle and two pistols.

"They'll kill you," he was warned.

"I'm going to get those mules," Searles snapped and followed their tracks across the Slate Range and Panamint Valley. High in the overlooking mountains he came upon the Indians feasting upon one of the animals and was immediately attacked with bows and arrows. He killed seven bucks and the rest ran, but an Indian's arrow was buried in his eye. He jerked the arrow out, later losing the eye, pushed on and recovered the rest of his mules. Thereafter the Piutes avoided Searles and his marsh because, they said, he possessed the "evil eye."

On the same lake where Searles began operations, the town of Trona was established to house the employees and processing plants of the American Potash and Chemical Company. It was British owned, though this ownership was successfully concealed in the intricate corporate structure of the Pacific Coast Borax Company, but later sold for twelve million dollars to Hollanders who left the management as they found it. During World War II Uncle Sam discovered that the Hollanders were stooges for German financiers' Potash Cartel.

The Alien Property Custodian took over and ordered the sale of the stock to Americans. Today it is what its name implies—an American company.

From the ooze where John Searles first camped to hunt grizzly bears, is being taken more than 100 commercial products and every day of your life you use one or more of them if you eat, bathe, or wear clothes, brush your teeth or deal with druggist, grocer, dentist or doctor.

Fearing exhaustion of the visible supply (the ooze is 70 feet deep) tests were made in 1917 to determine what was below. Result, supply one century; value two billion dollars. 34

Here are a few things containing the product of the ooze. Fertilizer for your flowers, orchards, and fields. Baking soda, dyes, lubricating oils, paper. Ethyl gasoline, porcelain, medicines, fumigants, leathers, solvents, cosmetics, textiles, ceramics, chemical and pharmaceutical preparations.

About 1300 tons of these products are shipped out every day over a company-owned railroad and transshipped at Searles' Station over the Southern Pacific, to go finally in one form or another into every home in America and most of those in the entire world.

The weird valley meanders southward from the lake through blown-up mountains gorgeously colored and grimly defiant—a trip to thrill the lover of the wild and rugged.

35

## **Chapter V But Where Was God?**

For years, on the edge of the road near Tule Hole, a rough slab marked Jim Dayton's grave, on which were piled the bleached bones of Dayton's horses. On the board were these words: "Jas. Dayton. Died 1898."

The accuracy of the date of Dayton's death as given on the bronze plaque on the monument and on the marker which it replaced, has been challenged. The author of this book wrote the epitaph for the monument and the date on it is the date which was on the original marker—an old ironing board that had belonged to Pauline Gower. In a snapshot made by the writer, the date 1898, burned into the board with a redhot poker shows clearly.

The two men who know most about the matter, Wash Cahill and Frank Hilton, whom he sent to find Dayton or his body, both declared the date on the marker correct.

The late Ed Stiles brought Dayton into Death Valley. Stiles was working for Jim McLaughlin (Stiles called him McGlothlin), who operated a freighting service with headquarters at Bishop. McLaughlin ordered Stiles to take a 12 mule team and report to the Eagle Borax Works in Death Valley. "I can't give you any directions. You'll just have to find the place." Stiles had never been in Death Valley nor could he find anyone who had. It was like telling a man to start across the ocean and find a ship named Sally.

At Bishop Creek in Owens Valley Stiles decided he needed a helper. There he found but one person willing to go—a youngster barely out of his teens—Jim Dayton.

Dayton remained in Death Valley and somewhat late in life, on one of his trips out, romance entered. After painting an intriguing picture of the lotus life a girl would find at Furnace Creek, he asked the lady to share it with him. She promptly accepted. 36

A few months later, the bride suggested that a trip out would make her love the lotus life even more and so in the summer of 1898 she tearfully departed. Soon she wrote Jim in effect that it hadn't turned out as she had hoped. Instead, she had become reconciled to shade trees, green lawns, neighbors, and places to go and if he wanted to live with her again he would just have to abandon the Death Valley paradise.

Dayton loaded his wagon with all his possessions, called his dog and started for Daggett.

Wash Cahill, who was to become vice-president of the borax company, was then working at its Daggett office. Cahill received from Dayton a letter which he saw from the date inside and the postmark on the envelope, had been held somewhere for at least two weeks before it was mailed.

The letter contained Dayton's resignation and explained why Dayton was leaving. He had left a reliable man in

temporary charge and was bringing his household goods; also two horses which had been borrowed at Daggett.

Knowing that Dayton should have arrived in Daggett at least a week before the actual arrival of the letter, Cahill was alarmed and dispatched Frank Hilton, a teamster and handy man, and Dolph Lavares to see what had happened.

On the roadside at Tule Hole they found Dayton's body, his dog patiently guarding it. Apparently Dayton had become ill, stopped to rest. "Maybe the sun beat him down. Maybe his ticker jammed," said Shorty Harris, "but the horses were fouled in the harness and were standing up dead."

There could be no flowers for Jim Dayton nor peal of organ. So they went to his wagon, loosened the shovel lashed to the coupling pole. They dug a hole beside the road, rolled Jim Dayton's body into it.

The widow later settled in a comfortable house in town with neighbors close at hand. There she was trapped by fire. While the flames were consuming the building a man ran up. Someone said, "She's in that upper room." The brave and daring fellow tore his way through the crowd, leaped through the window into a room red with flames and dragged her out, her clothing still afire. He laid her down, beat out the flames, but she succumbed.

A multitude applauded the hero. A little later over in Nevada another multitude lynched him. Between heroism and depravity—what?

Although Tule Hole has long been a landmark of Death Valley, few know its story and this I believe to be its first publication.

One day while resting his team, Stiles noticed a patch of tules growing a short distance off the road and taking a shovel he walked over, started digging a hole on what he thought was a million to one chance of finding water, and thus reduce the load that had to be hauled for use between springs. "I hadn't dug a foot," he told me "before I struck water. I dug a ditch to let it run off and after it cleared I drank some, found it good and enlarged the hole." 37

He went on to Daggett with his load. Repairs to his wagon train required a week and by the time he returned five weeks had elapsed. "I stopped the team opposite the tules, got out and started over to look at the hole I'd dug. When I got within a few yards three or four naked squaw hags scurried into the brush. I stopped and looked away toward the mountains to give 'em a chance to hide. Then I noticed two Indian bucks, each leading a riderless horse, headed for the Panamints. Then I knew what had happened."

Ed Stiles was a desert man and knew his Indians. Somewhere up in a Panamint canyon the chief had called a powwow and when it was over the head men had gone from one wickiup to another and looked over all the toothless old crones who no longer were able to serve, yet consumed and were in the way. Then they had brought the horses and with two strong bucks to guard them, they had ridden down the canyon and out across the desert to the water hole. There the crones had slid to the ground. The bucks had dropped a sack of piñon nuts. Of course, the toothless hags could not crunch the nuts and even if they could, the nuts would not last long. Then they would have to crawl off into the scrawny brush and grabble for herbs or slap at grasshoppers, but these are quicker than palsied hands and in a little while the sun would beat them down.

The rest was up to God.

The distinction of driving the first 20 mule team has always been a matter of controversy. Over a nation-wide hook-up, the National Broadcasting Co. once presented a playlet based upon these conflicting claims. A few days afterward, at the annual Death Valley picnic held at Wilmington, John Delameter, a speaker, announced that he'd made considerable research and was prepared to name the person actually entitled to that honor. The crowd, including three claimants of the title, moved closer, their ears cupped in eager attention as Delameter began to speak. One of the claimants nudged my arm with a confident smile, whispered, "Now you'll know...." A few feet away his rivals, their pale eyes fixed on the speaker, hunched forward to miss no word.

Mr. Delameter said: "There were several wagons of 16 mules and who drove the first of these, I do not know, but I do know who drove the first 20 mule team."

Covertly and with gleams of triumph, the claimants eyed each other as Delameter paused to turn a page of his manuscript. Then with a loud voice he said: "I drove it myself!" 38

May God have mercy on his soul.

A few days later I rang the doorbell at the ranch house of Ed Stiles, almost surrounded by the city of San Bernardino. As no one answered, I walked to the rear, and across a field of green alfalfa saw a man pitching hay in a temperature of 120 degrees. It was Stiles who in 1876 was teaming in Bodie—toughest of the gold towns.

I sat down in the shade of his hay. He stood in the sun. I said, "Mr. Stiles, do you know who drove the first 20 mule team in Death Valley?"

He gave me a kind of *et-tu, Brute* look and smiled.

"In the fall of 1882 I was driving a 12 mule team from the Eagle Borax Works to Daggett. I met a man on a buckboard who asked if the team was for sale. I told him to write Mr. McLaughlin. It took 15 days to make the round trip and when I got back I met the same man. He showed me a bill of sale for the team and hired me to drive it. He had an eight mule team and a new red wagon, driven by a fellow named Webster. The man in the buckboard was Borax Smith.

"Al Maynard, foreman for Smith and Coleman, was at work grubbing out mesquite to plant alfalfa on what is now Furnace Creek Ranch. Maynard told me to take the tongue out of the new wagon and put a trailer tongue in it. 'In the morning,' he said, 'hitch it to your wagon. Put a water wagon behind your trailer, hook up those eight mules with your team and go to Daggett.'

"That was the first time that a 20 mule team was driven out of Death Valley. Webster was supposed to swamp for me. But when he saw his new red wagon and mules hitched up with my outfit, he walked into the office and quit his job."

39

## Chapter VI Death Valley Geology

The pleasure of your trip through the Big Sink will be enhanced if you know something about the structural features which are sure to arrest your attention.

For undetermined ages Death Valley was desert. Then rivers and lakes. Rivers dried. Lakes evaporated. Again, desert. It is believed that in thousands of years there have been no changes other than those caused by earthquakes and erosion.

It is no abuse of the superlative to say that the foremost authority upon Death Valley geology is Doctor Levi Noble, who has studied it under the auspices of the U.S. Geological Survey since 1917. He has ridden over more of it than anyone and because of his studies, earlier conclusions of geologists are scrapped today.

From a pamphlet published by the American Geological Society with the permission of the U. S. Dept. of Interior, now out of print, I quote a few passages which Doctor Noble, its author, once described to me as "dull reading, even for scientists."

"The southern Death Valley region contains rocks of at least eight geologic systems whose aggregate thickness certainly exceeds 45,000 feet for the stratified rocks alone."

"The dissected playa or lake beds in Amargosa Valley between Shoshone and Tecopa contain elephant remains that are Pleistocene...."

"Rainbow Mountain is one of the geological show places of the Death Valley region.... Here the Amargosa river has cut a canyon 1000 feet deep.... The mountain is made up of thrust slices of Cambrian and pre-Cambrian rocks alternating with slices of Tertiary rocks, all of which dip in general about 30 to 40 degrees eastward, but are also anticlinally arched."

"None of the geologic terms in common use appear exactly to fit this mosaic of large tightly packed individual blocks of different ages occupying a definite zone above a major thrust fault." 40

The significant feature is that a stratum that began with creation may lie above one that is an infant in the age of rock—a puzzle that will engage men of Levi Noble's talents for years to come. But one doesn't have to be a member of the American Geological Society to find thrills in other gripping features.

Throughout the area south of Shoshone are many hot springs containing boron and fluorine—some with traces of radium. The water is believed to come from a buried river. The source of other hot springs in the Death Valley area is unknown.

More startling features were related to Shorty Harris and me at Bennett's Well in the bottom of Death Valley where we met one of Shorty's friends. Lanky and baked brown, in each wrinkle of his face the sun had etched a smile. "Shorty," he said, "yachts will be sailing around here some day. There's a passage to the sea, sure as hell."

"What makes you think so?" Shorty asked.

"Those salt pools. Just come from there. I was watching the crystals; felt the ground move a little. Pool started sloshing. A sea serpent with eyes big as a wagon wheel and teeth full of kelp stuck his head up. Where'd he come from? No kelp in this valley. That prove anything?"

Ubehebe Crater is believed to have resulted from the only major change in the topography of the valley since its return to desert, but John Delameter, old time freighter, thought geologists didn't know what they were talking about. "When I first saw Saratoga Spring I could straddle it. Full of fish four inches long. Next time, three springs and a lake. Fish shrunk to one inch and different shaped head."

Actually these fish are the degenerate descendants of the larger fish that lived in the streams and lakes that once watered Death Valley—an interesting study in the survival of species. The real name, *Cyprinodon Macularius*, is too large a mouthful for the natives so they are called desert sardines, though they are in reality a small killifish.

Dan Breshnahan, in charge of a road crew working between Furnace Creek Inn and Stove Pipe Well, ordered some of the men to dig a hole to sink some piles. Two feet beneath a hard crust they encountered muck. When they hit the pile with a sledge it would bounce back. Dan put a board across the top. With a man on each end of the board, the rebound was prevented and the pile driven into hard earth. "I'm convinced that under that road is a lake of mire and Lord help the fellow who goes through," Dan said.

A heavily loaded 20 mule team wagon driven by Delameter broke the surface of this ooze and two days were required to get it out. To test the depth, he tied an anvil to his bridle rein and let it down. The lead line of a 41  
20 mule team is 120 feet long. It sank (he said) the length of the line and reached no bottom.

On Ash Meadows, a few miles from Death Valley Junction and on the side of a mountain is what is known as The Devil's Hole which it is said has no bottom. True or false, none has ever been found.

A steep trail leads down to the water which will then be over your head. Indians will tell you that a squaw fell into this hole within the memory of the living and that she was sucked to the bottom and came out at Big Spring several miles distant. The latter is a large hole in the middle of the desert and from its throat, also bottomless, pours a large volume of clear, warm water.

"Explored?" shouted Dad Fairbanks one day when a white-haired prospector declared every foot of Death Valley had been worked over. "It isn't scratched!"

Only the day before (in 1934), Dr. Levi Noble had been working in the mountains overlooking the valley on the east rim. Through his field glasses he saw a formation that looked like a natural bridge. When he returned to Shoshone he phoned Harry Gower, Pacific Borax Co. official at Furnace Creek of his discovery and suggested that Gower investigate.

Since Furnace Creek Inn wanted such attractions for its guests, Gower went immediately and almost within rifle shot of a road used since the Seventies, he found the bridge.

That too is Death Valley—land of continual surprise.

Death Valley is the hottest spot in North America. The U.S. Army, in a test of clothing suitable for hot weather made some startling discoveries. According to records, on one day in every seven years the temperature reaches 180 on the valley floor. But five feet above ground where official temperatures are recorded the thermometer drops 55 degrees to 125.

The highest temperature ever recorded was 134 at Furnace Creek Ranch—only two degrees below the world's record in Morocco. In 1913, the week of July 7-14, the temperature never got below 127. Official recording differs little from that of Arabia, India, and lower California, but the duration is longer.

Left in the sun, water in a pail of ordinary size will evaporate in an hour. Bodies decompose two or three hours after rigor mortis begins but some have been found in certain areas at higher altitudes dried like leather. A rattlesnake dropped into a bucket and set in the sun will die in 20 minutes.

The evaporation of salt from the body is rapid and many prospectors swallow a mouthful of common salt 42  
before going out into a killing sun.

One of the pitiable features of death on the desert is that bodies are found with fingers worn to the bone from frantic digging and often beneath the cadaver is water at two feet.

There is also legendary weather for outside consumption. Told to see Joe Ryan as a source of dependable information, a tourist approached Joe and asked what kind of temperature one would encounter in the valley.

"Heat is always exaggerated," said Joe. "Of course it gets a little warm now and then. Hottest I ever saw was in August when I crossed the valley with Mike Lane. I was walking ahead when I heard Mike coughing. I looked around. Seemed to be choking and I went back. Mike held out his palm and in it was a gold nugget and Mike was madder'n hell. 'My teeth melted,' Mike wailed. 'I'm going to kill that dentist. He told me they would stand heat up to 500 degrees.'"

I met an engaging liar at Bradbury Well one day. He was gloriously drunk and was telling the group about him that he was a great grand-son of the fabulous Paul Bunyan.

"Of course," he said, "Gramp was a mighty man, but he was dumb at that. One time I saw him put a handful of pebbles in his mouth and blow 'em one at a time at a flock of wild geese flying a mile high. He got every goose, but how did he end up? Not so good. He straddled the Pacific ocean one day and prowled around in China, and saw a cross-eyed pigeon-toed midget with buck teeth. Worse, she had a temper that would melt pig-iron.

"Gramp went nuts over her. What happened? He married her. She had some trained fleas. If Gramp got sassy, she put fleas in his ears and ants in his pants and stood by, laughing at him, while he scratched himself to death. Hell of an end for Gramp, wasn't it?"

In the late fall, winter, and early spring perfect days are the rule and if you are among those who like uncharted trails, do not hurry. Then when night comes you will climb a moonbeam and play among the stars. You will learn too, that life goes on away from box scores, radio puns, and girls with a flair for Veuve Cliquot.

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## Chapter VII Indians of the Area

The Indians of the Death Valley country were dog eaters—both those of Shoshone and Piute origin. Both had undoubtedly degenerated as a result of migrations. The Shoshones (Snakes) had originally lived in Idaho, Oregon,



and Washington. The Piutes in Utah, Idaho, and Nevada.

The true blood connection of coast Indians may well be a matter of dispute. "Almost every 15 or 20 leagues you'll find a distinct dialect," was said of California Indians. (Boscana in Robinson's Life in California, p. 220.) Most of them were hardly above the animal in intelligence or morality. Though the Death Valley Indians are called Shoshone and Piutes, to what extent their blood justifies the classification is the white man's guess.

Those whom Dr. French found in the Panamint said they had no tribal name. Many California tribes were given names by the whites, these names being the American's interpretation of a sound uttered by one group to designate another. "They do not seem to have any names for themselves." (Schoolcraft's Arch., Vol. 3.)

All seem to agree however, that the farther north the Indian lived, the more intelligent he was and the better his physique—which would indicate a relation to the better diet in the lush, well-watered and game-filled valleys and foothills. Some of the women are described by early writers as "exceedingly pretty." Others, "flat-faced and pudgy." "The Indians in the northern portion ... are vastly superior in stature and intellect to those found in the southern part." (Hubbard, Golden Era, 1856.)

Certainly those found in Death Valley country reflected in their persons and in their character the niggardly land and the struggle for survival upon it. They were treacherous as its terrain. Cruel as its cactus. Tenacious as 44 its stunted life.

It is interesting to note the range of opinion and the conclusions drawn by earlier travelers.

Of the Shoshones: "Very rigid in their morals." (Remi and Brenchley's Journal, Vol. 1, p. 85.)

"They of all men are lowest, lying in a state of semi-torpor in holes in the ground in winter and in spring, crawling forth and eating grass on their hands and knees until able to regain their feet ... living in filth ... no bridles on their passions ... surely room for no missing links between them and brutes." (Bancroft's Native Races, Vol. 1, p. 440.)

"It is common practice ... to gamble away their wives and children.... A husband will prostitute his wife to a stranger for a trifling present." (Ibid. ch. 4, Vol. 1.)

"Our Piute has a peculiar way of getting a foretaste of connubial bliss—cohabiting experimentally with his intended for two or three days previous to the nuptial ceremony, at the end of which time either party can stay further proceedings to indulge further trials until a companion more congenial is found." (S. F. Medical Press, Vol. 3, p. 155. See also, Lewis and Clark's Travels, p. 307.)

"The Piutes are the most degraded and least intellectual Indians known to trappers." (Farnham's Life, p. 336.)

"Pah-utes are undoubtedly the most docile Indians on the continent." (Indian Affairs Report, 1859, p. 374.)

"Honest and trustworthy, but lazy and dirty," is said of the Shoshones. (Remi and Brenchley's Journal, p. 123.) Some ethnologists declare they cannot be identified with any other American tribe.

Wives were purchased, cash or credit. Polygamy prevailed. Unmarried women belonged to all, but Gibbs says women bewailed their virginity for three days prior to marriage. "They allow but one wife." (Prince in California Farmer, Oct. 18, 1861.)

Husbands were allowed to kill their mothers-in-law. The heart of a valiant enemy killed in battle was eaten raw or cut into pieces and made into soup. Women captives of other tribes were ravished, sold or kept as slaves. Some Southern California tribes sold their women and occasionally tribes were found without a single squaw.

"They are exceedingly virtuous." (Remi and Brenchley's Journal, Vol. 1, pp. 1-23-8.)

"Given to sensual excesses." (Farnham's Travel, p. 62.)

"The Nevada Shoshones are the most pure and uncorrupted aborigines on the continent ... scrupulously clean ... chaste." (Prince, California Farmer, Oct. 18, 1861.) 45

Thus the Indian who came or was driven to this wasteland evoked conflicting opinions and the real picture is vague.

The lowest of California Indians is believed to have been the Digger, so-called because he existed chiefly upon roots and lived in burrows of his own making, but his isolation by ethnologists is not convincing. He was found around Shoshone by Fremont and Kit Carson and inhabited valleys to the north and west, but in the Death Valley region the Piute and Shoshone were dominant.

Blood vengeance was deep-rooted. Found with the Indian collection of Dr. Simeon Lee at Carson City was a revealing manuscript that tells how swiftly it struck.

Mudge rode up to another Indian standing on a Carson City street and without warning shot him dead and galloped away. The dead man had two cousins working at Lake Tahoe. The murder had occurred at 9:30 a.m. and by some means of communication unknown to whites, they were on Mudge's trail within two hours and had found him. Mudge promptly killed them both and fled again. Sheriff Ulric engaged Captain Johnnie, a Piute, to track the slayer. He found Mudge's lair, but Mudge was a sure shot, well protected and to rush him meant certain death. The posse decided to keep watch until thirst or hunger forced him out. "Me fix um," said Captain Johnnie.

He disappeared, but soon returned with an enormous amount of tempting food which he contrived to place within easy reach of Mudge. "Him see mopypass (food). Eat bellyful and fall down asleep."

That is exactly what happened and old Demi-John, the father of the murdered boys crawled stealthily through the sage and with his hunting knife severed the head from the sleeping Mudge's body.

In Mono county Piutes killed the Chinese owner of a cafe and fed the carcass to their dogs. In court they blandly confessed and justified it, claiming the Chinaman had killed and pickled one of their missing tribesmen and then sold and served to them portions of the victim as "corned beef and cabbage."

For the desert Indian life was raw to the bone. He was an unemotional, fatalistic creature as ruthless as the land. In the struggle to live, he had acquired endurance and cunning. He knew his desert—its moods, its stingy dole, its chary tolerance of life. He knew where the mountain sheep hid, the screw-bean grew and the fat lizard crawled. He knew where the drop of water seeped from the lone hill. He combed the lower levels of the range for chuckwalla, edible snakes, horned toads—anything with flesh; stuffed the kill into bags and preserved them 46 for later use. He made flour from mesquite beans; stored piñons, roots, herbs in his desperate fight to survive, and anything that crawled, flew, or walked was food. I have seen a squaw squatted beside the carcass of a dog, picking out the firmer flesh.

When the Piute came to a spring, the first thing he did was to look about for a flat rock which he was sure to find if a member of his tribe had previously been there. Kneeling, he would skim the water from the surface and dash it upon this rock. Then he smelled the rock. If there was an odor of onion or garlic, he knew it contained arsenic and was deadly. Naturally, he would be concerned about another water hole. He had only to look about him. He would find partially imbedded in the earth several stones fixed in the form of a circle not entirely closed. The opening pointed in the direction of the next water. The distance to that water was indicated by stones inside the circle. There he would find for example, three stones pointing toward the opening. He knew that each of those stones indicated one "sleep." Therefore he would have to sleep three times before he got there. In other words, it was three days' journey.

But which of these trails leading to the water should he take? There might be several trails converging at the water hole. The matter was decided for him. He walked along each of those trails for a few feet. Beside one of them he would find an oblong stone. By its shape and position he knew that was the trail that led to the next water.

Under such circumstances a man would perhaps wonder if upon arrival at the next water hole he would find that water also unfit to use. The information was at hand. If, upon top of that oblong stone he found a smaller stone placed crosswise and white in color, he knew the water would be good water. If a piece of black malpai was there instead of the white stone, he knew the next water would be poison also.

Not infrequently he would find other information at the water hole if there were boulders about, or chalky cliffs upon which the Indian could place his picture writing. If he saw the crude drawing of a lone man, it indicated that the land about was uninhabited except by hunters, but if upon the pictured torso were marks indicating the breasts of a woman, he knew there was a settlement about and he would find squaws and children and something to eat.

Frequently other information was left for this wayfaring Indian. Under conspicuous stones about, he might find a feather with a hole punched through it or one that was notched. The former indicated that one had been there who had killed his man. The notch indicated that he had cut a throat.

Since there was a difference between the moccasins of Indian tribes, the dust about would often inform him 47 whether the buck who went before was friend or enemy.

Like all American aborigines, the Piute had his medicine man, but the manner of his choosing is not clear. The one selected had to accept the role, though the honor never thrilled him, because he knew that when the score of death was three against him he would join his lost patients in the happy hereafter. Occasionally he was stoned to death by the relatives of the first lost patient and with the approval of the rest of the tribe. Not infrequently it was believed the medicine man's departed spirit then entered the medicine man's kin and they were also butchered or stoned to death.

**NOTE.** Early writers refer to Pau Eutahs, Pah Utes, Paiuches, Pyutes, and Paiutes. The word Piute is believed to mean true Ute.

Bancroft claimed the Piutes and Pah Utes were separate tribes, the latter being the Trout or Ochi Indians of Walker River; the former the Tule (or Toy) Indians of Pyramid Lake.

There was an undetermined number of branches of the original Utah stock. Besides the above, there was another tribe called by other Indians, Cozaby Piutes, Cozaby being the Indian name of a worm that literally covered the shores of Mono Lake. This worm was a principal food of the tribe.

Though "Piute" is the spelling justifiably used throughout the region, "Pahute" was chosen a few years ago by a group of scholars as the preferable form.

## Desert Gold. Too Many Fractions

On the Nevada desert wind-whipped Mount Davidson (or Sun Mountain) guided the Forty Niners across the flat Washoe waste. At its foot they rested and cursed it because it impeded their progress to the California goldfields. Ten years later they rushed back because it had become the fabulous Comstock, said to have produced more than \$880,000,000, though the Nevada State bureau of mines places the figure at \$347,892,336. The truth lies somewhere between.

“Pancake” Comstock had acquired, more by bluff and cunning than labor, title to gold claims others had discovered and cursed a “blue stuff” that slowed the recovery of visible particles of gold. Later the “blue stuff” was blessed as incredibly rich silver. A mountain of gold and silver side by side. It just couldn’t be.

A new crop of overnight millionaires. New feet feeling for the first step on the social ladder. The Mackays, the Floods, the Fairs, the Hearsts.

All this was more like current than twenty year old history to Jim Butler on May 18, 1900, when his hungry burro strayed up a hill in search of grass. Soon a city stood where the burro ate and soon adventurers were poking around in the canyons of Death Valley, 66 miles south.

Jim Butler, more rancher than gold hunter was a likable happy-go-lucky fellow, who could strum a banjo and sing a song. But when he found the burro in Sawtooth Pass he saw a ledge which looked as if it might have values. Born in El Dorado county in California in 1855, Butler was more or less gold conscious, but unexcited he stuck a few samples in his pocket and went on after the burro.

A story survives which states that a half-breed Shoshone Indian known as Charles Fisherman had told Butler of the existence of the ore without disclosing its location and that Butler was actually searching for it when the burro strayed. The preponderance of evidence, however, indicates that Butler was en route to Belmont to see his friend, Tasker Oddie, who was batching there in a cabin. He gave Oddie one of the samples and after his visit, left for home. 49

Oddie laid the sample on a window sill and forgot it.

In Klondike a few days later, Butler showed another sample to Frank Higgs, an assayer. Half in jest he said: “Frank, I’ve no money to pay for an assay, but I’ll cut you in on this stuff if it shows anything.”

Higgs looked at the sample and returned it to Butler: “Just a waste of time. Forget it.”

Later in Belmont Henry Broderick, a prospector dropped in for a visit with Oddie and noticed the sample Butler had given Oddie and looked it over. “This ore has good values,” he told Oddie. “It’s worth investigating.” Oddie knew that Broderick’s opinion was not to be underrated.

Oddie was a young lawyer with little practice and a salary of \$100 a year as District Attorney. Belmont had a population of 100. Oddie didn’t have two dollars to risk, but he took the sample to W. C. Gayhart at Austin and offered Gayhart a fractional interest if he’d assay it. With few customers, Gayhart took a chance.

The ore showed values and Oddie was mildly excited. Butler lived 35 miles away in wild, difficult country and Oddie wrote him, enclosing the assay. Several weeks passed before Butler received the letter. Then Butler and his wife returned to Belmont only to find Oddie could not go with them. Jim and Mrs. Butler now returned home, loaded provisions, tools, and camp equipment in a wagon and three days later, Aug. 26, 1900, they reached Sawtooth Pass and made camp.

The Butlers staked out eight claims. Jim took for himself the one he considered best. He named it The Desert Queen. Mrs. Butler chose another and called it Mizpah. Jim located another for Oddie and named it Burro. The best proved to be Mrs. Butler’s Mizpah.

Returning to Belmont, they found Oddie at home. The matter of recording the location notices had to be attended to. “That will cost ten or fifteen dollars,” Butler said. Neither of them had any money. Wils Brougher was recorder of Nye county and Oddie’s friend, so Oddie made a proposition to Brougher. “If you’ll pay the recorder’s fees we’ll give you an eighth.”

Brougher said, “Nye county is one of the largest counties in the United States, but there are only 400 people in it and I’m not getting many fees these days. Leave ’em.”

After they’d gone Brougher looked at the assay Oddie had left and decided to take a chance. The setup was now: Butler and his wife five-eighths, Oddie, Brougher, and Gayhart, one-eighth each. 50

They managed to pool resources and obtained \$25 in cash to provide material and provisions.

Brougher, Oddie, Jim, and Mrs. Butler set out in October, 1900. Mrs. Butler did the cooking while the men dug, drilled, and blasted two tons of ore. The ore was sacked and hauled 150 miles to Austin and shipped to a San Francisco smelter. The returns showed high values but still they had a major problem—money to develop the claims. Because the country had been prospected and pronounced worthless, men of millions were not backing a banjo-picking rancher and a young lawyer with no money and few clients. The answer was leasing to idle miners willing to gamble muscle against money. The venture made many of them rich. The others recovered more than wages. As the leases expired the owners took them over.

The camp where Mrs. Butler cooked became the site of the Mizpah Hotel and the City of Tonopah and the hill

where the burro strayed produced many millions.

There are several versions of the Butler discovery and the writer does not pretend that his own is the true one. He can only say that he knew many of those who were first on the scene and some of those who held the first and best leases, and his conclusions are based on their personal narratives.

Oddie became one of the moguls of mining, Nevada's governor, and a senator of the United States.

Twenty-six miles south of Tonopah was a place known as Grandpa, so named because there were always a few old prospectors camped at the water hole known as Rabbit Springs. These patriarchs had combed the desert about, for years without success.

Al Myers, a prospector working on a hill nearby, came to the Grandpa Spring to fill a barrel of water and found his friend, Shorty Harris, who had been camping there, packing his burros to leave. "Better hang around, Shorty," Al advised. "I'm getting color."

"Luck to you," Shorty laughed. "But any place where these old grandpas can't find color, is no place for me."

In six weeks Myers and Tom Murphy made the big strike (1903) and Grandpa became Goldfield—one of the West's most spectacular camps. Some of the more promising claims of Goldfield were leased, the most valuable being that of Hays and Monette, on the Mohawk. In 106 days the lease produced \$5,000,000.

Out of the Mohawk one car was shipped which yielded over \$579,000 and ore in all of the better mines was so rich that Goldfield quickly became the high-grader's paradise. Though wages at Tonopah were twice those paid at Goldfield, miners deserted the older camp for the lower wage and made more than the difference by concealing high-grade in the cuffs of their overalls or in other ingenious receptacles built into their clothing. Miners and muckers took the girls of their choice out of honkies and installed them in cottages. More than one of these gorgeous creatures, having found her man in her boom-town crib, later ascended life's grand stairway to live virtuously and bravely in a Wilshire mansion or a swank hotel. 51

To stop the stealing, a change room was installed but many had already secured themselves against want. A wealthy resident of California once told me: "With the proceeds of the high-grade I took home I built rentals that led to bank connections and more lucky investments. Everybody was doing it."

Tex Rickard, a gambler and saloon man, already known in Alaska and San Francisco for spectacular adventures, here began his career as a sports promoter in the ill-advised Jeffries-Johnson fight.

One morning his Great Northern had more than its usual crowd. Men stood three deep at the bar, games were busy and Billy Murray, the cashier was rushed. It was not unusual for desert men to leave their money with Murray. He would tag and sack it and toss it aside, but today there was a steady stream being poked at him. Finally it got in his way and he had it taken through the alley to the bank, but the deluge continued.

When it again got in his way, his assistant having stepped out, Billy took it to the bank himself. There he learned the reason for the flood of money. A run was being made on the John S. Cook bank. He satisfied himself that the bank was safe and returned to his cage. As fast as the money came in the front door, it went out the back and Billy Murray thus saved the bank and the town from collapse.

A resourceful youngster who knew that wherever men recklessly acquire, they recklessly spend, dropped in from Oregon, got a job in Tom Kendall's Tonopah Club as a dealer. Good looking and likable, he made friends, took over the gambling concession and was soon taking over Goldfield and the state of Nevada. He was George Wingfield, who, when offered a seat in the United States Senate, calmly declined it.

Goldfield is only 40 miles from the northern boundary of Death Valley National Monument and was in bonanza when Shorty Harris walked into the Great Northern saloon. "I've been drinking gulch likker," he told the bartender. "Give me the best in the house."

The bartender reached for a bottle. "This is 100 proof 14 year old bourbon." 52

Shorty drank it, laid a goldpiece on the bar. "Good stuff. I'll have another."

"You must be celebrating," the bartender said.

"You guessed it," Shorty said and laid a piece of high-grade beside his glass. "I've got more gold where that came from than Uncle Sam's got in the mint."

A faro dealer noticed the ore and picked it up. "Good looking rock," he said and passed it to a promoter standing by. In a moment a crowd had gathered. "Looks like Breyfogle quartz," the promoter said and led Shorty aside. "I can make you a million on this. Want to sell?"

"Not on your life," Shorty said, but after pressure and a few drinks, he agreed to part with an eighth interest. The deal closed, he left to see friends around town. He found each of them in a barroom. News of his strike had preceded him and each time he laid the ore on the bar someone wanted an interest. Someone called him aside and someone bought the drinks.

Within an hour every fortune hunter in Goldfield was looking for Shorty Harris, each believing Shorty had found the Lost Breyfogle.

When he left town, weaving in the dust of his burros, sixteen men wished him well, for each had a piece of paper

## Chapter IX Romance Strikes the Parson

Scorning Al Myers's advice to locate a claim on the Goldfield hill, Shorty Harris headed south, prospecting as he went until he reached Monte Beatty's ranch where he camped with Beatty, a squaw man. "I'm going to look at a rhyolite formation in the hills four miles west. It looks good—that hill," Shorty told him.

"Forget it," Beatty said, "I've combed every inch."

With faith in Beatty's knowledge of the country, he abandoned the trip and crossed the Amargosa desert to Daylight Springs, found the country full of amateur prospectors excited by the discoveries at Tonopah and Goldfield. After a few weeks he decided there was nothing worthwhile to be found. "I had a hunch Beatty could be wrong about that formation and decided to go back."

He was well outfitted and with five burros and more than enough provisions, was ready to go when, out of the bush came a cleancut youngster—a novice who had brought his wife along.

"Shorty," he said, "we're out of grub. Can you spare any?"

"Sure. But you'd be better off to go with me. I have enough grub for all of us."

Ed Cross had all to gain; nothing to lose by following an experienced prospector.

At a water hole known as Buck Springs they made camp. Within an hour they went up a canyon, each working a side of it. Shorty broke a piece of quartz from an outcropping; saw shades of turquoise and jade. "Come a-runnin' Ed," he shouted. "We've got the world by the tail and a downhill pull."

They staked out the discovery claims. "How many more should we locate?" Cross asked.

"None. Give the other fellow a chance. If this is as good as we think, we've got all the money we'll ever need. If it isn't and the other fellow makes a good showing it will help us sell this one."

They went to Goldfield. Shorty showed the sample to Bob Montgomery, an old friend. Bob was skeptical. But in an hour the news was out and Goldfield en masse headed for the new strike. Those, who couldn't get conveyances, walked. Some pulled burro carts across the desert. Some started out with wheelbarrows. Jack Salisbury began to move lumber. Others brought merchandise, barrels of liquor. Everything to build a town.

"Specimens of my ore," Shorty said, "were used by Tiffany for ring settings, lavallieres, bracelets. It went to Paris and London. Ore broken from the ledge sold for \$50 a pound. I must have given away thousands of dollars' worth of it for souvenirs."

Overnight Rhyolite was born. Shorty bought a barrel of liquor, drove a row of nails around the barrel, hung tin dippers on the nails and invited the town to quench its thirst. Two railroads came. One, 114 miles from Las Vegas. Another, 200 miles from Ludlow.

"Two things influenced me in naming it Bullfrog," Shorty said. "Ed had asked, 'what'll we name it?' As I looked at the green ore in my hand, a frog bellowed. 'Bullfrog,' I said." (One writer has stated erroneously that there is not a bullfrog on the desert.)

The tycoons of mining and their agents appeared as if borne on magic carpets and in a little while men who would have turned him from their doors, were fawning around the little man with the golden smile and the ugly brawl for the Bullfrog was on—a struggle between cheap promoters who gave him cheap whiskey and moguls who gave him champagne.

Scores of yarns have been written about the sale of the Bullfrog. It was one of the few things in Shorty's life which he discussed with reserve. In my residence two years before he died and in my presence he told my wife, to whom he was singularly devoted, the sordid story. "Cross had a good head," Shorty said. "He attended to business, sold his interest and retired to a good ranch.

"I woke up one morning and judging from the empties, I must have had a grand evening. I reached for a full pint on the table and under it was a piece of paper with a note. I read it and learned for the first time that I'd sold the Bullfrog."

"The law would have released you from that contract," I said.

"I'd signed it," he answered quietly.

I thought of the crumbling adobe on the Ballarat flat and the lean years that followed.

"At that, I got good money for a fellow like me," he added. "I've never wanted for anything."

A fortune blown like a bubble meant absolutely nothing—stopped no laugh; dimmed no hope; quenched no fire in his eager eyes.

"If I'd got those millions the big boys would have hauled me off to town, put a white shirt on me. Maybe they would have made me believe Shorty Harris was important. 'Mr. Harris this and Mr. Harris that.' I've got something they can't take away. I step out of my cabin every morning and look it over—100 miles of outdoors. All mine."

The future of Rhyolite seemed assured when Bob Montgomery sold to Charles M. Schwab, president of Bethlehem Steel Company, his interest in the claim known as the Montgomery Shoshone for more than \$2,000,000.

The discovery of this claim has been accredited to Shoshone Johnnie and historians have said that Montgomery bought it from Johnnie for a pair of overalls, a buggy, and a few dollars. Actually Bob Montgomery was among the first on the scene following Shorty's discovery strike and located the claim himself. Even if Johnnie had located it Montgomery would have been entitled to one-half interest for the reason that he had been grubstaking Johnnie for years.

It never paid as a mine, but America was gold mad and the two railroads which brought mail for Rhyolite also carried stock certificates out and the promoters lost nothing.

The strike at Bullfrog was made in 1904. Rhyolite attained a population of about 14,000 at its peak—then started downward. On January 1, 1926, I made a camp fire in its empty streets and beside it tried to sleep through a biting wind that seemed aptly enough a dirge. The next morning I poked around in the abandoned stores to marvel at things of value left behind. Chinaware and silver in hurriedly abandoned houses and in the leading cafe. The cribs still bore the castoff ribbons and silks of the girls and for all I know, the satin slipper which I found on a bed may have been the one that Shorty Harris filled with champagne to toast the charms of Flaming Jane.

I walked up to the vacant depot. Across the door, through which thousands had passed from incoming trains with youth and hope and the eagerness of life, lay the long-dead carcass of a cow. It fitted, it seemed to me, the scene about.

Like Tonopah, Skidoo on top of Tucki Mountain overlooking Death Valley may be accredited to the straying of a burro in 1905.

John Ramsey and John Thompson, two prospectors, camped overnight in Emigrant Canyon which leads into Death Valley. The grass about was lush and they thought it safe to turn the burros loose. The burros strayed during the night and because the walls on the east side of the canyon are perpendicular, search was immediately confined to the sloping west area. But the burros, always unpredictable, found a way to ascend Tucki Mountain and there they were found—one of them actually straddling an outcropping of gold. 56

This happened on the 23rd day of the month and because of a popular current slang expression, "Twenty-three for you—skidoo," (meaning phooey, or shut up) the claim and the town were named Skidoo.

Bob Montgomery bought the claim on sight. A winding road with a spectacular view of Death Valley was built, a mill installed on the side of Telephone Canyon and water brought 22 miles from Panamint Canyon. A long rambling building on top of the mountain served as offices and living quarters for officials. A broad porch encircled it and afforded a sweeping and unforgettable view of Death Valley country.

On the area about this building was the company town. Adjoining was "Our Town" where the cribs and honkies thrived.

I first visited it with Shorty Harris, holding my breath most of the way on the steep, narrow, and winding road. We appropriated the company building for our temporary home. Shorty had owned claims there and had helped build the road.

Montgomery paid \$60,000 for the claims and took out \$9,000,000 before production costs exceeded his profits, when work was abandoned.

During World War I, Montgomery sold the pipe, which had brought the water to Skidoo, to Standard Oil Company at a price far in excess of its cost. That was the end of Skidoo.

More interesting to me than the fate of Skidoo was that of Blonde Betty and the traveling preacher, of which Shorty was reminded when we strolled by the crib in which Betty had lived.

"Skagway Thompson, as fine a chap as ever drew a cork, died right over there in that shack and we decided he deserved a nice planting. Everybody liked Skagway. Only women around at that time were crib girls and they banked his grave with wild flowers and I got this sky pilot to say a few words.

"He was a young fellow, good looking and agreeable. I told him Skagway's friends thought it would be nice if one of the women in town would sing Skagway's favorite song. 'It's called "When the Wedding Bells Are Ringing"' I said, 'and I hope you don't mind if it's not in the hymn books.' I didn't tell him the girl who was going to sing it was Blonde Betty—a chippy—figuring he'd be on his way before he found out. That gal could sing like a flock of larks and after the service the preacher barged up to me and said he wanted to meet Betty and would I introduce him.

"There was no way out and besides, I figured what he didn't know wouldn't hurt him. He told her what a wonderful voice she had, how the song had touched him and hoped she would sing at one of his meetings. 57

"Blonde Betty was pretty as curly ribbon and I was afraid every minute he was going to ask if he could call on her, so I horned in and said, 'Parson, excuse me, but I promised I would bring Miss Betty home right away.'



"So I took her arm and pulled her away.

"'You big-mouthed bum,' Betty says when we were out of hearing. 'Why don't you attend to your own business? I know how to act.'"

Shorty pointed to a riot of wild flowers on the side of a hill across the gulch. "The next day I saw her and the Parson picking flowers right over there. Of course he didn't know then what she was. After that I reckon he didn't give a dam'. He chucked the preaching job and ran off with Betty. But maybe God went along. They got married and live over in Nevada and you couldn't find a happier family or a finer brood of children anywhere.

"It is no argument for sin, but this was a hell of a country in those days and you just couldn't always live by the Book."

On July 4, 1905 Shorty Harris made the strike which started the town of Harrisburg, now only a name on a signboard. A feud due to a partnership of curious origin, started immediately and is worth mention only because it confused historians of a later period who, gathering material after Shorty's death have given only the story of the feudist who survived him.

Here is Shorty's version: "I was trying to save distance by taking the Blackwater trail across Death Valley into the Panamint. I had been over the country and had seen a formation that looked good and was going back to look it over. The Blackwater trail is a wet trail and one of my burros sank in the ooze. I had just gotten her out when a fellow I'd never seen before, came up. He said he was a stranger in the country and he wanted to get to Emigrant Springs where his two partners were waiting. He explained that the foreman at Furnace Creek had told him I had left only a short while before, but he might overtake me by hurrying, and I would show him the way. Then he asked if he could join me.

"I told him it was free country and nobody on the square was barred. When I reached my destination I showed him the trail to Emigrant Springs. I reckon I talked too much on the way over—maybe made him think I had a gold mountain. Anyway, he said he believed he would look around a little to see what he could find. I didn't even know his name and though it was against the unwritten code, he followed me. There wasn't anything I could do about it without trouble and I was looking for gold—not trouble. 58

"In 15 minutes I had found gold. He was pecking around a short distance away and also found rock with color and claimed a half interest. It was then that I learned his name—Pete Auguerreberry and that his partners were Flynn and Cavanaugh. Wild Bill Corcoran had grubstaked me. I told Pete five partners were too many and we should agree upon a division point—each taking a full claim and he could have his choice.

"He refused and wanted half interest in both and nothing short of murder would have budged him. I went to Rhyolite for Bill Corcoran. He went for his partners. When we met, Corcoran had an offer to buy, sight unseen, from one of Schwab's agents. Everyone of us wanted to sell, except Pete who stood out for a fantastic price. His partners offered to give him a part of their share if he would accept the offer. Pete refused. He thought it was worth millions. Wild Bill organized a company and we started work."

For awhile it seemed the Harrisburg claims would prove to be good producers. In the end it was just another town on the map for Shorty. Futile years for Pete.

Once I asked Shorty Harris how he obtained his grubstakes. "Grubstakes," he answered, "like gold, are where you find them. Once I was broke in Pioche, Nev., and couldn't find a grubstake anywhere. Somebody told me that a woman on a ranch a few miles out wanted a man for a few days' work. I hoofed it out under a broiling sun, but when I got there, the lady said she had no job. I reckon she saw my disappointment and when her cat came up and began to mew, she told me the cat had an even dozen kittens and she would give me a dollar if I would take 'em down the road and kill 'em.

"It's a deal," I said. She got 'em in a sack and I started back to town. I intended to lug 'em a few miles away and turn 'em loose, because I haven't got the heart to kill anything.

"A dozen kittens makes quite a load and I had to sit down pretty often to rest. A fellow in a two-horse wagon came along and offered me a ride. I picked up the sack and climbed in.

"'Cats, eh?' the fellow said. 'They ought to bring a good price. I was in Colorado once. Rats and mice were taking the town. I had a cat. She would have a litter every three months. I had no trouble selling them cats for ten dollars apiece. Beat a gold mine.' 59

"There were plenty rats in Pioche and that sack of kittens went like hotcakes. One fellow didn't have any money and offered me a goat. I knew a fellow who wanted a goat. He lived on the same lot as I did. Name was Pete Swain.

"Pete was all lit up when I offered him the goat for fifty dollars. He peeled the money off his roll and took the goat into his shack. A few days later Pete came to his door and called me over and shoved a fifty dollar note into my hands. 'I just wanted you to see what that goat's doing,' he said.

"I looked inside. The goat was pulling the cork out of a bottle of liquor with his teeth.

"'That goat's drunk as a boiled owl,' Pete said. 'If I ever needed any proof that there's something in this idea of the transmigration of souls, that goat gives it. He's Jimmy, my old sidekick, who, I figured was dead and buried.'

"'Now listen,' I said. 'Do you mean to tell me you actually believe that goat is your old pal, whom you drank with

and played with and saw buried with your own eyes, right up there on the hill?"

"Exactly," Pete shouted, and he peeled off another fifty and gave it to me. So, you see, a grubstake, like gold, is where you find it."

## Chapter X Greenwater—Last of the Boom Towns

Located on Black Mountain in the Funeral Range on the east side of Death Valley, Greenwater was the last boom town founded in the mad decade which followed Jim Butler's strike at Tonopah. Records show locations of mining claims in the district as early as 1884, but all were abandoned.

The location notice of a "gold and silver claim" was filed in 1884 by Doc Trotter, a famous character of the desert, remembered both for his good fellowship and his burro—Honest John—a habitual thief of incredible cunning, "Picked locks with baling wire...."

The first location of a copper claim was made by Frank McAllister who, with a man named Cooper and Arthur Kunzie, may be credited with one of the West's most spectacular mining booms.

In 1905 Phil Creaser and Fred Birney took samples of the Copper Blue Ledge and sent them to Patsy Clark, who was so impressed that he dispatched Joseph P. Harvey, a prominent mining engineer to look at the property. Harvey started from Daggett and had reached Cave Spring in the Avawatz Mountains when he was caught in a cloudburst and lost all his equipment. He returned to Daggett, secured a new outfit and this time reached Black Mountain, but was unable to locate the claims.

Again Birney and Creaser contacted Clark and this time the mining magnate came to Rhyolite, ordered another examination of the property, giving his agent authority to buy. Upon the assay's showing, the claims were bought. Immediately Charles M. Schwab, August Heinze, Tasker L. Oddie, Borax Smith, W. A. Clark, and many other moguls of mining hurried to the scene or sent their agents. In their wake came gamblers, merchants, crib girls, soldiers of fortune, and thugs.

\$4,125,000 was paid for 2500 claims. Result—a hectic town with as many as 100 people a day pouring out of the canyons onto the barren, windy slope.

Noted mining engineers announced that Black Mountain was one huge deposit of copper with a thin overlay of rock, dirt, and gravel. "It will make Butte's 'Richest Hill on Earth' look like beggars' pickings," they announced. 61

Greenwater stocks sky-rocketed and so many people poured into the new camp that the town was moved two miles from the mines in order to take care of the growth which it was believed would soon make it a metropolis. Before pick and shovel had made more than a dent on the crust of Black Mountain, two newspapers, a bank, express lines, and a magazine were in operation.

Here Shorty Harris missed another fortune only because his partner went on a drunk.

Leaving Rhyolite, Shorty had induced Judge Decker, a convivial resident of Ballarat to furnish a grubstake to look over Black Mountain. He made several locations, erected his monuments, returned to Ballarat and gave them to Decker to be recorded.

When the papers reached Ballarat with the news that the copper barons were bidding recklessly for Greenwater claims Shorty was broke again. Bursting into Chris Wicht's saloon, he shouted, "Where's the Judge?"

Chris nodded toward the end of the bar where the Judge, swaying slightly, was waving his glass in lieu of a baton while leading the quartet in "Sweet Adeline." Wedging through the crowd, Shorty touched the Judge's elbow: "Lay off that cooking likker, Judge. It's Mum's Extra for us from now on."

"Yeh? How come?" the Judge asked thickly.

"We're worth a billion dollars," Shorty said. "I staked out that whole dam' mountain. Where're those location notices?"

"What location notices?" Decker blinked.

"The ones I gave you to take to Independence."

With one hand the Judge steadied himself on the bar. With the other he fumbled through his pockets, finally producing a frayed batch of papers, covered with barroom doodling, but no recorder's receipt for the location notices. "Well, I'll be damned," he muttered.

"So'll I," Shorty gulped.

If Decker had recorded the notices both he and Shorty would have become rich through the sale of those claims.

When laborers cleared the ground to begin work for Schwab, Patsy Clark, and others, they tore down the monuments containing the unrecorded notices.

In a little cemetery on the gravel flats at Ballarat, lies Decker.

Pleasantly refreshed with liquor one yawny afternoon he managed to have the last word in an argument with the constable, Henry Pietsch and went happily to his room. Later the constable thought of a way to win the argument and went to the Judge's cabin. A shot was heard and Pietsch came through the door with a smoking gun in his hand. Decker, he said, had started for a pistol in his dresser drawer. But Decker was found with a hole in his back, his spine severed. At Independence, the constable was acquitted for lack of evidence and returned to Ballarat to resume his duties, but was told that he might live longer somewhere else. Pietsch didn't argue this time and thus avoided a lynching. He left Ballarat and, I believe, was hanged for another murder. 62

Among those who came early to Greenwater, none was more outstanding than a gorgeous creature with a wasp waist who stepped from the stage one day, patted her pompadour with jewelled fingers, gave the bustling town an approving glance. Then she turned to the bevy of blondes and brunettes she had brought. "It's a man's town, girls...."

Bystanders were already eyeing the girls; their scarlet lips and the deep dark danger in their roving eyes.

So Diamond Tooth Lil was welcomed to Greenwater and became important both in its business and social economy.

It was agreed that Lil was a good fellow. Greenwater also learned that her word was good as her bond. She kept an orderly five dollar house and if anyone chose to break her rules of conduct, he ran afoul of her six-gun. Because she could fight like a jungle beast, she was also called Tiger Lil. Somewhere along the line, four of her upper teeth had been broken and in each of the replacements was set a diamond of first quality. As Greenwater prospered so did Diamond Tooth Lil.

One day an exotic creature with a suggestion of Spanish-Creole and dark, compelling eyes dropped off the stage. She too had pretty girls and when the new bagnio had its grand opening, with champagne and imported orchestra, Diamond Tooth Lil sent a huge floral piece.

A few nights later Lil was sitting in her parlor wondering where the men were. The girls were all banked around with folded hands.

"Maybe there's a celebration...." A moment later a belated male barged in.

"Willie, where's everybody?" Lil asked.

Willie flicked a look at the idle girls. "Maybe," he announced, "they're down at that new cut-rate menage."

"Cut-rate?" Lil cried.

"Yeh. Three dollars."

A steely glint came into Diamond Tooth Lil's eyes.

She tossed her cigarette into the cuspidor, went to her room, picked up her six-gun, saw that it was loaded and hurried to her rival's.

A rap on the door brought the dark beauty to the porch. "Listen dearie," Diamond Tooth Lil began. "This is a union town. I hear you're scabbing." 63

The hot Latin temper flared. "I run my business to suit myself...."

"And you won't raise the price?" asked Diamond Tooth Lil.

"Never!" Suddenly the exotic one looked into hard steel and harder eyes.

"Okay. You're through. Start packing," ordered Lil.

Something in the eyes behind the six-gun told the madam that surrender was wiser than a funeral and the scab house closed forever.

A wayfarer in Greenwater announced that he was so low he could mount stilts and clear a snake's belly, but being broke, he could only sniff the liquor-scented air coming from Bill Waters's saloon and look wistfully at the bottles on the shelves. Then he noticed that Bill Waters was alone, polishing glasses. A sudden inspiration came and he sauntered in. "Bill," he said, "gimme a drink...."

Bill Waters was no meticulous interpreter of English and slid a glass down the bar. A bottle followed. The drinker filled the glass, poured it down an arid throat. "Thanks," he called and started out.

"Hey—" cried Bill Waters. "You haven't paid for that drink."

"Why, I asked you to give me a drink...."

"Yeh," Bill sneered. "Well, brother, you'd better pay."

"Horse feathers—" said the fellow and proceeded toward the door.

Bill Waters picked up a double barrelled shotgun, pointed it at the departing guest and pulled the trigger. The

jester fell, someone called the undertaker and the porter washed the floor.

It looked bad for Bill. But lawyers solve such problems. Bill said he was joking and didn't know the gun was loaded. The answer satisfied the court and Bill returned to his glasses.

For a few years Greenwater prospered. Then it was noticed that the incoming stages had empty seats. Bartenders had more time to polish glasses. "The World's Biggest Copper Deposit" which the world's greatest experts had assured the moguls lay under the mountain just wasn't there.

Today there is barely a trace of Greenwater. A few bottles gleam in the sun. The wind sweeps over from Dante's View or up Dead Man's Canyon. The greasewood waves. The rotted leg of a pair of overalls protrudes from its covering of sand. A sunbaked shoe lies on its side.

But somewhere under its crust is a case of champagne. Dan Modine, the freighter, buried it there one dark night over 40 years ago and was never able to find it.

64

## Chapter XI The Amargosa Country

In Hellgate Pass I met Slim again, resting on the roadside, his burro browsing nearby. Slim, I may add here, already had a niche in Goldfield's hall of fame. He had walked into a gambling house one day broke, thirsty, nursing a hangover, and hoping to find a friend who would buy him a drink. Though it was a holiday and the place crowded, he saw no familiar face, but while waiting he noticed the cashier was busy collecting the winnings from the tables. He also noticed that in order to save the time it required to unlock the door of the cage, the cashier would dump the gold and silver coins on the shelf at his wicker window, then for safety's sake, shove it off to fall on the floor inside.

Slim watched the procedure awhile and with a sudden bright idea, sauntered out. A few moments later he returned through an alley with an auger wrapped in a tow sack, crawled under the house and soon a stream of gold and silver was cascading into Slim's hat.

A lookout at a table nearest the cage, hearing a strange metallic noise, went outside to investigate and peeking under the floor, saw Slim without being seen. It was just too good to keep. Stealthily moving away, he spread the news and half of Goldfield was gathered about when Slim, his pockets bulging with his loot, crawled out only to face a jeering, heckling crowd.

Cornered like a rat in a cage, he couldn't run; he couldn't speak. He could only stand and grin and somehow the grin caught the crowd and instead of a lynching, Slim was handcuffed and led away and later the merciful judge who had been in the crowd declared Goldfield out of bounds for Slim and sent him on his way.

At no other place in the world except Goldfield, with its craving for life's sunny side, could such an incident have occurred.

After greetings Slim confided that he was en route to a certain canyon, the location of which he wouldn't even tell to his mother. There, not a cent less than \$100,000,000 awaited him. No prospector worthy of the name ever bothers to mention a claim of less value. Not sure of the roads ahead, I asked him for directions. 65

"You'd better go down the valley," he advised, pointing to a small black cloud above Funeral Range. "Regular cloudburst hatchery—these mountains."

At a sudden burst of thunder we flinched and at another the earth seemed to tremble. Forked lightning was stabbing the inky blackness and I expected to see the mountains fall apart. "Something's got to give," Slim said. "Look at that lightning ... no letup." Another roar rumbled and rolled over the valley. "God—" muttered Slim, "I haven't prayed since I fell into a mine shaft full of rattlesnakes."

As we watched the incessant play of lightning, Slim told me about his fall into the shaft: "Arkansas Ben Brandt was working about 100 yards away. Deaf as a lamp post, Ben is, but I kept praying and hollering and just when I'd given up, here comes a rope. You can argue with me all day but you can't make me believe the Lord didn't unstop old Ben's ears."

Slim gave me a final warning. "Take the road over the mountain when you come to the Shoshone sign. When you get there be sure to see Charlie before you go any farther."

At every water hole where prospectors were gathered I'd heard someone tell someone else to see Charlie. At Furnace Creek I'd heard the vice president of the Borax Company tell an official of the Santa Fe railroad to see Charlie and only an hour before I met Slim I had stopped to give a tire patch to a young miner with a flat. While I waited to see that the patch stuck, I learned he was on his way to consult Charlie.

"My helper," he confided, "jumped my claim after he learned I hadn't done last year's assessment work. That's legal if a fellow's a skunk but when he stole my wife and chased me off with my own shotgun, bigod—that's different." I suggested a lawyer. "I'll see Charlie first..."

Naturally I became curious about this Charlie, who seemed to be a combination of Father Confessor and the Caliph Haroun Alraschid to all the desert. "Just who is Charlie?" I asked Slim.

"He runs the store at Shoshone. Tell him I'll be down soon. I want him to handle my deal." He slapped his burro and we parted—he for his \$100,000,000, I to leave the country. Watching the spring in his step a moment, I got into my car and knew at last the why of those dark alluring canyons that ran up from the hungry land and hid in the hills. I knew why there are riches that nothing can take away and why rainbows swing low in the sky. The good God had made them so that fellows like Slim could climb one and ride.

Driving along I found myself trying to appraise the endless waste. Was it a blunder of creation, hell's front yard or God's back stairs? It was easy to understand the appeal of vast distances, of desert dawns and desert nights but what was it that made men "go desert"? 66

The answer was becoming clearer. Fellows like Slim had found God in a snake hole, or if you prefer—a way of life patterned with infinite precision to their needs. It is easy enough to tear into scraps, another's formula for happiness and recommend your own but that is an egotism that only the fool will flaunt and I began to suspect that the Slims and the Shortys had found a freedom for which millions in the tired world Outside vainly struggled and slowly died.

*"I wanted the gold, and I got it—  
Came out with a fortune last fall—  
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,  
And somehow the gold isn't all.*

*It grips you like some kinds of sinning;  
It twists you from foe to a friend;  
It seems it's been since the beginning;  
It seems it will be to the end."*

—Robert W. Service.

Rounding a sharp turn in the road that led over and around a hill jutting out from a mountain of black malpai, I saw a sign: "Shoshone" and just beyond, a little settlement almost hidden in a thicket of mesquite. A sign on a weather-beaten ramshackle building read, "Store." A few listing shacks on a naked flat. An abandoned tent house, its torn canvas top whipping the rafters in the wind. Whirlwinds spiraling along dry washes to vanish in hummocks of sand.

The presence of three or four prospectors strung along a slab bench either staring at the ground at their feet or the brown bare mountains, only emphasized the depressing solitude and I decided if I had to choose between hell and Shoshone I'd take hell.

Reaching the store through deep dust, I guessed correctly that the big fellow giving me an appraising look was Charlie. He was slow in his movements, slow in his speech and I had the feeling that his keen, calm eyes had already counted the number of buttons on my shirt and the eyelets in my shoes. I asked about the road to Baker.

"Washed out. Won't be open for two weeks."

"Two weeks?" I gasped. "Long enough to kill a fellow, isn't it?"

"Well, there's a little cemetery handy. Just up the gulch."

Impulsively I thrust out my hand. "Shake. You win. Now that we understand each other, have you a cabin for rent for these two weeks?" 67

"Yes, but you'd better take it longer," he chuckled. "In two weeks you'll be a native and won't want to get out."

The showing of the cabin was delayed by a lanky individual who was pawing over a pile of shoes. "Charlie, soles on my shoes are worn through. These any good?"

"Not worth a dam'," Charlie said. He picked up hammer and nails, handed them to the lanky one. "Some old tires outside. Cut off a piece and tack it on. I'll have some good shoes next time you're in."

A miner in an ancient pickup stopped for gas. As Brown filled the tank he noticed a tire dangerously worn. "Blackie, you need a new casing to get across Death Valley."

"These'll do," Blackie answered as he dug into all his pockets, paid for the gas and got into the car.

"Wait a minute," Brown said and in a moment he was rolling a new tire out, lifting it to the bed of the pickup. He handed Blackie a new tube. "If you use them, pay me. If you don't, bring 'em back."

Blackie regarded him a moment. "How'd you know I was broke?" he grinned, and chugged away.

A man stopped a truck in front of the door, came in and asked how far it was to Furnace Creek. Charlie looked him over, then glanced at the truck. "Fifty-eight miles the short way. Nearly 80 the other. You'll have to take the long way."

"Why?" the fellow bristled.

"Your load is too high for the underpass on the short route. Road's washed out anyway."

The man frowned and turned to go.

"Wait a minute," Charlie called. He reached for a sack of flour, laid it on a counter. Then he stood a slab of bacon on its edge and cut off a chunk. "You'll stop at Bradbury Well—"

"I won't stop nowhere," the truckman said.

"You'll have to. Your radiator will be boiling." He got a carton, put the flour and bacon in it and reaching on a shelf behind, got coffee, sugar, and canned milk and put these in. "Old Dobe Charlie Nels is camped there. Poor old fellow hasn't been in for two weeks...."

The man looked at Charlie, uncertain. "You want me to drop it off, huh?"

"Yes," Charlie said and lugging the carton to the truck, he shoved it in.

With squinted eyes the driver watched. "Mister, I'll surely fill up here on my way back," and with a friendly wave, climbed into his cab and I began to understand why all over the desert I'd heard of Charlie. 68

The cabin assigned me was the usual box type, shaded by the overhanging branches of a screwbean mesquite.

"Cabin's not much," Charlie said, "but you'll have a Beauty Rest mattress to sleep on. My wife says folks'll put up with most anything if they have a good bed." He looked the room over and I noticed that nothing escaped him. Wood and kindling. Oil in the lamp. Water in the pitcher—an ornate vessel with enormous roses edged with gilt. He opened a closet door, saw that the matching vessel was in place and went out. After arranging my belongings, with time to kill, I returned to the store, hoping to learn something about nearby trails.

A short woman who preceded me slammed a can of coffee on the counter, removed her long cigarette holder, blew a ring of smoke at the ceiling and asked Charlie where he got the coffee. He told her that it came in a shipment.

"Well bigod, you send it back."

Charlie laughed and turned to me: "This is Myra Benson. You want to stay on the good side of Myra. She has charge of the dining room."

My remark that good coffee was my early morning weakness led to an invitation to sample her brew. "Mine too," she said. "The pot's on the stove before daylight, if you're up that early."

I soon discovered that Myra's language was just a bit of color Death Valley imparts to speech, for she was deeply religious if not in all its forms, in all of its essentials and the occasional use of a two-fisted phrase did not in the least detract from the eternal feminine of one of Death Valley's most remarkable women.

Guided by the light in her kitchen, I joined her the next morning while Shoshone still slept, and over a delicious cup learned something about people and places.

The man with the wide Stetson was Dan Modine, deputy sheriff. Liked poker. The quiet, squat fellow with the blue pop eyes was Billy de Von. "College man. Works on the roads. Taught in the University of Mexico before he came here. Siberian Red? Oh, that's Ernie Huhn. No place on Godamighty's earth he hasn't been. As soon bet \$1000 as two bits on a pair of jacks."

"The tall thin fellow they called Sam? Must be Sam Flake. Here before Noah built the ark."

Knowing that Mormons had pioneered in the area, I was curious about an undersized man pushing an oversize baby carriage loaded with infants and a dozen youngsters trailing him. "Does he happen to be one of the Faithful who has clung to his wives?" I asked.

"That's Eddie Main," Myra laughed. "Bachelor. Just loves kids. He was born in San Francisco in the days when a nickel just wasn't counted unless it had a dime alongside. His folks sent him to New York to be educated. Eddie didn't like it. 'It's a nickel town,' Eddie said. 'Cheapest hole on earth.' He came to the desert and the desert took him over. When he's not hauling kids around he's reading. Don't get out on a limb in an argument with Eddie. You'll lose sure. Every now and then Eddie goes East for a vacation. It's awful on the mothers. They have to take care of their own children and the children want Eddie." 69

"Who is Hank, the fellow that came in with the pickup Ford?" I asked.

"Our bootlegger. Comes Wednesdays and Saturdays. Regular as a bread route. Always tell when he's due. Bench is crowded. Didn't you notice the tarpaulin over his truck? Always two kegs and a sack of empty pints and quarts. Rough roads here. Siphons out what you want. Death Valley Scotty? Around yesterday. Lit up like a barn afire." The short man with the black whiskers was Henry Ashford who, with his brothers Harold and Rudolph owned the Ashford mine.

"How does such a little store in a place like this make a living for the Browns?"

"I wonder myself, at times," she said. "Everybody around here takes their troubles to Charlie or Stella. Maybe you noticed their home—the cottage with the screen porch a few steps from the store. Stella was telling me yesterday she needed a new carpet for her living room. I said, 'I'm not surprised. You're running a nursery, emergency hospital, and a domestic relations court.' Sometimes young couples find their marriage going on the rocks. The woman goes to Stella to get the kinks out. As for Charlie, if you're around long enough you'll see him most every morning strolling over to the shacks in the jungle or up to the dugouts in Dublin Gulch. He thinks nobody knows what he's doing or maybe they figure he's just taking a walk. I know. Some of these old fellows are always in a



bad way. Just last week Charlie came in here and told me to send something a sick man could eat over to old Jim. 'I'll have to take him to the hospital soon as I can get my car ready,' he said. Three hundred miles—that trip.

"And there's Phil. You'll see him around. Fine steady chap. Lost his job when the mine he worked in shut down. Long as he was working he was the first in the dining room when I opened the door. He began to miss a breakfast, then a dinner, and finally he didn't show up at all. I supposed he was cooking his own and didn't mention it. Kept his chin up. You could hear him laughing loud as anybody on the bench, but Charlie noticed that once a day Phil would follow his nose over into the mesquite where somebody was sure to share a mulligan stew. 70

"One day when Phil was sitting alone on the woodpile just outside my kitchen, Charlie sat down beside him. They didn't know I was there. 'Phil,' Charlie says, 'the ditch that carries the runoff up at the spring needs widening. Could you spare a few days to put it in shape?'

"Phil left that bench running, got a pick and shovel and went singing up the road and to this day he doesn't know that Charlie just created that job so he could eat."

I mentioned the fellow with black hair and blue eyes. "He complained of rheumatism and slapped his knees a lot."

"Oh, that's Dutch Barr. It isn't rheumatism. Just a sign he's going on a drunk."

The lanky man with the blond eyebrows and sombre face which lighted so easily to laugh, was Whitey Bill McGarn. "... Never had a worry in his life...."

I learned also that the mountain of malpai which lifts above Shoshone was a burial place for a race of Indians antedating the Piutes and Shoshones. "They buried their dead in a crouching position on their knees, elbows bent, hands at their ears. Old Nancy, who was Sam Yundt's squaw wife before he got rich, says they were buried that way so they would be ready to go quick when the Great Spirit called."

The first rose of dawn was in the sky when I left Myra. "You'll have time enough to look around before breakfast," she told me and recommended a view of the valley from the flat-topped mesa above my cabin. "You can reach the top by climbing up a gully and holding on to the greasewood. You can see the dugouts in Dublin Gulch too. Some real old timers live there."

A sweeping view of the little valley rewarded the climb.

Below, Shoshone lay, tucked away in the mesquite. No honking horns, no clanging cars. No swollen ankles dragging muted chains to bench or counter, desk or machine. Soon faint spirals of smoke leaned from the shanties. Shoshone was awakening. It would wash its face on a slab bench, eat its bacon and eggs, and somebody would go out to look for two million dollars.

After breakfast, I joined the old timers on the bench. "No—nothing exciting happens around here," Joe Ryan told me and stopped whittling to look at a car coming up the road. A moment later the car stopped at the gas pump and three smartly tailored men stepped out. I heard one say, "Odd looking lot on that bench, aren't they?" Then Joe said to the fellow at his side, "Queer looking birds, ain't they?"

"How much is gas?" one of the tourists asked.

"Thirty cents," Charlie said. 71

"Why, it's only 18 in the city," the man flared. "How far is it to the next gas?"

Charlie told him, and Big Dan sitting beside me muttered: "Dam' fool'll pay 50 cents up there."

The driver climbed into the car and Charlie asked if he had plenty of water.

"A gallon can full...."

"Not enough," Charlie warned.

A fellow in the back seat spoke, "Aw, go on. He wants to sell a canteen...."

As the car pulled out, Joe called to Charlie: "You're sold out of canteens, ain't you?"

"Yes. But I was going to give him one of those old five gallon cans on the dump." He went inside and Joe Ryan said, "Won't get far on a gallon of water." He waved his knife toward the little cemetery at the mouth of the gulch. "Lot of smart Alocs like him up there, that Charlie dragged in offa the desert."

It was five days almost to the hour when Ann Cowboy, a Piute squaw came to the store with an Indian boy who couldn't speak English; nodded at the boy and said to Charlie: "Him see...." She pointed to the big black mountain of malpai above Shoshone, whirled her finger in a circle, shot it this way and that, then patted the floor. "You savvy?"

Her dark eyes watched Charlie's and when she had finished Charlie called Joe Ryan and together they went across the road, climbed into a pickup truck and left in a hurry. Even I understood that somebody on the other side of that mountain was in trouble, but I had no idea that in three or four hours the pickup would return with a cadaver under a tarpaulin and a thirst-crazed survivor whose distorted features bore little resemblance to those of man.

Big Dan helped lift the victim from the truck. "There were three," Dan said. "Where is the other fellow?"

"We looked all over," Joe shrugged.

"The one that's missing," Dan said, "is the fellow that griped about the canteen. I remember his black hair."

They carried the still-living man over to Charlie's house and left him to the ministrations of the capable Stella. Charlie returned to the store, got a pick and shovel from a rack, handed one to Ben Brandt and one to Cranky Casey. Not a word was spoken to them. They took the tools and started toward the little cemetery at the mouth of Dublin Gulch.

I joined Dan on the bench. "Well," Dan said, "they saved the price of a canteen."

72

Two spinsters—teachers of zoology in a fashionable eastern school for girls—came in search of a place they called Metbury Springs. Brown told them there were no such springs in the Death Valley region. Obviously disappointed, one produced a map, spread it on the counter, ran her finger over a maze of notes and looking up asked what sort of rats lived about Shoshone. Charlie told them that very few rats survived their natural enemies and were seldom seen.

"What do they look like?" the teacher asked.

"Just regular rats," Charlie told her.

Again she consulted her notes. "Do you mean to say the only rat you've seen here is *Mus decumanus*?"

"Mus who?" Charlie asked. "Only rats around here besides the two-legged kind are just plain everyday rats."

The ladies gathered up their papers, went outside, looked over the hills, consulted their maps, and returned to Brown. "Sir, this is Metbury Spring," one announced, "and for your own information we may add that in no other place in the world is there a rat like the one you have here."

The amazing feature of this incident is that it is true. The rats in some unexplained way had disappeared.

The spinsters remained for weeks but failed to find the specimen they sought, but Charlie learned that the first man known to have settled at Shoshone was a man named Brown and Shoshone's first name was Metbury Spring.

Death came to Shoshone that week-end. George Hoagland, prospector, reached Trail's End. Charlie announced the news to the bench and asked for volunteers to dig the grave. Bob Johnson, another prospector, jumped up. "I'll help."

The others gave Bob a quick look and exchanged slow ones with each other, because it was known that Bob had not liked Hoagland. "I've been in lots of deals with that bastard," he had often said. "Came out loser every time. Always left himself a hole to wiggle out of."

Right or wrong, Bob's opinion was shared by many. Herman Jones glanced after Bob, now going for a pick and shovel. "That's sure white of Bob, forgetting his grudge," Herman said and all Shoshone approved.

I joined the little group that filed up to the cemetery at the mouth of the gulch for the graveside ceremony. We stood about waiting for the box that contained all there was of George.

They take death on the desert just as they do any other grim fact of nature. They talked of George and the hard, chalky earth Bob had to dig through in the hot sun. There were mild arguments about whose bones lay under this or that unmarked grave. "Dad Fairbanks brought that fellow in...." "No such thing. That's Tillie Younger—member of Jesse James's gang. I helped bury him...."

73

Presently there was a stir and I saw Charlie over where the women were. He had another chore and was doing it because there was no one else to do it.

"Usually reads a coupla verses," Joe Ryan told me. "But somebody stole the only Bible in Shoshone."

The box was lowered, the grave filled and Charlie stepped forward. He held his hat well up in front of his chest and I suspected that he had a few notes pasted in the hat. Those about were listening intently as people will to one who has something to say and says it in a few words.

Suddenly I was conscious of mumbling and the tramping of earth and seeing Brown flick a glance out of the corner of his eye toward the disturbing sound, I turned to see Bob Johnson jumping up and down on the earth that filled the grave—careful to miss no inch of it. When he had tamped it sufficiently he stepped aside and muttered angrily: "Now dam' you—let's see you wiggle out of this hole!"

Yet, when the hills are covered with wild flowers one may see on the unsodded graves of the little cemetery a bottle or a tin can filled with sun cups or baby blue eyes and in the dust the tracks of a hobnailed shoe.

I soon discovered the bench was more than a slab of wood. It was a state of Hallelujah. For the most part those who gathered there were a silent lot, but as one unshaven ancient told me, "Too damned much talk in the world. Two-three words are plenty—like yes, naw, and dam'." Some of them had beaten trails from Crede or Cripple Creek, Virginia City or Bodie. "It's a clean life and clean money," was an expression that ran like a formula through their conversation.

"Of course, few keep the money they get," Joe Ryan said. "Jack Morrissey couldn't read or write. He struck it rich. Bought a diamond-studded watch and couldn't even tell the time of day. Went to Europe; hit all the high spots; came back and died in the poor house. But he had his fun, which makes more sense than what Nat Crede did. He hit it rich. Built a town and a palace. Then blew his brains out and left all his millions to a Los Angeles foundling."

One oldster remembered Eilly Orrum of Virginia City. "She had followed the covered wagons and made a living washing our clothes, but she got into our hearts. Everybody liked her. Some say she forgot to get a divorce from her second husband before she married Sandy Bowers. Nobody blamed her. She and Sandy ran a beanery. Eilly would feed anybody on the cuff. John Rodgers ran up a board bill and couldn't pay it. He had a few shares in a no-count claim and talked Eilly into taking the shares to settle the bill. 74

"Within two weeks Eilly was getting \$20,000 a month from that deal. It wasn't long before she was giggling happily and telling everybody she didn't see how folks could live on less than \$100,000 a year."

"Julia Bulette? Ran a snooty fancy house. But she taught Virginia City how to eat and what, and soon the rich fellows wouldn't stand for anything except the world's best foods."

"Oh yes, everybody knew Old Virginy. Gave the town its name. Always drunk. Discovered the Ophir. Swapped it for a mustang pony and a pint of likker to old Pancake Comstock. When he sobered up he discovered the pony was blind. Pancake swapped an eighth interest in the Ophir to a Mexican, Gabriel Maldonado, for two burros. The Mexican took out \$6,000,000. Pancake was quite a lady-killer. Ran away with a miner's wife. Fellow was glad to get rid of her, but decided he'd beat hell out of Pancake. Found him in new diggings nearby and jumped him. 'You don't want her,' Pancake says. 'Be reasonable. I'll buy her.'

"They haggled awhile and the fellow agreed to accept \$50 and a plug horse. He took the money and started for the horse.

"'Wait a minute,' Pancake says, 'I want a bill of sale,' and wrote it out on the spot, and made the fellow sign it. Didn't keep her long though. She ran away with a tramp fiddler. The Comstock Lode produced over a billion dollars. He might have had a fifth of that. Just too smart for his own good. Finally paid the price. Found him on the trail one day. Brains blowed out. Suicide."

Dobe Charlie Nels was at Bodie, rendezvous of the toughest of the bad men when the United States Hotel rented its rooms in six-hour shifts and guests were awakened at the end of that period to make places for others. He recalled Eleanor Dumont, whose deft fingers dealt four kings to the unwary and four aces to herself. Smitten lovers had shot it out for her favors on the Mother Lode and on the Comstock, but when life and love still were fair, fate played a scurvy trick on the beauteous Eleanor. The shadow of a little down began to show on her lip and darkened with the years and so she became Madame Moustache. "She just got tired living and one night she went outside, swallowed a little pellet and passed the deal to God."

But the charmers of Bodie and its bad men and the millions its hills produced were not so deeply etched on his memory as the job he lost because he did it well. Hungry and broke when he arrived he took the first job offered—stacking cord wood. 75

"It was a job I really knew. The boss drove stakes 4×8 feet alongside a mountain of cut wood. I figured I had a long job. He left and I took pains to make every cord level on top, sides even. When the boss came back he blew up, kicked over my piles and wanted to know if I was trying to ruin him. 'If you'd picked out a few crooked sticks and crossed a few straight ones, you could have made a cord with half the wood. Get out and don't come back.'" Charlie also had a story of a memorable night.

A bartender in one of Bodie's better saloons was putting his stock in order after a busy night when three celebrants in swallow tails and toppers came unsteadily through the doors. The two on the outside were gallantly steadying the one in the center as they led him to the bar. The bartender smiled understandingly when, coming for their orders, he noticed the center man's head was pillowed on his arms over the bar, his topper lying on its side in front of his face. Recalling that the fellow had consumed often and eagerly but had paid for none in an earlier session, he nodded at the silent one: "Shall I count him out?"

"Oh no. Bill's buying this time."

The drinks served, the bartender left to attend another late patron and moments passed before he returned to find Bill just as he had left him, but alone—his drink untouched. He tapped Bill's shoulder and asked payment for the drinks. When three taps and three demands brought no answer, he picked up a bung starter; went around the counter, seized Bill by the shoulder, wheeled him around only to discover that Bill was dead. Startled and panicky, the bartender now ran to the door, saw Bill's friends weaving up the street and ran after them, told them excitedly that Bill had croaked.

"Oh," one said thickly. "Bill's ticker jammed in our room an hour ago. His last words were, 'Fellows, I want you to have a drink on me.' Couldn't refuse old Bill's last request."

When Dobe Charlie had finished this story he turned to a clear-eyed ancient standing nearby. "Jim, I reckon you'd call me a Johnny-come-lately since you were a Forty-Niner."

"No," Jim said. "I was 12 when I came to Hangtown. I remember a fellow they called Wheelbarrow John, because he made a better wheelbarrow than anyone else. He saved \$3000 and went back East. He was John Studebaker. Made wagons first. Then autos."

"Young fellow named Phil Armour came. No luck. Pulled out. He did all right in Chicago though. Founded Armour Company.

"Did I ever tell you about the Digger Ounce? No? Well, it's history. The Digger Indians didn't know what gold was. Actually they'd been throwing nuggets at rabbits and couldn't believe their eyes when they saw miners exchange the same stuff for food and clothing at the store. The Indians had been getting it along the stream beds for ages. So they came in with their buckskin loin bags full of it. The merchant took it all right, but when he balanced his scales, he used a weight that gave the Digger only one dollar for every five he was entitled to. Then the Indian had to pay three prices for everything he bought. One miner loafing around the store, followed the Diggers one day, learned where they were getting it and cleaned up \$40,000 in no time. That's history too. 76

"Crooked merchants used the same trick on drunken whites and anybody else who didn't keep their eyes open. So the Digger Ounce became a byword all along the Mother Lode."

But of all the stories about the Comstock this fine old gentleman told us, I like best one about Joe Plato. Young, strong, and handsome as Apollo, Joe craved a fling after months of toil in the gulches with no sight of woman other than the flat-faced Washoe squaws.

In San Francisco Joe saw a big red apple and he wanted it. A breath-taking girl sold him the apple and he wanted her. He acquired the girl also. His gambols over, Joe handed her five shares of ten he owned in a Comstock claim. 'A little token,' he grinned, never dreaming the beautiful wanton had a heart and loved him madly. So he forgot her. She didn't forget Joe.

Months later the ten shares were worth on the market \$1,000,000. Joe remembered then. 'Too much for a girl like that.'

To beat the news and retrieve the stock, he braved Sierra storms, found her. In the battle of wits she played her cards superbly. "Of course," she said at last, "... if we were married...."

So the beaten Joe faced the preacher.

When Joe Plato died she took her millions to San Francisco, married a rich merchant, became a social leader and the mother of nabobs.

One morning at breakfast Myra informed me that I could get to Bradbury Well, a famous landmark on the road to Death Valley. To break the routine, I went. The route leads over Salsbury Pass, named for Jack Salsbury—a congenital promoter who was forever hunting something to promote. He had made and lost fortunes in cattle, lumber, and mines and for a while lived at Shoshone.

In a ravine near Bradbury Well were two or three dugouts. In one was the ubiquitous Rocky Mountain George—lean, seamed, and soft voiced. On the box he used for a table lay a letter mailed in Denver and bearing this address: "Rocky Mountain George, Nevada." Known all over the gold belt, a dozen postmasters had sent it from town to town and now it had caught up with George. 77

Meeting George a few weeks later in Beatty I recalled our meeting. He hadn't shaved in a week and his torn overalls were covered with grime. A well-tailored gentleman came out of the hotel across the street and stepped into a smart car. "Hey, Jim—" George called. "Come over here a minute...." The man left his car and walked over. "Jim, I want you to meet my friend...." Jim and I shook hands. "Jim's our governor," George added and I looked again at Nevada's Governor James Scrugham, later its U. S. Senator. For an hour he and George talked of canyons in which, they decided, somebody would find a billion dollars and I decided Democracy was safe on the desert.

Walking up the wash from George's dugout I was surprised to see a slim blonde with blue eyes and a nice smile. Obviously she had just left her stove, for she had a steaming pot of coffee in her hand. I made some inane remark about the beauty of the morning.

"It's nearly always like this," she said and after a moment I was sitting on the bench outside the dugout sipping coffee. I learned that her name was Helen. "Why shouldn't I try prospecting? I've nothing to lose. I had a job clerking, but I just couldn't scrimp enough to pay for medicine and the doctors' bills."

That and the telltale spot on her cheek seemed reason enough for her presence and, as she explained, "I might make a strike."

Later in Beatty, I noticed a small crowd about the office of Judge W. B. Gray, Beatty's marrying Justice, who was also interested in mines. "What's the riot?" I asked Rocky Mountain George, who was whittling on the bench beside me. "Helen made a big strike," he told me and I hurried over and met her coming out—radiant and excited.

"I've just heard of your strike," I said. "Where did you make it?"

"Right in that wash," she laughed. "He came along one day and—well, we just got to liking each other and—" She paused to introduce me to a good looking clean-cut fellow and added: "So we just up and married."

The population of Beatty had so changed in one generation that in 1949 when the town wanted to put on a celebration, not a citizen could be found who knew Beatty's first name. Finally a former acquaintance was located at Long Beach who advised a booster group that the name of its founder was William Martin Beatty. The gentleman is mistaken. Beatty's first name was Montelius and was called Monte by all old timers.

A feature of social life in Shoshone was the Snake House—an unbelievable structure made of shook from apple crates, scraps of corrugated iron found in the dump, tin cut from oil cans, and cardboard from packing cartons, which because of scant rainfall, served almost as well as wood or iron. 78

A fellow comes in from the hills, craves relaxation and finds it in the Snake House. Though he never plays poker, Eddie Main who lived a few yards away was induced to function as a sort of Managing Director, to see that the game remained a gentleman's game.

Inside, swinging from the roof is a Coleman lantern and under it a big round table covered with a blanket stretched tight and tacked under the edges. A rack of chips. Chairs for players and kegs and beer crates for spectators. A stove in the corner furnishes heat when needed. If you limit your poker to penny ante, the game is not for you. I have seen more than \$1000 in the pots and large bets are the rule.

One night Sam Flake who has been in Death Valley country longer than any living man, joined the game. Sam, a student of poker, ran afoul of four queens and went home broke. The next day as he worked in a mine tunnel, Sam was holding a post mortem over his disaster. He went over his play point by point. Like many a desert man used to solitude, Sam occasionally talked to himself aloud, And unaware that Whitey Bill McGarn was in a stope just above him, Sam diagnosed his loss: "I opened right. I anted right. I bet right. I called right. Can't be but one answer. I was sitting in the wrong seat." (Sam Flake died suddenly at Tecopa Hot Springs in 1949.)

The village of Tecopa is 11 miles south of Shoshone. When the railroad was built stations were given names of local significance and this honors the Indian chief, Cap Tecopa.

Important discoveries of gold, silver, lead, and talc were made and are still being worked. In the early days murders of both whites and Indians, without any clues were of frequent occurrence. Someone recalled that every killing of an Indian by a white man had been followed by a white man's murder.

The Piute believed in blood atonement and when a young American was found butchered in the Ibex hills, friends of the deceased went to Cap Tecopa with evidence which indicated the murder was committed by Cap's tribesmen. "We want these killings stopped," they told him heatedly.

Cap denied any knowledge of the crime and brushed aside the suggestion that he produce the assassin. "Too many Indians," Cap said. "But if you help, I can stop the killings."

"How?" they demanded.

"You tell hiko no kill Indian. I tell Indian no kill hiko." 79

Cap Tecopa was a good prospector and owned a coveted claim which he refused to sell.

Among the fortune seekers was a flashily dressed individual who wore a tall silk topper. The beegum fascinated Cap and he wanted it. He followed the wearer about, his eyes never leaving the shiny headgear. At last the urge to possess was irresistible and he approached the owner. A lean finger gingerly touched the sacred brim. "How much?"

All he got was a shake of the head. Failure only stimulated Tecopa's desire. His money refused, Cap in his desperation thought of the claim which the cunning of the promoters, the wiles of gamblers, the pleas of friends had failed to get.

The owner of the hat annoyed by Tecopa, decided to get rid of him. "You take hat. I take claim."

The Indian reached for the topper. "Take um," he grunted and the deal was made. Several other versions of this story are recalled by old timers.

The Tecopa Hot Springs were highly esteemed by the desert Indian, who always advertised the waters he believed to have medicinal value. In the Coso Range he used the walls of a canyon approaching the springs for his message. The crude drawing of a man was pictured, shoulders bent, leaning heavily on a stick. Another showed the same man leaving the springs but now walking erect, his stick abandoned.

The Tecopa Springs are about one and a half miles north of Tecopa and furnish an astounding example of rumor's far-reaching power. Originally there was only one spring and when I first saw it, it was a round pool about eight feet in diameter, three feet deep and so hidden by tules that one might pass within a few feet of it unaware of its existence. The singularly clear water seeped from a barren hill. About, is a blinding white crust of boron and alkali. There Ann Cowboy used to lead Mary Shoofly, to stay the blindness that threatened Mary Shoofly's failing eyes. When the whites discovered the spring, the Indians abandoned it.

Later it became a community bath tub and laundry. Prospectors would "hoof" it for miles to do their washing because the water was hot—112 degrees, and the borax content assured easy cleansing. Husbands and wives began to go for baths and someone hauled in a few pieces of corrugated iron and made blinds behind which they bathed in the nude. A garment was hung on the blind as a sign of occupation and it is a tribute to the chivalry of desert men that they always stopped a few hundred feet away to look for that garment, and advanced only when it was removed.

Today you will see two new structures at the spring and long lines of bathers living in trailers parked nearby. They are victims of arthritis, rheumatism, swollen feet, or something that had baffled physicians, patent medicines, and quacks. They come from every part of the country. Somebody has told them that somebody else had been cured at a little spring on the desert between Shoshone and Tecopa. 80

Some live under blankets, cook in a tin can over bits of wood hoarded like gold, for the vicinity is bare of growth. It is government land and space is free. Some camp on the bare ground without tent, the soft silt their only bed. "Something ails my blood. Shoulder gets to aching. Neck stiff. Come here and boil out" ... "Like magic—this water. I've been to every medicinal bath in Europe and America. This beats 'em all."

You finally turn away, dazed with stories of elephantine legs, restored to perfect size and symmetry. Of muscles dead for a decade, moving with the precision of a motor. Of joints rigid as a steel rail suddenly pliable as the ankles of a tap dancer.

Here they sit in the sun—patient, hopeful; their crutches leaning against their trailer steps. They have the blessed privilege of discussing their ailments with each other. "Oh, your misery was nothing. Doctors said I would never reach here alive...."

An analysis shows traces of radium.

A few miles below Tecopa is another landmark of the country known as the China Ranch. To old timers it was known as The Chinaman's Ranch. One Quon Sing, who had been a cook at Old Harmony Borax Works quit that job to serve a Mr. Osborn, wealthy mining man with interests near Tecopa. His service with Osborn covered a period of many years.

"I can't state it as a fact," Shorty Harris once told me, "but I have been told by old settlers that Osborn located him on the ranch as a reward for long and faithful service."

The land was in the raw stage, with nothing to appeal to a white man except water. It was reached through a twisting canyon which filled at times with the raging torrents dropped by cloudbursts. Erosion has left spectacular scenery. In places mud walls lift straight up hundreds of feet. Nobody but a Chinaman or a bandit hiding from the law would have wanted it.

There was a spring which the Chinaman developed and soon a little stream flowed all year. The industrious Chinaman converted it into a profitable ranch. He planted figs and dates and knowing, as only a Chinaman does, the value and uses of water the place was soon transformed into a garden with shade trees spreading over a green meadow—a cooling, restful little haven hidden away in the heart of the hills. He had cows and raised chickens and hogs. He planted grapes, dates, and vegetables and soon was selling his produce to the settlers scattered about the desert. From a wayfaring guest he would accept no money for food or lodging. 81

After the Chinaman had brought the ranch to a high state of production a white man came along and since there was no law in the country, he made one of his own—his model the ancient one that "He shall take who has the might and he shall keep who can." He chased the Chinaman off with a shot gun and sat down to enjoy himself, secure in the knowledge that nobody cared enough for a Chinaman to do anything about it.

The Chinaman was never again heard of.

The ranch since has had many owners. Though the roads are rough and the grades difficult, on the broad verandas that encircle the old ranch house, one feels he has found a bit of paradise "away from it all."

Sitting on the porch once with Big Bill Greer, who owned a life interest in it until his demise recently, we talked of the various yarns told of the Chinaman.

"The best thing he did was that planting over there by the stream." He lifted his huge form from the chair. "Just wait a minute. I'll get you a specimen."

While he was gone I strolled around to see other miracles wrought by the heathen chased from his home by a Christian's gun. When I returned Bill was waiting with two tall glasses, diffusing a tantalizing aroma of bourbon. Floating on the liquor were bunches of crisp, cooling mint. He gave me one, lifted the other. "Here's to Quon Sing. God rest his soul," Bill said.

As we slowly sipped I asked him if he had brought the specimen.

"It's the mint," Bill said.

82

## **Chapter XII**

### **A Hovel That Ought To Be a Shrine**

An Indian rode up to the bench, leaped from his cayuse and tried to tell Joe Ryan something about a "hiko." Joe matched his pantomime and broken English, finally jerking a thumb over his shoulder and the Indian went into the store.

"That's Indian Johnnie," Joe said: "Hundred and fifty miles to his place, other side of the Panamint. Awful country to get at. Shorty Harris is in a bad way at Ballarat."

A few moments later Charlie drove his pickup to the pump, filled the gas tank and before we realized it, was swallowed in a cloud of dust. "He's in for a helluva trip," Joe said.

Before the day was over, snow covered the high peaks and a biting wind drove us from the bench. "Let's go over

to the Mesquite Club," Joe said.

We hurried across the road to the sprawling old building hidden in a thicket and listing in every direction of the compass, but over the roof, like friendly arms crooked the branches of big mesquite trees. Among mining men that ramshackle was known around the world.

Inside was a big pot-bellied stove. Beside it, a huge woodbox. Chairs held together with baling wire. Two or three old auto seats hauled in from cars abandoned on the desert. An ancient, moth-eaten sofa on which the wayfarer out of luck was privileged to sleep. Three or four tables, each with a dog-eared deck of cards where old timers played solitaire or a spot of poker. There were books and magazines—high and low-brow, left by the tourists. But there was a friendliness about the shabby room that had nothing to gain from mahogany or chandeliers of gold.

Wind kept us indoors for two days. On the third we were on the bench again when someone said, "Here comes Charlie...."

A moment later Joe and Big Dan were helping Charlie take Shorty Harris, dean of Death Valley prospectors, more dead than alive, into a cabin and lay him on the bed. "You must have had an awful time," Joe said to Charlie. 83

"Not too bad ... made it," Charlie answered as he started a fire in the stove. He brought in water and wood and turned to Joe. "Wish you'd fill up that gas tank and see about the oil...."

Joe looked at him, puzzled.

"Got to take him to the hospital," Charlie said.

We knew that meant another trip of 140 miles.

"Damned if you do," Joe said. "I'll get somebody to go."

I supposed after the all night trip under such conditions Brown would go to bed but an hour later when I went to the store for some small purchase a woman climbed out of a pickup truck and with three small children, came in. She lived on her ranch 60 miles away and had come to buy her month's supply of provisions—a full load for the truck. When she paid her bill she nodded toward her brood: "Charlie, those kids look like brush Indians with all that hair...."

Charlie got scissors and comb and went to work. Before he had swept out the shorn locks Ben Brandt came in, holding his jaw.

"Feels like a stamp mill," he groaned. "Haven't slept in a week. Be dead by the time I get to Barstow." It was 125 miles to Barstow and Ben was waiting for a ride with someone going that way.

Charlie went behind the counter, returned with forceps, opening and closing the jaws of the instrument two or three times as if in practice and then he turned to the sufferer: "You understand it's against the law for me to use these things. In a pinch—"

"To hell with the law," Ben snapped. "Yank it out!"

Charlie took a chair to the back porch. Ben sat down and with a vice-like arm about Ben's head, the forceps went in and the tooth came out.

I went outside and sat on the bench with a better understanding of Shoshone and people and values which come only from friendships closely knitted and help unselfishly given.

Why does a man like the desert? As good an answer as any is another question: Why does he like chicken? Students of human behavior, poets, writers, gushing debutantes and greying dowagers, humorless scientists, and bored urbanites have labored mightily to explain it.

"Something just gets into the blood," one says, frankly groping for an answer. Immensities of space. Solitudes that whittle the ego down to size. Detachment from routine cares. A feel of nearness to whatever it is that is God. Stars to finger. The muted symphonies of farflung sky and earth. 84

Whatever it is, I was now aware that as between hell and Shoshone, I would give the nod to Shoshone. I was getting used to Shoshone and desolation when a few days later Charlie came out of the store and sat beside me on the bench. "Road's open," he said. "I reckon you're in a hurry to get away."

I didn't answer at once but conscious of his searching look, finally stammered that Dan Modine wanted me to go with him to Happy Jack's party. "I can spare another day...." Charlie lit a cigarette, took a puff or two. "You've gone desert," he chuckled and went back into the store.

For a week I'd been hearing of Happy Jack's party and when Dan told me that everyone within 100 miles would be on hand, I was glad to go. Dan gave me Jack's background on the 35 mile trip across dry washes, deep sands, and hairpin turns on pitching hills.

Born on the desert, Jack was the son of a Forty Niner and a Piute squaw. He had grown up as an Indian and had married Mary, a full blood Piute. Jack's brother Lem married Anna, another squaw.

"Lem had worked at odd jobs and in the mines," Dan said. "Now and then he and Anna would do a little

prospecting. Anna found a claim that showed a little color. Lem worked alongside his squaw a couple weeks, but it was a back breaking job and Lem quit it. But Anna kept digging and one day she came up to their shack with a piece of ore that was almost pure gold. Anna's find made them rich.

"I reckon money does things to people. Anyway, it didn't take Lem long to get rid of Anna. He gave her enough so that she could take it easy. Then he pushed off to the city to live high, wide, and handsome. I see Anna now and then. She's not jolly like she used to be. Lem has always wanted Jack to get rid of Mary and come to the city. In fact, Jack told me once that Lem offered to give him half of his money if he would do that. But Jack said, to hell with the city. He's the happy go lucky sort. Big, good looking, and lazy. His old dobe under the cottonwood tree and the water running by with plenty of outdoors—that suits Jack."

We found, as Dan had predicted, that everybody in the country had come to Jack's party. A long U shaped table was placed outside under the shade of a tree. From nearby pits came a tantalizing aroma of barbecue. A keg of bourbon encircled with glasses stood beside a bucket of dripping mint. Cigars and cigarettes were on top of the keg and Jack saw that his guests were always supplied.

There was an orchestra with capable musicians, Jack occasionally pinch hitting for the bull fiddler when the latter took time out for a drink or a dance. But when the snare drum player wanted his bourbon, Jack was like a kid pulling doodads from a Christmas tree. "It will last a week," Dan said. "A few may pull out after a day or two, but others will take their places." 85

"This must have cost Jack a year's labor," I said. "I told him that once," Dan laughed. "He asked me what else would a fellow work a year for."

Jack's views of life and things were Mary's, except that Mary knew lean years come and if any provisions were to be made for them she would have to make them. She tended the goats and the sheep, cut the deer and the mountain sheep into strips and hung them high, where the flies wouldn't get them, to cure in the breeze. If Jack wanted to throw a party, so did Mary. "... Big party ... kill fat steer. Five sheep. Heap good time...." To Jack's everlasting credit, be it said that whatever Mary did, suited Jack.

"Oh, him fine man," Mary would say. "Like home. Play with children. No get mad...."

There may be somewhere in this world a morsel approaching Mary's barbecued mountain sheep, but I've never tasted it.

Jack told me later that the best meat is that from an old ram with no teeth. "He hasn't eaten all winter, because his teeth won't let him cut the hard, woody sage and being starved when spring comes, he gorges on the new sacatone. He fattens quickly and his flesh is tender."

While Dan and I were walking about, a long limousine came across the valley and parked behind a screen of mesquite well away from the house and the guests. Dan and I happened to be nearby as a big, dark man expensively tailored stepped out. A lady fashionably dressed remained in the car.

"That's Lem," Dan explained. "When he was a kid he ran around in a gee string. I reckon his wife doesn't want to meet the in-laws."

We came upon him a moment later and while he and Dan talked of old times Jack rushed down and embraced Lem. "Come up," he urged, but Lem's interest was lukewarm. Mary was busy and he would see her later. No, he didn't wish a drink. He had cigars. Just stopped in to see how Jack was and if he'd changed his mind.

Dan and I moved away and sat under a shed along the runoff of the spring and had no choice about listening to a conversation not intended for our ears.

Jack was squatted on his heels and his brother was sitting on a boulder. Lem was talking, his voice brittle: "Of course, we married squaws ... but we are more white than Indian. I'll give you all the money you need. Let Mary go back to her people. She'll be happy. Look at Anna ... she's contented and better off with her own people and it will be the same with Mary." 86

Lem lifted his hand, a big diamond ring flashing on his finger as he pointed to the squalid cabin where Jack's fat squaw, her face beaming, was serving the guests. "Look at that hovel. Just a pig sty. If you prefer that to \$10,000 a year, it's your business. I've come out for the last time...."

Jack, bareheaded, rose, his hair ruffled in the wind as he glanced at the things about—the sagging roof, the shade tree beside it and following his glance I saw Mary smile at him and wave. Then he turned to Lem: "A pig sty, huh? Ten thousand a year. Mansion in the city." His eyes traveled over Lem's smart tailored suit, the diamond, the malacca cane pecking the gravel at his feet. I could see Jack's fingers digging at his palms, the muscles rippling along his wrists and I sensed that he was seething inside.

"Pig sty.... One year I recollect, no crop. No meat. No game. Nothing. I was down with fever. She was down too, but she got up and walked and crawled from here to Indian Springs. Through the brush. Over the mountain to get grub from her people. Why, sometimes I'd feel like going off by myself and bawling...." Jack turned again to his brother, flint in his dark eyes. "I ought to brain you. To hell with your money. She stuck with me and bigod, I'll stick with her."

Then Jack calmly strode back to his party, and somehow it seemed to me the hovel had suddenly become a holy shrine.



## Chapter XIII

### Sex in Death Valley Country

Sex, of course, went with the white man to the desert, but because there were no Freuds, no Kinseys stirring the social sewage, it was considered merely as a biologic urge and thus its impact on the lives of the early settlers was a realistic one. It was not good for man to live alone. The husky young adventurer found a water hole and a cottonwood tree and built a cabin. But he found it wasn't a home. The lonely immensity of space he knew, was no place for a white woman and none were there. He faced the fundamental problem squarely and looked about for a squaw.

He paid Hungry Bill or some other Indian head man \$10 for the mate of his choice and that sanctified the relation. She brought a certain degree of orderliness to the cabin, washed his clothes, cooked his meals. A child was born and the cabin became a home. The squaw could sharpen a stick, walk out into the brush and return with herbs and roots and serve a palatable dinner. She worked his fields, groomed his horses and relieved him of responsibility for the children. The progeny followed the rules of breeding. Some good. Some bad.

Said old Jim Baker, who married a Shoshone, pleading for a "squar" deal for his son: "There's only one creature worse than a genuine Indian and that's a half breed. He has got two devils in him and is meaner than the meanest Indian I ever saw. That boy of mine is a half-breed and he ain't accountable."

Almost all of the first settlers were squaw men and the matings were tolerated because they were understood. It was often a long journey to obtain the sanction of a Chief and the squaw was taken without formality. Many of these matings lasted and the offspring were absorbed without social embarrassment in the life of the community. Dr. Kinsey would have had little joy in his search for perversion or infidelities, though there is the instance of a drunken squaw who aroused the owner of a saloon at midnight on the Ash Meadows desert and shouted: "I want a man...." 88

Once Shoshone faced the desperate need of a school. There were only three children of school age in the little settlement and the nearest school was 28 miles away. Parents complained, but authorities at the county seat nearly 200 miles away, pointed out that the law required 13 children or an average attendance of five and a half to form a school district.

Like other community problems it was taken to Charlie, though none believed that even Charlie could solve it.

The time for the opening of schools was but a few weeks away when one day Brown headed his car out into the desert. "Hunting trip," he explained.

In a hovel he found Rosie, a Piute squaw with a brood of children. "How old?" Charlie asked.

"Him five ... him six now," she said. "Him seven. Him eight."

"How'd you like to live at Shoshone? Plenty work. Good house."

"Okay. Me come," Rosie said.

With the half breeds, the school was able to open.

Rosie was a challenging problem. She would have taken no beauty prize among the Piutes, but when along her desert trails she acquired these children of assorted parentage, Fate dealt her an ace.

With the few dollars Rosie wangled from the several fathers for the support of their children, she lived unworried. She liked to get drunk and the only nettling problem in her life was the federal law against selling liquor to Indians. So she established her own medium of exchange—a bottle of liquor. Unfortunately she spread a social disease and that was something to worry about.

"Rosie has Shoshone over a barrel," Joe Ryan said. "If we run her out, we won't have enough children for school."

Then there was the economic angle—the loss of wages by afflicted miners and mines crippled by the absence of the unafflicted who would take time off to go to Las Vegas for the commodity supplied by Rosie.

Charlie arranged for Ann Cowboy to look after Rosie's children and called up W. H. Brown, deputy sheriff at Death Valley Junction and told him to come for Rosie. Brownie, as he is known all over the desert, came and took Rosie into custody. "What'll I charge her with?"

"She has a venereal disease," Charlie said.

"There's no law I know of against that...."

"All right. Charge her with pollution. She got drunk and fell into the spring." Then Charlie called up the Judge and suggested Rosie have a year's vacation in the county jail. 89

The paths that radiated from Rosie's shack in the brush like spokes from the hub of a wheel, were soon overgrown with salt grass. She served her sentence and returned to Shoshone and the paths were soon beaten smooth again.

Eventually Brown declared Shoshone out of bounds for Rosie and she moved over into Nevada. There she found a

lover of her tribe and one night when both were drunk, Rosie decided she'd had enough of him and with a big, sharp knife she calmly disemboweled him—for which unladylike incident she was removed to a Nevada prison where the state cured her syphilis and turned her loose—if not morally reformed, at least physically fit.

One of Rosie's patrons was a man thought to be in his middle fifties. Always carefully groomed, his white shirts, spotless ties, and tailored suits were conspicuous in a place where levis were the rule. He was also a total abstainer. When he died suddenly and it was learned he was 82 years old, Shoshone gasped. An item in his will read: "To Rosie, \$50 to buy whiskey."

Living in a wickiup in the mesquite was the Indian, Tom Weed, who shared with his squaw a passion for liquor. Sober, Tom was industrious in the Indian way. He knew the country, when and where the mountain sheep were fattest; the herbs that cured and the best grasses for the beautiful baskets woven by his wife.

Tom filed on a deposit of non-metallic ore near Shoshone and forgot it. A subsequent locater found a buyer. Considerable capital was to be invested and the purchaser decided that Tom, if so disposed, could at least challenge the title. In order to dispose of Tom he sent the document to Dad Fairbanks together with a check payable to Tom for \$1000 and asked Dad to get a quit claim deed from Tom.

Since \$1000 was more than Tom ever expected to see in his life he was eager to sign. "You cash check?" he asked Dad.

"Sure," Dad told him.

As Dad was getting the money he said, "Tom, long winter ahead. Hard to get work. Don't you think you'd better leave money with me? Might come in handy." Dad saw that Tom was impressed and added: "You told me yesterday you were going over to Las Vegas. That's another good reason. Think it over."

"Okay. Me think." Tom stood for a long moment staring at the floor, studying every angle of the problem. Finally he thrust his palm at Dad and said gravely: "Might die...."

Dad gave him the money and Tom went to Las Vegas. In an hour he was drunk. In three he was broke and in 90 jail.

One night he and his squaw got blissfully drunk. They were sleeping in a shed full of combustible junk when it caught fire. Other Indians attracted by their screams rushed to the scene but both were dead. From Tom's wickiup, a few feet from the shed, they took Tom's guns and saddles, his squaw's priceless baskets—all the belongings of both—and tossed them into the flames. Thus the evil spirits were kept away and the souls of Tom and his squaw passed happily to the Piute heaven which is a place where there is a big lake and forests filled with game and the squaws are strong and plentiful.

The Johnnie Mine, an important gold producer, east of Shoshone, was located by John Tecopa, son of Cap Tecopa, Pahrump Chief.

Tecopa found the float; gave Ed Metcalf an interest to help him locate the ledge. Bob and Monte Montgomery bought the claim. They interested Jerry Langford, who induced the Mormon Church to get behind the project.

The Potosi was an early discovery on Timber Mountain between the Johnnie Mine and Good Springs. (It was here that Carole Lombard, wife of Clark Gable, was killed in an airplane accident in 1941.) From this mine came the lead which made the bullets used in the Mountain Meadows massacre. Jeff Grundy, a prospector of early days, said his father molded the bullets and delivered them to John D. Lee, who after 20 years was executed for the murder of the 123 victims of the massacre.

Lee was the owner of Lee's Ferry, which was the only place where the Colorado River could be crossed in the Grand Canyon area until the present suspension bridge 500 feet high was built.

Near Johnnie are Ash Meadows and the beautiful Pahrump Valley, overlooked by the Charleston Mountains—the summer sleeping porch of Las Vegas, 35 miles south.

At Ash Meadows lived Jack Longstreet, who wore his hair long enough to cover his ears. He claimed kinship with the distinguished South Carolina family of that name. Easier to prove is that Mr. Longstreet came from Texas and as a 14 year old youngster was caught with a band of horse thieves in Colorado. The older ones were hanged but because of his youth Longstreet was released after his ears were cropped to brand him for identification by others. He lived and drank lustily for 96 years and died with a competency.

Near Johnnie also lived Mary Scott, who discovered the Confidence Mine, a landmark in Death Valley. Mary was a squaw who, after consorting with several white men, chose for her mate a half-breed named Bob Scott. On a hunting and trapping trip Mary picked up some ore which Scott decided was silver. Since silver could not be profitably handled because of transportation costs, Scott filed no notice. 91

Years after Scott's death, Mary showed samples of the ore to her cousin, an Indian named Bob Black and Bob showed it to Frank Cole, a millwright at the Johnnie Mine. Cole and Jimmy Ashdown grubstaked Mary and Bob, who returned to Death Valley and located the property. Samples showed rich gold.

For a wagon with a canopy and a spavined horse Cole and Ashdown secured the interest of Mary and Bob. Cole and Ashdown then sold to the Montgomery brothers, who through Bishop Cannon secured backing for the venture from the Mormon Church.

Dan Driscoll built the road to the mine. Shorty Harris, Bob Warnack, and Rube Graham dug the well and mine shaft. It produced rich ore to a depth of 65 feet, where the vein was broken up.

## Chapter XIV

### Shoshone Country. Resting Springs

The country about Shoshone is identified with the earliest migration of Americans to California.

It is a curious fact that prior to the coming of Jedediah Smith who, in 1826 was actually the first American to enter the state from the east, the contented Spanish believed that the Sierras were insurmountable barriers to invasion by the hated American or any attacking enemy.

After Smith the first white American to look upon the Shoshone region so far as known, was William Wolfskill, a Kentucky trapper who left Santa Fe in 1830-31 on a trading expedition with stores of cloth, garments, and gimcracks.

Having had poor luck in disposing of his cargo, when he reached the Virgin River he decided to push westward across the Mojave Desert and entered California by way of Cajon Pass. After resting at San Gabriel he went north into the San Joaquin Valley. There he disposed of his stock at fabulous prices, taking in trade mules, horses, silks, and other items which he took to Taos and Santa Fe, receiving for this merchandise equally huge profits.

Wolfskill later settled in Los Angeles, one of the earliest Americans in the pueblo where he acquired large land holdings. There he established the citrus industry, planting a grove in what is now the heart of Los Angeles.

In 1832 Joseph B. Chiles organized a party at Independence, Missouri, and started for California. It numbered 50 men, women, and children. Upon reaching Fort Laramie, Wyoming (which was officially Fort John, but for some reason was never so called) Chiles met Joseph Reddeford Walker and employed him as guide.

Eighteen years before the Bennett-Arcane party came to grief, Walker had discovered Walker River and Walker Lake in Nevada, afterward named for him. After reaching the Sierras, his jaded teams were unable to cross and had to be abandoned, the party narrowly escaping death. Having heard of the southerly course over the old Spanish Trail, he turned back and over it guided the Chiles party. 93

Early in 1843, John C. Fremont led a party of 39 men from Salt Lake City northward to Fort Vancouver and in November of that year, started on the return trip to the East. This trip was interrupted when he found his party threatened by cold and starvation and he faced about; crossed the Sierra Nevadas and went to Sutter's Fort. After resting and outfitting, he set out for the East by the southerly route over the old Spanish trail, which leads through the Shoshone region.

At a spring somewhere north of the Mojave River he made camp. The water nauseated some of his men and he moved to another. Identification of these springs has been a matter of dispute and though historians have honestly tried to identify them, the fact remains that none can say "I was there."

In the vicinity were several springs any of which may have been the one referred to by Fremont in his account of the journey. Among these were two water holes indicated on early maps as Agua de Tio Mesa, and another as Agua de Tomaso.

There are several springs of nauseating water in the area and some of the old timers academically inclined, insisted that Fremont probably camped at Saratoga Springs, which afforded a sight of Telescope Peak or at Salt Spring, nine miles east on the present Baker-Shoshone Highway at Rocky Point.

Kit Carson was Fremont's guide. Fremont records that two Mexicans rode into his camp on April 27, 1844, and asked him to recover some horses which they declared had been stolen from them by Indians at the Archilette Spring, 13 miles east of Shoshone.

One of the Mexicans was Andreas Fuentes, the other a boy of 11 years—Pablo Hernandez. While the Indians were making the raid, the boy and Fuentes had managed to get away with 30 of the horses and these they had left for safety at a water hole known to them as Agua de Tomaso. They reported that they had left Pablo's father and mother and a man named Santiago Giacomo and his wife at Archilette Spring.

With Fremont, besides Kit Carson, was another famed scout, Alexander Godey, a St. Louis Frenchman—a gay, good looking dare devil who later married Maria Antonia Coronel, daughter of a rich Spanish don and became prominent in California.

In answer to the Mexicans' plea for help, Fremont turned to his men and asked if any of them wished to aid the victims of the Piute raid. He told them he would furnish horses for such a purpose if anyone cared to volunteer. Of the incident Kit Carson, who learned to write after he was grown, says in his dictated autobiography: "Godey and myself volunteered with the expectation that some men of our party would join us. They did not. We two and the Mexicans ... commenced the pursuit." 94

Fuentes' horse gave out and he returned to Fremont's camp that night, but Godey, Carson, and the boy went on. They had good moonlight at first but upon entering a deep and narrow canyon, utter blackness came, even shutting out starlight, and Carson says they had to "feel for the trail."

One may with reason surmise that Godey and Carson proceeded through the gorge that leads to the China Ranch and now known as Rainbow Canyon. When they could go no farther they slept an hour, resumed the hunt and shortly after sunrise, saw the Indians feasting on the carcass of one of the stolen horses. They had slain five others and these were being boiled. Carson's and Godey's horses were too tired to go farther and were hitched out of sight among the rocks. The hunters took the trail afoot and made their way into the herd of stolen horses.

Says Carson: "A young one got frightened. That frightened the rest. The Indians noticed the commotion ... sprang to their arms. We now considered it time to charge on the Indians. They were about 30 in number. We charged. I fired, killing one. Godey fired, missed but reloaded and fired, killing another. There were only three shots fired and two were killed. The remainder ran. I ... ascended a hill to keep guard while Godey scalped the dead Indians. He scalped the one he shot and was proceeding toward the one I shot. He was not yet dead and was behind some rocks. As Godey approached he raised, let fly an arrow. It passed through Godey's shirt collar. He again fell and Godey finished him."

Subsequently it was discovered that Godey hadn't missed, but that both men had fired at the same Indian as proven by two bullets found in one of the dead Indians. Godey called these Indians "Diggars." The one with the two bullets was the one who sent the arrow through Godey's collar and when Godey was scalping him, "he sprang to his feet, the blood streaming from his skinned head and uttered a hideous yowl." Godey promptly put him out of his pain.

They returned to camp. Writes Fremont: "A war whoop was heard such as Indians make when returning from a victorious enterprise and soon Carson and Godey appeared, driving before them a band of horses recognized by Fuentes to be part of those they had lost. Two bloody scalps dangling from the end of Godey's gun...."

Fremont wrote of it later: "The place, object and numbers considered, this expedition of Carson and Godey 95 may be considered among the boldest and most disinterested which the annals of Western adventure so full of daring deeds can present." It was indeed a gallant response to the plea of unfortunates whom they'd never seen before and would never see again.

When Fremont and his party reached the camp of the Mexicans they found the horribly butchered bodies of Hernandez, Pablo's father, and Giacomo. The naked bodies of the wives were found somewhat removed and shackled to stakes.

Fremont changed the name of the spring from Archilette to Agua de Hernandez and as such it was known for several years. He took the Mexican boy, Pablo Hernandez, with him to Missouri where he was placed with the family of Fremont's father-in-law, U. S. Senator Thomas H. Benton. The young Mexican didn't care for civilization and the American way of life and in the spring of 1847 begged to be returned to Mexico. Senator Benton secured transportation for him on the schooner Flirt, by order of the Navy, and he was landed at Vera Cruz—a record of which is preserved in the archives of the 30th Congress, 1848.

Three years later a rumor was circulated that the famed bandit, Joaquin Murietta was no other than Pablo Hernandez.

Lieutenant, afterwards Colonel, Brewerton was at Resting Springs in 1848 with Kit Carson who then was carrying important messages for the government to New Mexico. He found the ground white with the bleached bones of other victims of the desert Indians. Brewerton calls them Pau Eutaws.

The Mormons began early to look upon this region as a logical part of the State of Deseret, for the creation of which, Brigham Young petitioned Congress, setting forth among reasons for the recognition of such a state that: "... We are so far removed from all civilized society and organized government and also natural barriers of trackless deserts, including mountains of snow and savages more bloody than either, so that we can never be united with any other portion of the country."

As early as 1851, the far-seeing Young decided to found a colony of Saints in San Bernardino, California, to extend Mormon influence. Sam Brannan, brilliant adherent of that faith, had already come to California with the nucleus of a Mormon colony in 1846, two years before Marshall discovered gold.

Brannan became an outstanding figure among the Argonauts. None exceeded him in leadership or popularity in the building of San Francisco and the state. He grew rich and unfortunately began drinking; finally 96 abandoned Mormonism and died poor.

The colonizers sent out by Brigham Young were in three divisions. One under the leadership of Amasa Lyman, who brought his five wives. Another was headed by Charles C. Rich, who was accompanied by three of his wives. It is interesting to note that Rich became the father of 51 children by five wives.

The third division was under the command of Captain Jefferson Hunt, guide for the entire party. These leaders were all able men who were highly regarded by gentiles. They also camped at Agua de Hernandez and it was the Mormons who junked the previous name and gave one with significance. They called it "Resting Springs" and this more fitting name has lasted.

On May 21, 1851, the Mormon elder, Parley P. Pratt, heading a party of missionaries en route to the South Sea Islands writes in his diary: "We encamped at a place called Resting Springs.... This is a fine place for rest.... Since leaving the Vegas (Las Vegas) we have traveled 75 miles through the most horrible desert.... Twenty miles from the Vegas we were assailed ... by a shower of arrows from the savage mountain robbers.... Leaving Resting Springs the party arrived at Salt Spring gold mines toward evening...."

In 1850, Phineas Banning, pioneer resident of Los Angeles and later owner of Catalina Island, hauled freight from

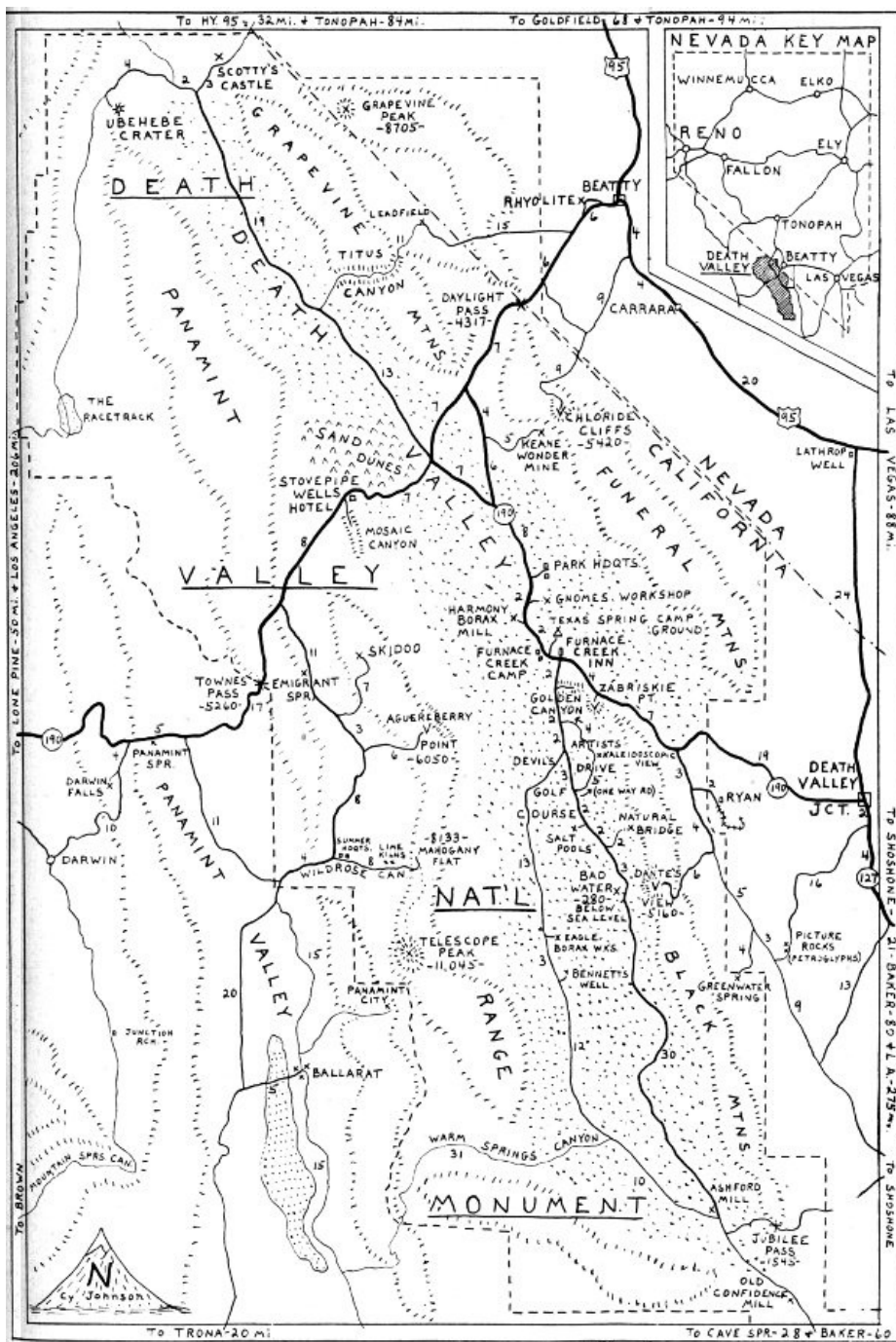
Los Angeles to the gold mine at Salt Spring opposite Rocky Point just south of the Amargosa River on the Baker road and in 1854 Mormons discovered gold 25 miles south of Resting Springs, long before Dr. French searched for the Gunsight in Death Valley.

The Amargosa River is one of the world's most remarkable water courses. Originating at Springdale, north of Beatty, Nevada, it twists southward in zigzag pattern until it reaches a point about 34 miles south of Shoshone. There it turns west, crosses Highway 127, enters Death Valley at its most southerly point and then turns north to disappear 60 miles from the place of its origin.

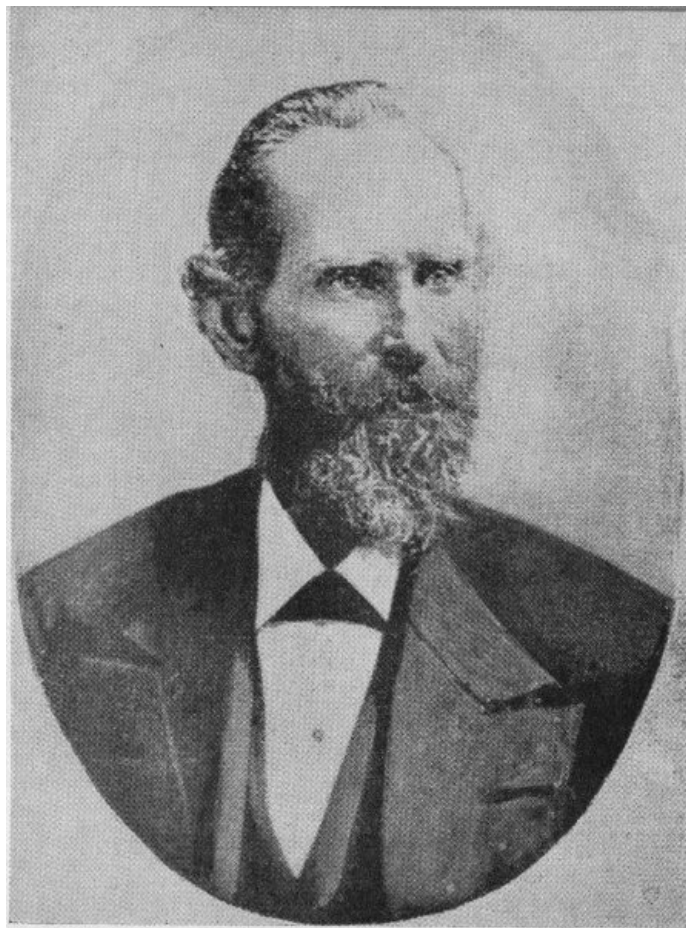
You may cross and re-cross it many times totally unaware of its existence, but in the cloudburst season it can and does become a terrible agent of destruction.

In 1853 Major George Chorpenning obtained a contract to carry mail between the Mormon colony of San Bernardino, California, and Salt Lake. To reach Resting Springs, a station on the route, required five days. Today it is a journey of four hours.

Resting Springs was also a relay station for white outlaws and Indian raiders from Utah, Wyoming, and the Dakotas. Even before Fremont, Carson, or the Mormons old Bill Williams, for whom Bill Williams River, Bill Williams Mountain, and the town of Williams, Arizona, are named was at Resting Springs.



**Map of Death Valley**  
**High-resolution Map**



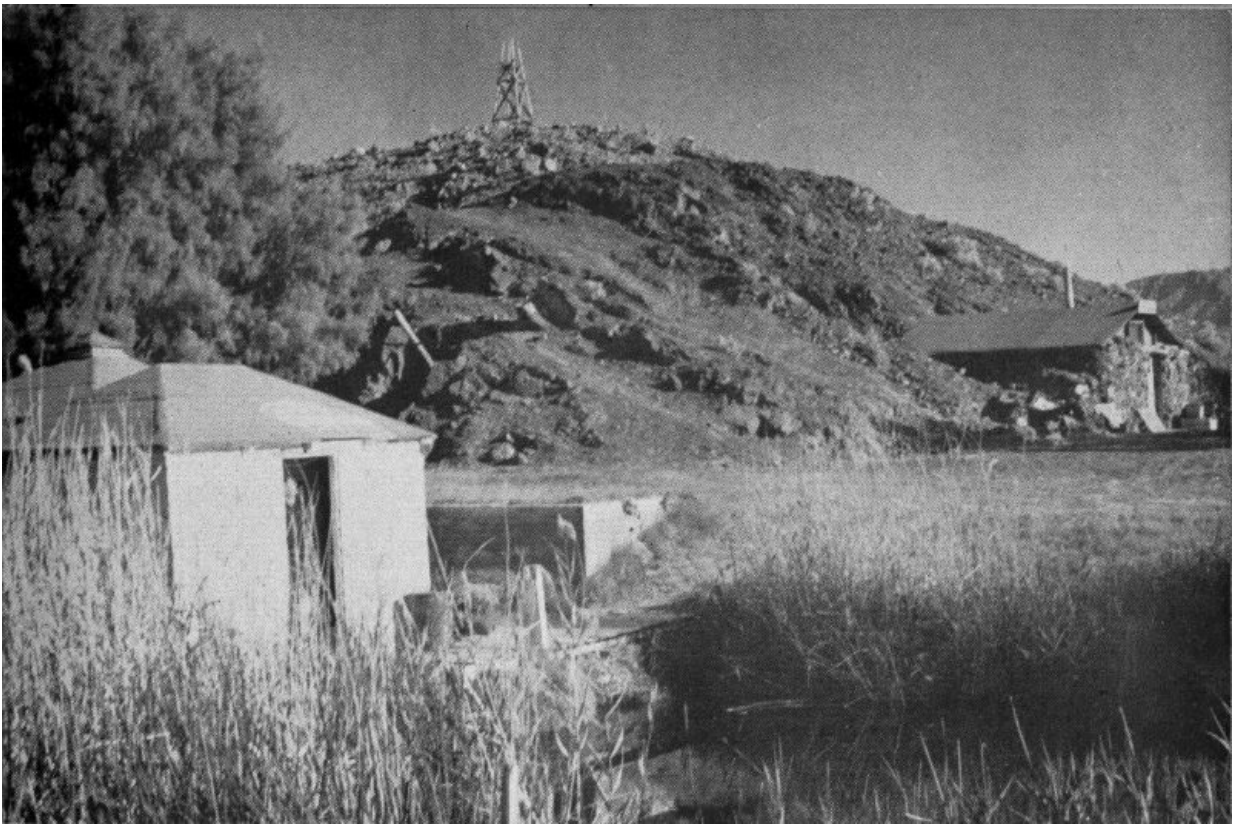
*John W. Searles, looking for gold, made a fortune in borax.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Like Weepah which "Boomed and Busted" after one day, Gilbert died after a few weeks.*





*Saratoga Springs*

COURTESY HAROLD G. WEIGHT



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*The Bottom of America*

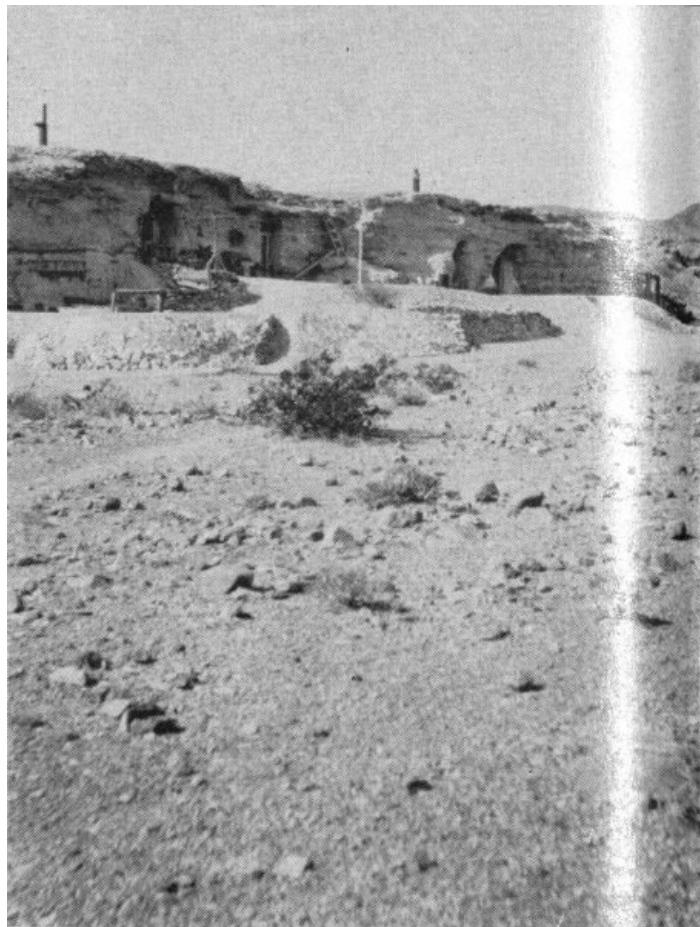
BAD WATER  
279.6 FEET BELOW SEA LEVEL  
LOWEST POINT IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

= SHOSHONE 57  
= BAKER 93  
FURNACE CREEK 17 =



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.

*Grave of Jas. Dayton.  
Bones are those of his horses.*

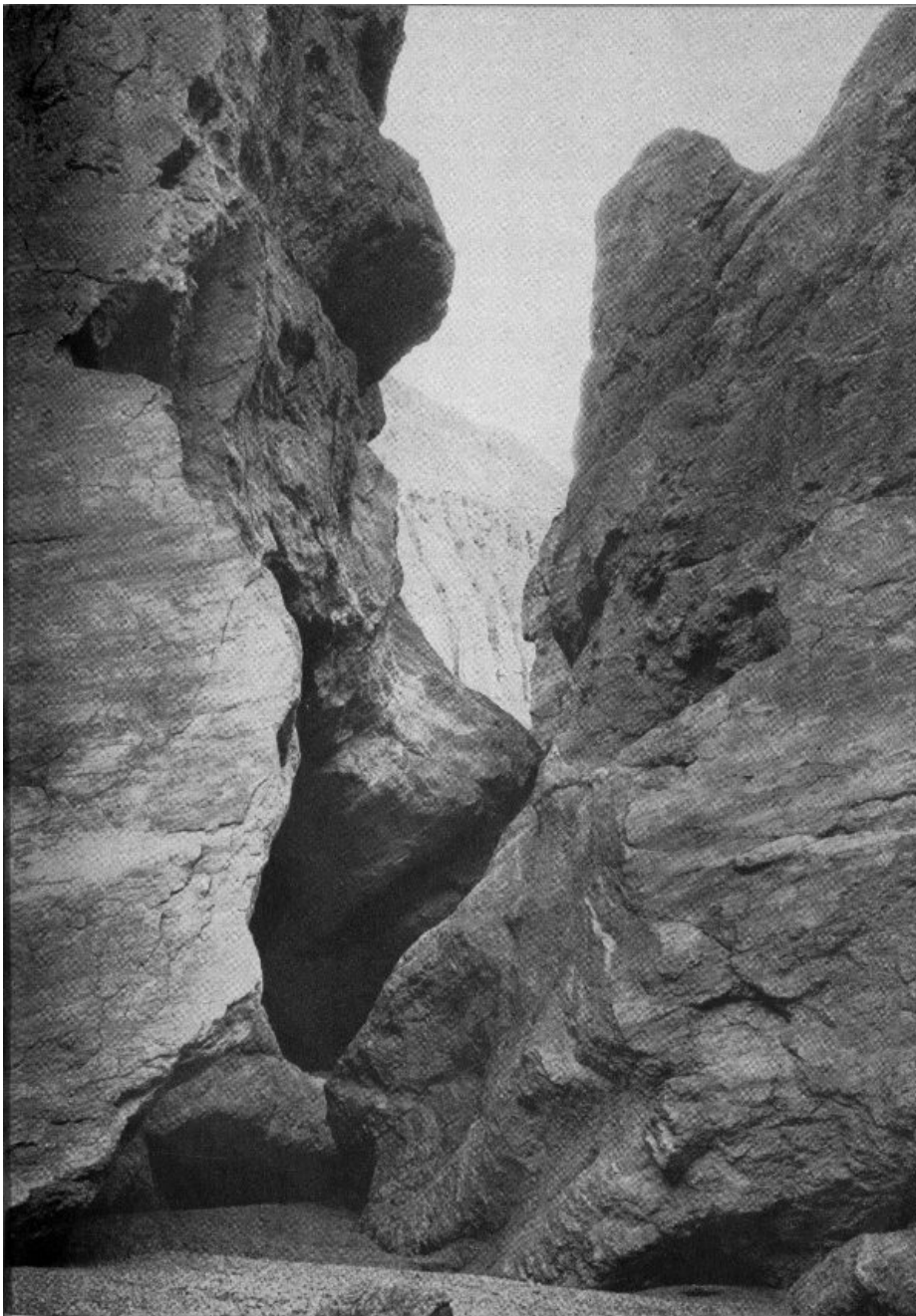


*Dugouts in Dublin Gulch at Shoshone.*





*Mesquite Club, Shoshone. Known throughout the West.*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.

*Golden Canyon*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*One of the famous Twenty Mule Teams.*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*Here boomed and busted the C. C. Julian swindle. Great names and great banks were shamefully involved.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

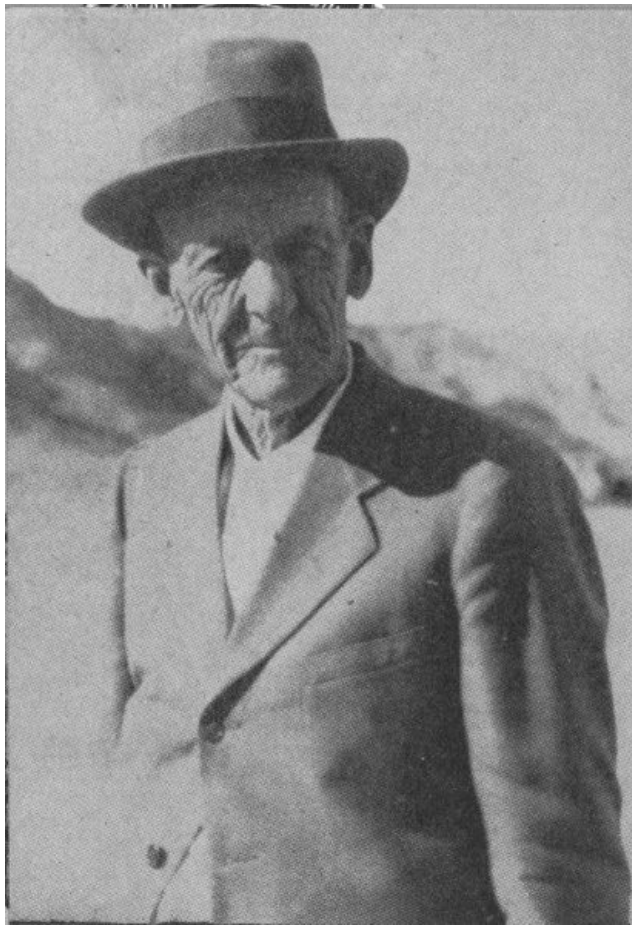
*Yellow Aster Mine (foreground) made owners rich. Randsburg in the background.*



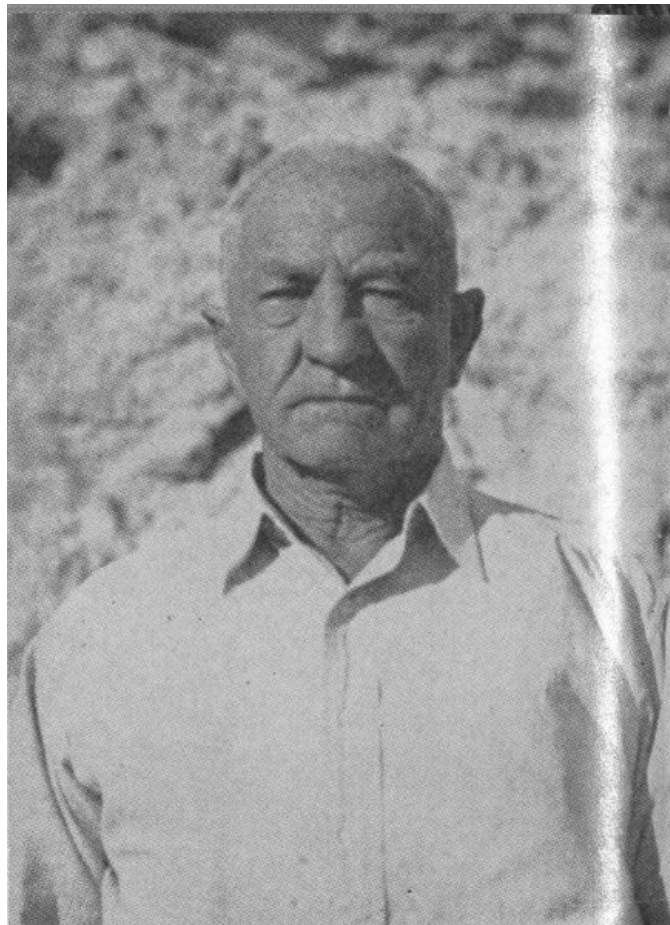
COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Belle Springs (Agua Tomaso) on old Salt Lake trail. Camp site of John C. Fremont.*





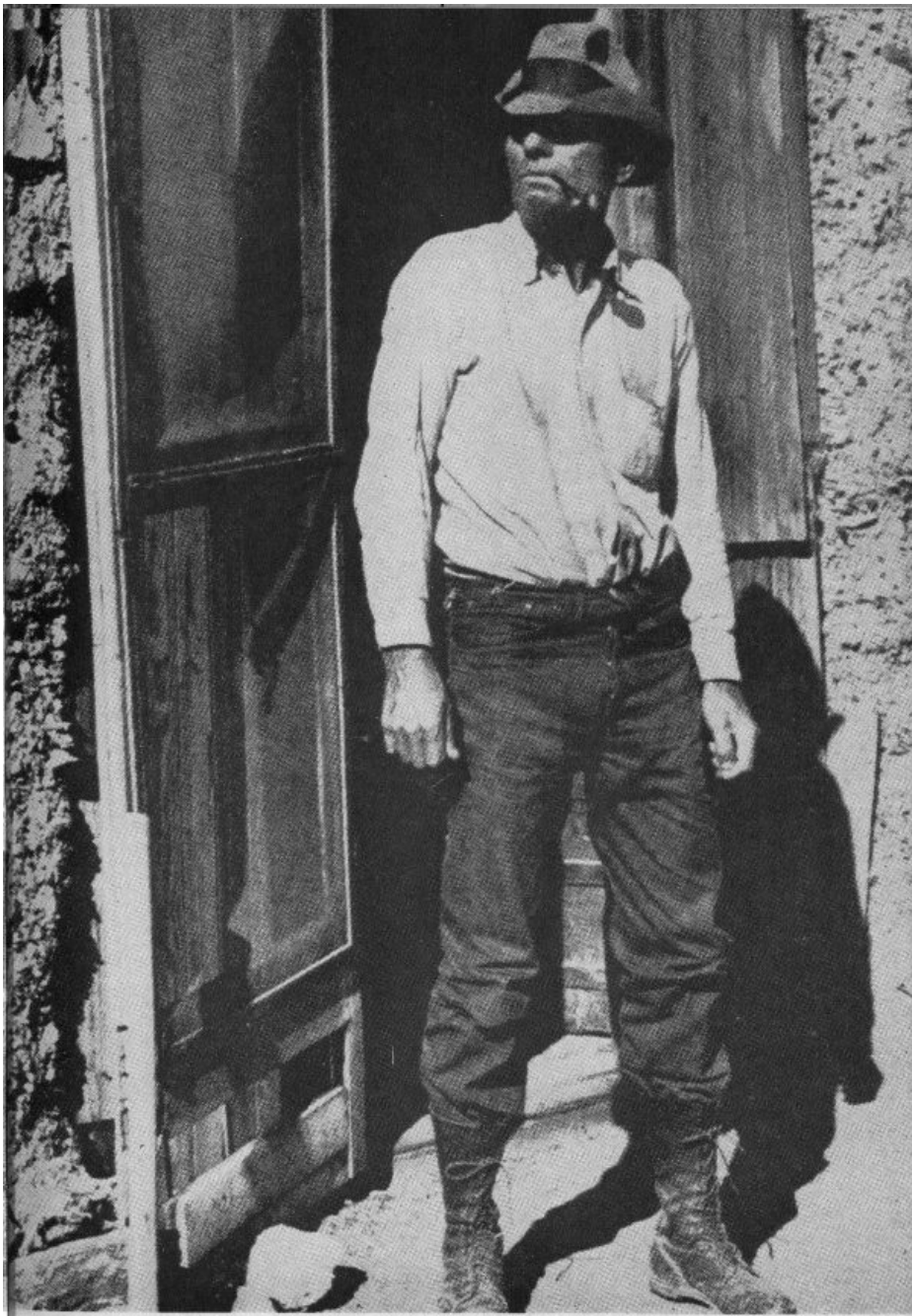
*Ralph Jacobus Fairbanks, outstanding pioneer, every man's friend.*



*Dobe Charlie Nels.  
He saw Bodie boom and die.*



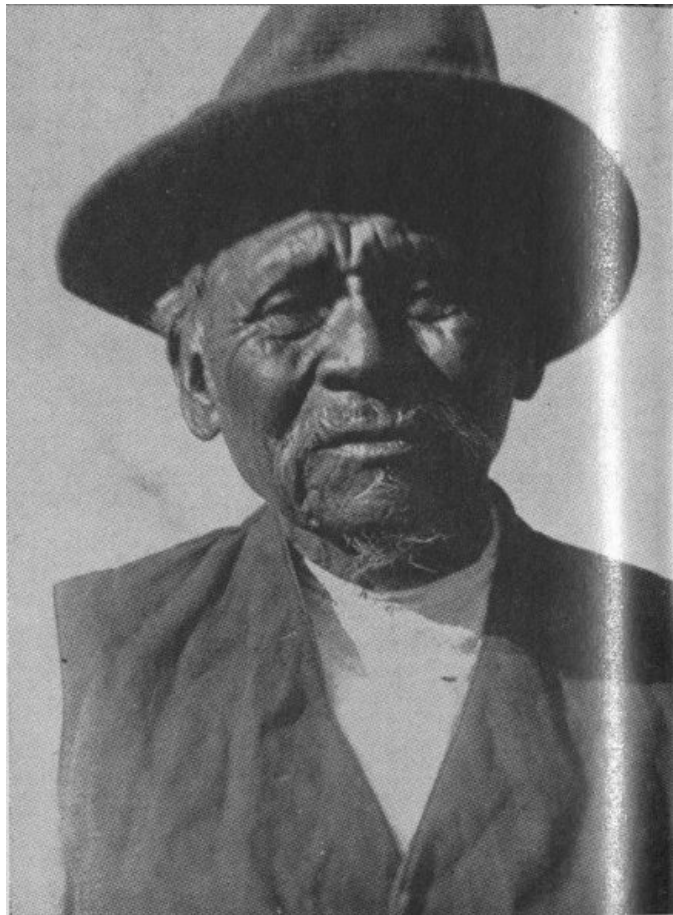
*Bodie, hellroarer from cemetery. Now another ghost town.*



*Seldom-seen Slim, colorful desert character.*

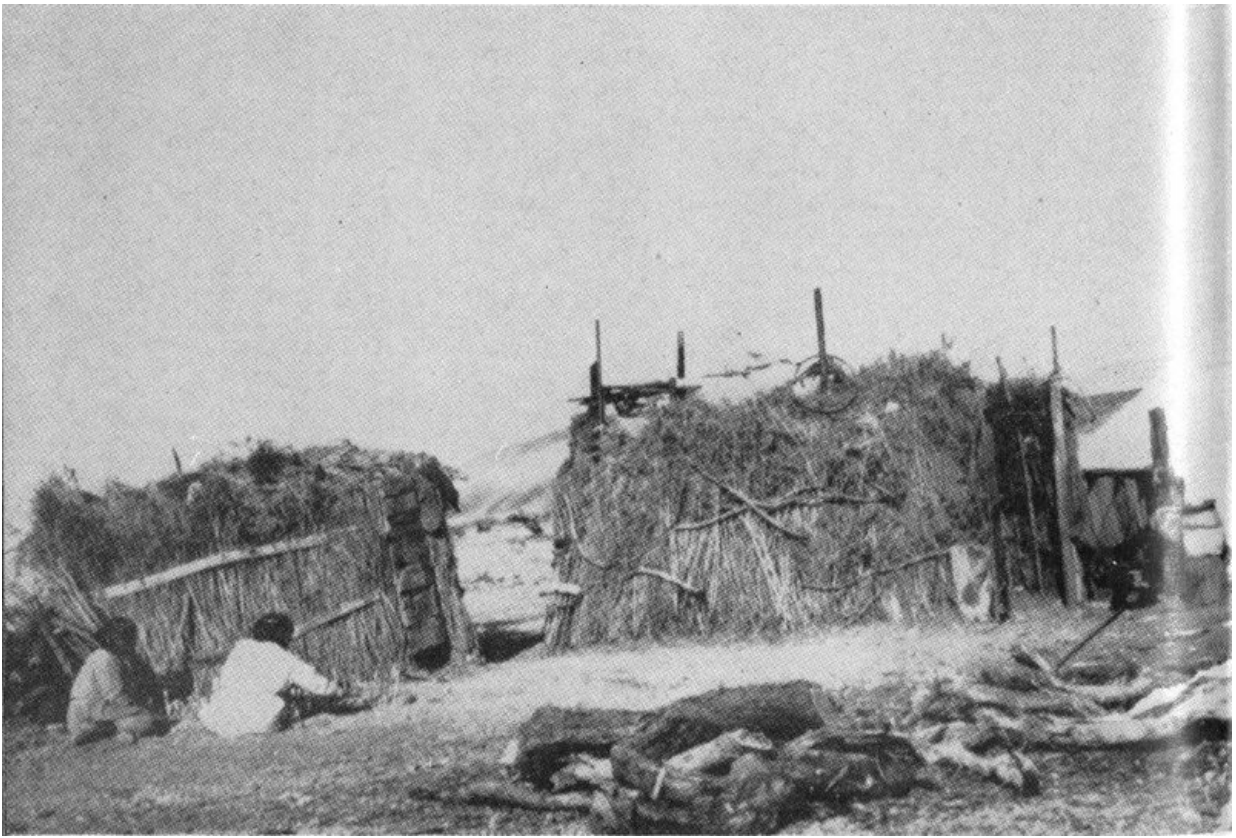


*Senator Charles Brown, benevolent overlord of Death Valley.*



*Panamint Tom, noted Piute, brother of Hungry Bill, Indian Chief*





*Where these wickiups were, now stands luxurious Furnace Creek Inn.*



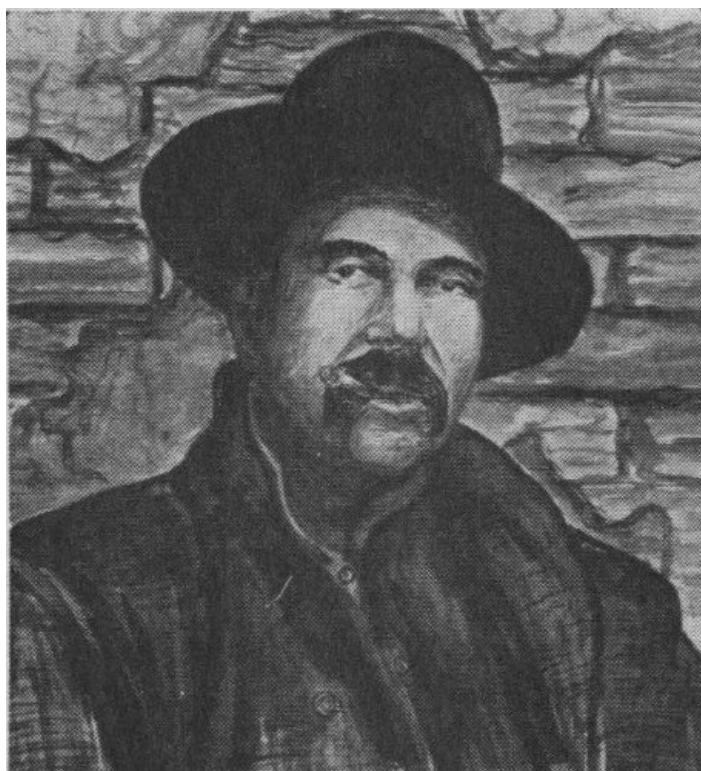
Courtesy Frasher's Photo. Pomona, Calif.

*Darwin Falls*





*Shorty Harris and his cabin at Ballarat, Panamint Valley.*



*Jim Butler, the discoverer of Tonopah Silver.*



*Sir Harry Oakes, booted off a train one day, discovered one of the world's richest mines the next.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Beatty, Nevada. Bare Mountain in distance.*





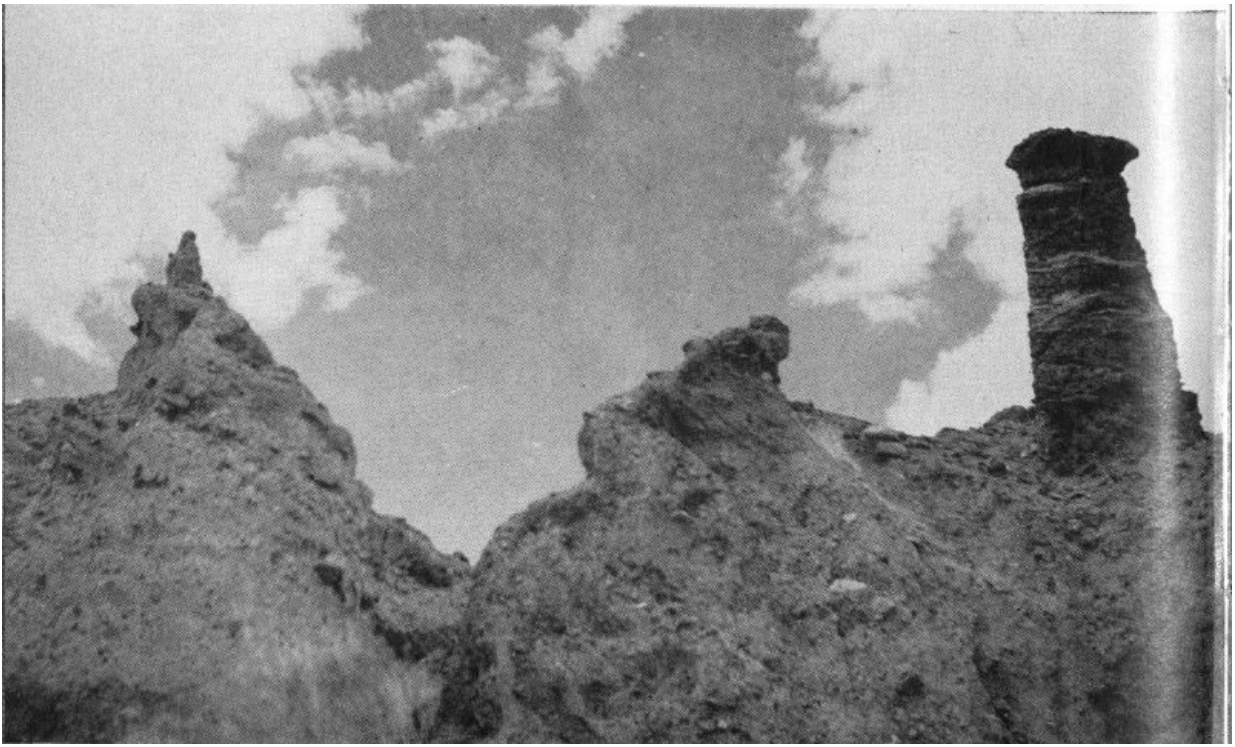
*"Ma" and "Dad" Fairbanks.  
He was known to the Indians as Long Man.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

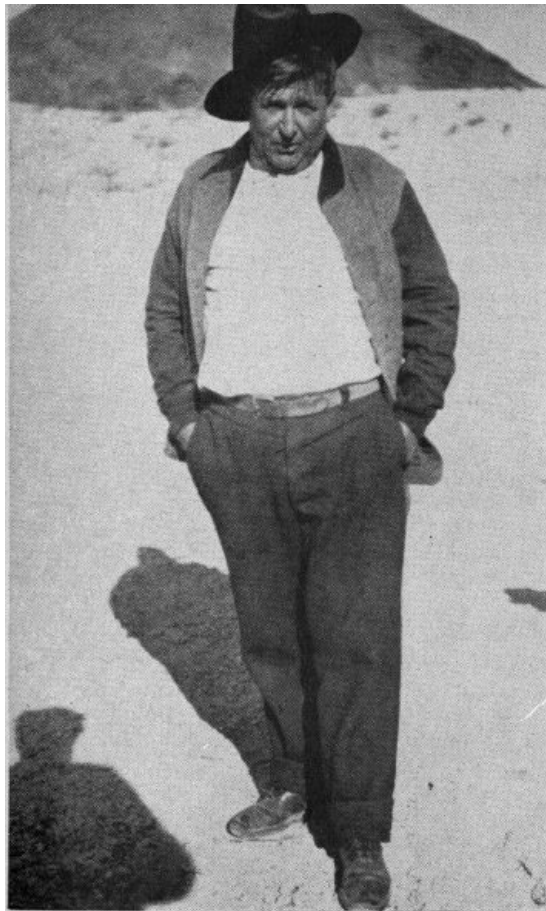
*Old Road Sign in Emigrant Wash.*

Townsend Pass →  
← Skidoo 7 M.



*Rock resting on gravel, gravel on sand. Here Quon Sing, heathen, created an oasis, was chased off by Christian's guns.*

XV



*Death Valley Scotty on his native heath.*



*Charles and Stella Brown, Shoshone.*



*Station at Rhyolite, Nevada, long a ghost town.*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.

*Monument in Death Valley honors Shorty Harris.*

BURY ME BESIDE JIM DAYTON IN THE VALLEY WE LOVED. ABOVE ME WRITE: "HERE LIES SHORTY HARRIS, A SINGLE BLANKET JACKASS PROSPECTOR."—EPITAPH REQUESTED BY SHORTY (FRANK) HARRIS BELOVED GOLD HUNTER. 1856-1834. HERE JAS. DAYTON, PIONEER, PERISHED 1898.

TO THESE TRAILMAKERS WHOSE COURAGE MATCHES THE FOUNDERS OF THE LAND THIS BIT OF EARTH IS DEDICATED FOREVER.



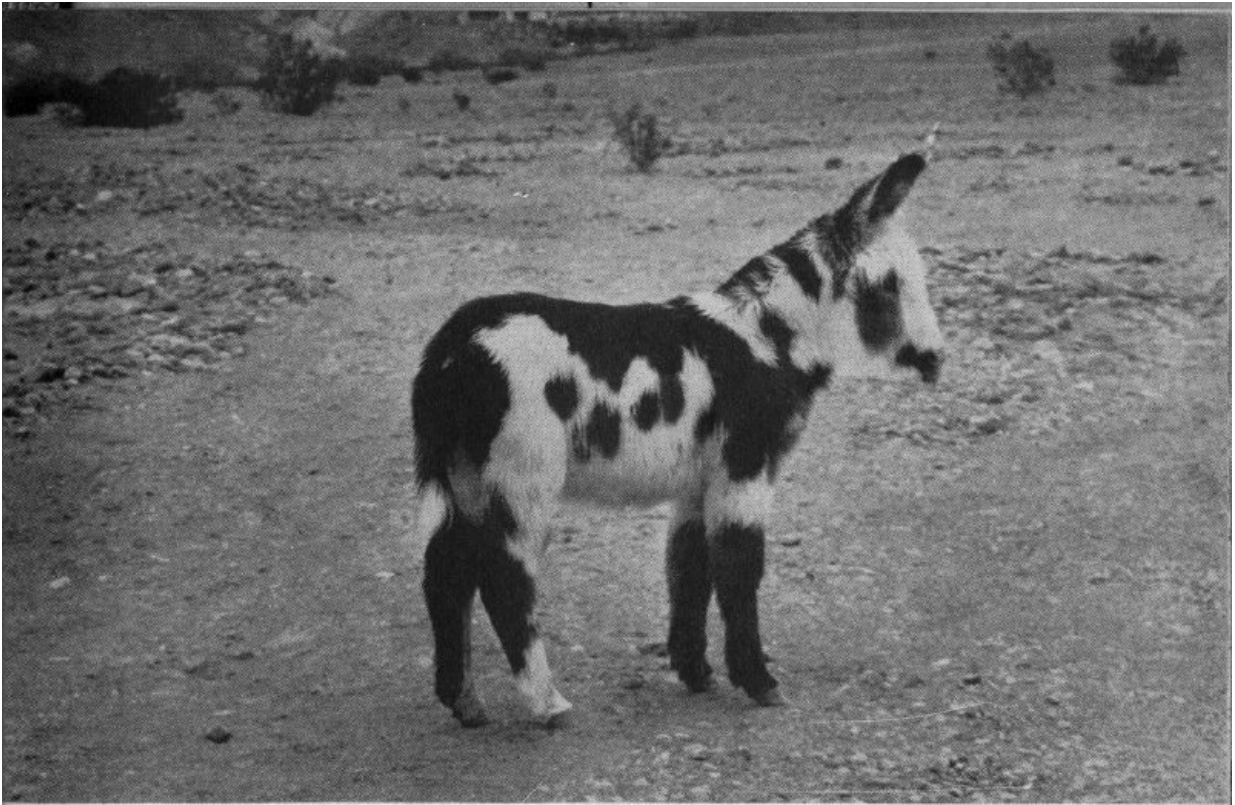


*Pete Harmon, prospector. He walked more than 400 miles in July to visit Shorty Harris when he heard that he was ill.*



*Calico, Ghost Town*

COURTESY HAROLD. O. WEIGHT



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*Wild Burro Colt*

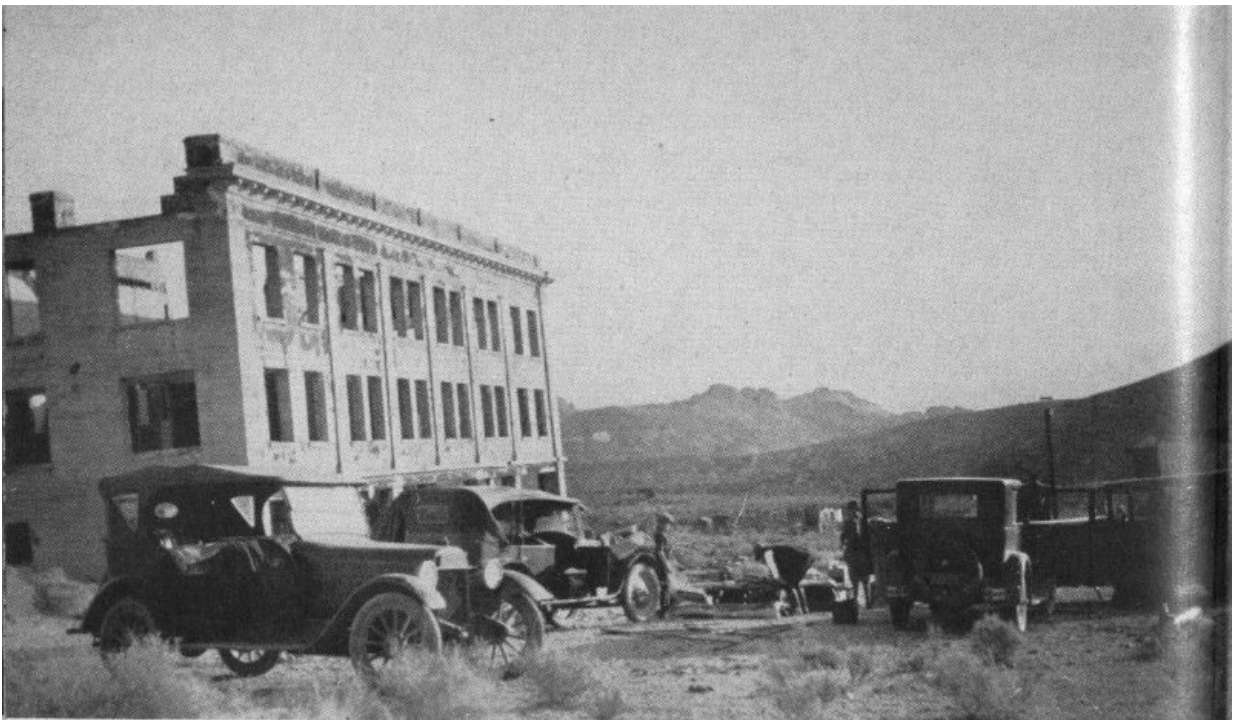


COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT  
*Death Valley's fantastic rock formations seen from Augerreberry's Point.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Old Harmony Borax Works, opposite Furnace Creek.*



*January 2, 1926. We camped our second night out at the Phantom City of Rhyolite.*



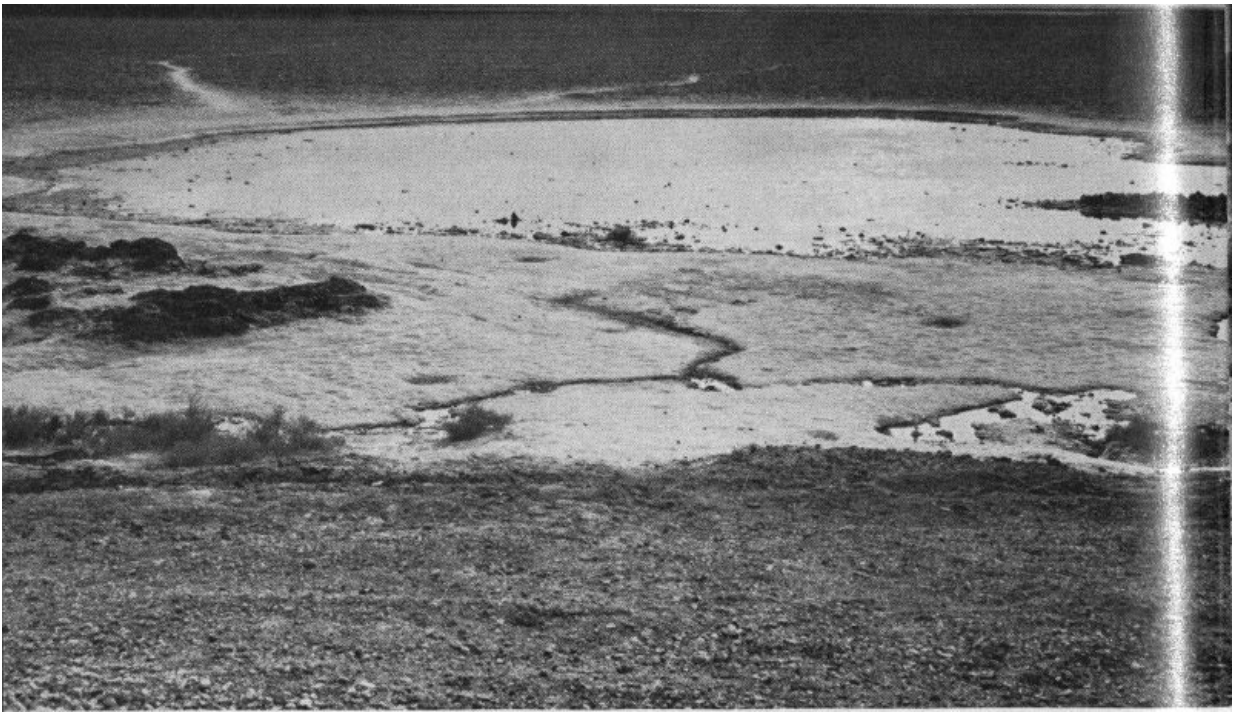


*Dublin Gulch, Shoshone. In these dugouts lived Joe Volmer, Dobe Charley and Jack Crowley, prospectors.*



*Golden Street, Rhyolite*

COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Bad Water, here the thirsty drank and died.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Ballarat, once an important freight station, now sand and sage.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

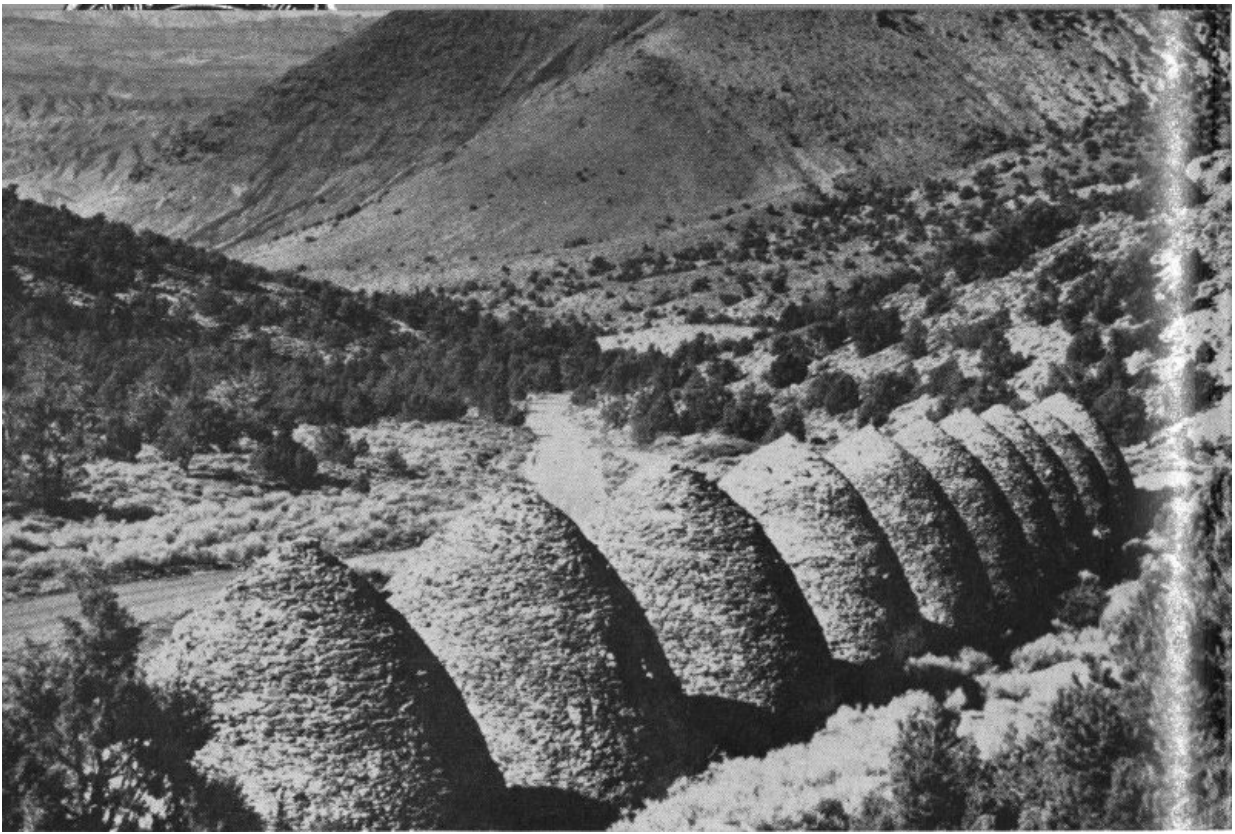
*Stables of Tufa Works used by Twenty Mule Teams, where borax was mined.*



COURTESY HAROLD O. WEIGHT

*Zabriskie Ruins. Opals may be found in the canyon at right.*

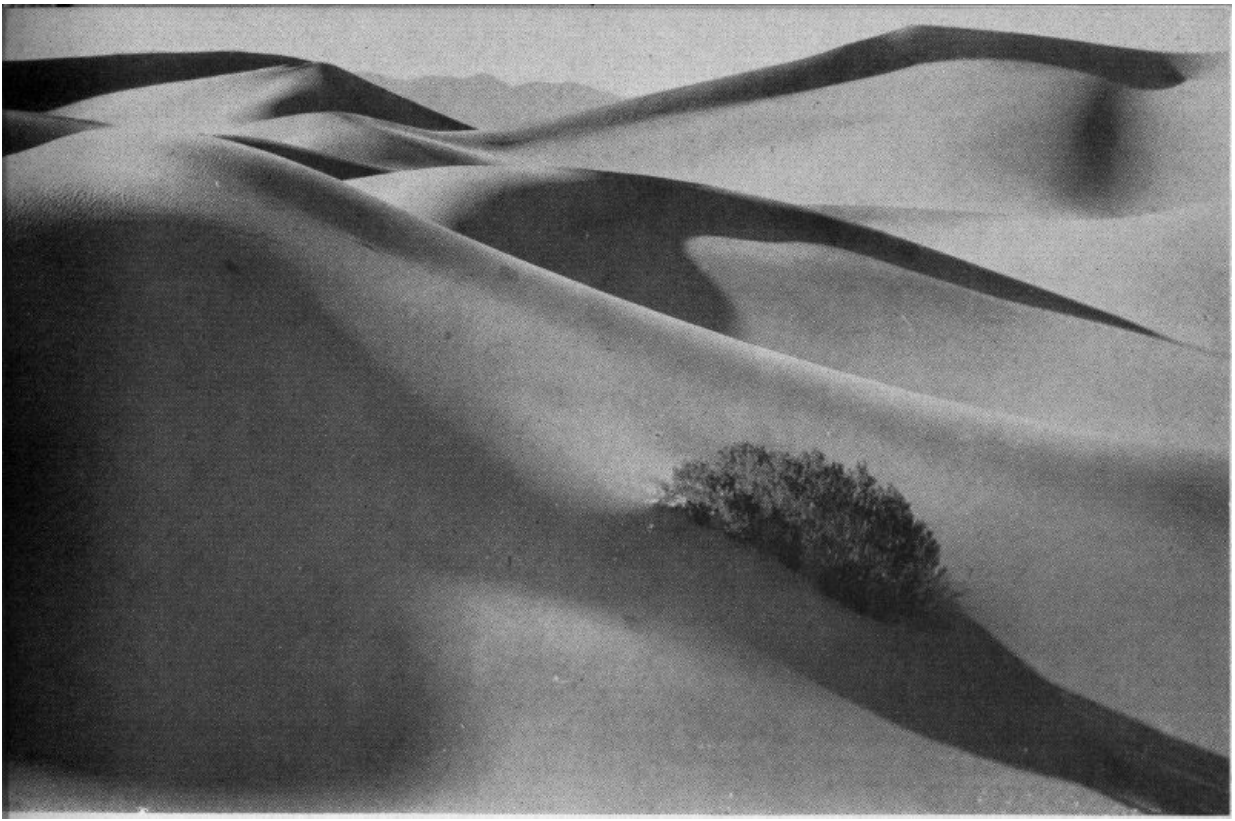




COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*Charcoal Pits*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*Typical Death Valley Canyon*

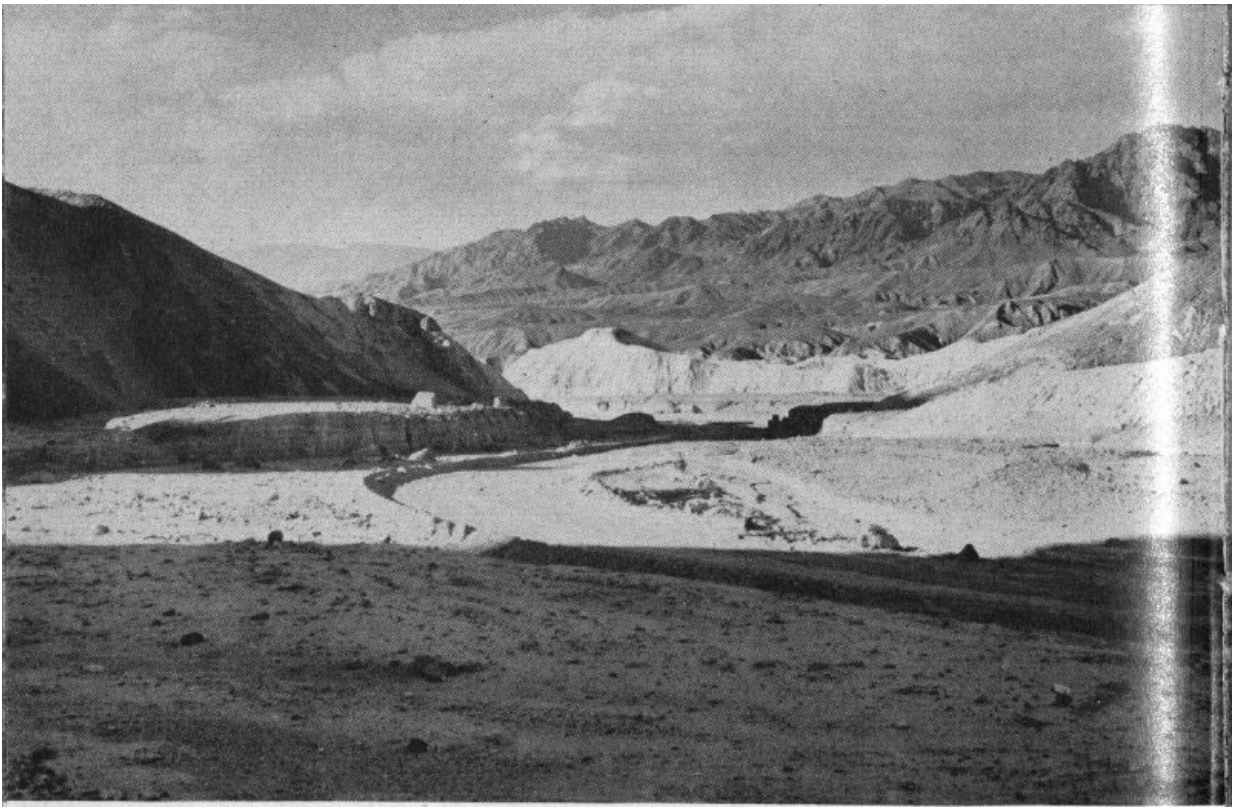


COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*Death Valley sand dunes*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.  
*Effect of prehistoric convulsions*





COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.

*Furnace Creek wash*



COURTESY FRASHER'S PHOTO. POMONA, CALIF.

*Ryan, and an abandoned borax mine.*

Williams was a Baptist preacher, turned Mountain Man. He had guided Fremont through the terrors of the San Juan country and was accused of cannibalism when hunger threatened one detachment. Of Williams Kit Carson said: "In starving times, don't walk ahead of Bill Williams." 97

Williams brought a band of Chaguanosos Indians to Resting Springs and made it an outpost for a horse stealing raid. With him were Pegleg Smith and Jim Beckwith, the mulatto who after having been a blacksmith with Ashley's Fur Traders in 1821, became a famous guide, Indian Chief, trader, and scout. (Also called Beckwourth and Beckworth.)

Leaving Resting Springs, they proceeded through Cajon Pass for their loot and on May 14, 1840, Juan Perez, administrator at San Gabriel Mission excited Southern California when he announced that every ranch between San Gabriel and San Bernardino had been stripped of horses. Two days later posses from every settlement in the

valley started in pursuit. The raiders made it a running battle, defeated several detachments, adding the latter's stock and grub to their plunder.

Five days later, reinforcements were sent from Los Angeles, Chino, and other settlements, all under command of Jose Antonio Carrillo—ancestor of the movie celebrity, Leo Carrillo. He had "225 horses, 75 men, 49 guns with braces of pistols, 19 spears, 22 swords and sabers, and 400 cartridges."

The posse threw fear into the raiders, but didn't catch them, though the latter lost half of the stolen horses. At Resting Springs, Carrillo found some abandoned clothing, saddles, and cooking utensils. Fifteen hundred horses that had died from thirst or lack of food were counted during the chase.

Later, when Pegleg Smith was chided about the high price he demanded of an emigrant for a horse, he remarked: "Well, the horses cost me plenty. I lost half of them getting out of the country and three of my best squaws...."

The earliest American settler at Resting Springs remembered by old timers was Philander Lee, a rough and somewhat eccentric squaw man. He was big, straight as a ramrod, afraid of nothing, and of an undetermined past. He was there in the early Eighties. He cleared 200 acres, raised alfalfa, stock, and some fruit. He had a way of adding the last part of his first name to his offspring, Leander and Meander are samples. Some of his descendants still live in the country.

It was near Resting Springs Ranch while Phi Lee owned it that Jacob Breyfogle, of lost mine fame, was scalped by Hungry Bill's tribesmen. The story is told in another chapter. 98

Phi Lee's brother, Cub Lee, who added spicy pages to the annals of Death Valley country, built the first home erected at Shoshone—an adobe which still stands. It was long the home of the squaw, Ann Cowboy. Another brother of Phi Lee was known as "Shoemaker" because he roamed the desert as a cobbler. All were squaw men.

Cub Lee established a reputation for keeping his word and it was said no one ever disputed it and lived. Indians over in Nevada were giving a "heap big" party. His squaw wanted to go. Cub didn't. "You stay home," he ordered. "If you go, I'll kill you." He rode away and upon returning, discovered she was absent. He leaped on his cayuse, went to the party and found her. Whipping out his gun he killed both wife and son, blew the smoke out of his pistol and leisurely rode away.

But the Nevada officials thought Cub Lee was too meticulous about keeping his word and Cub had a brief cooling off period in the pen.

Pegleg Smith made Resting Springs his headquarters for the greatest haul in the history of California horse stealing and reached Cajon Pass before the theft was discovered. These horses were driven into Utah and there sold to emigrants, traders, and ranchers. Smith may be said to be the inventor of the Lost Mine, as a means of getting quick money. The credulous are still looking for mines that existed only in Pegleg's fine imagination.

Thomas L. Smith was born at Crab Orchard, Kentucky, October 10, 1801. With little schooling, he ran away from home to become a trapper and hunter, and following the western streams eventually settled in Wyoming. He married several squaws, choosing these from different tribes, thus insuring friendly alliance with all.

He had been a member of Le Grand's first trapping expedition to Santa Fe and was an associate of such outstanding men as St. Vrain, Sublette, Platte, Jim Bridger, Kit Carson, the merchant Antoine Rubideaux (properly Robedoux) of St. Louis. He spoke several Indian languages and earned the gratitude of the Indians in his area by leading them to victory in a battle with the Utes. Able and likable, he also had iron nerves and courage. His morals, he justified on the ground that his were the morals of the day.

J. G. Bruff, historian, whose "Gold Rush-Journal and Drawings" is good material for research, met Smith on Bear River August 6, 1849, and wrote in his diary: "Pegleg Smith came into camp. He trades whiskey." Actually he traded anything he could lay his hands on.

While trapping for beaver with St. Vrain on the Platte, Smith was shot by an Indian, the bullet shattering the bones in his leg just above the ankle. He was talking with St. Vrain at the moment and after a look at the injury, begged those about to amputate his leg. Having no experience his companions refused. He then asked the camp cook to bring him a butcher knife and amputated it himself with minor assistance by the noted Milton Sublette. 99

Smith was then carried on a stretcher to his winter quarters on the Green River. While the wound was healing he discovered some bones protruding. Sublette pulled them out with a pair of bullet molds. Indian remedies procured by his squaws healed the stump and in the following spring of 1828 he made a rough wooden leg. Thereafter he was called Pegleg by the whites and We-he-to-ca by all Indians.

A wooden socket was fitted into the stirrup of his saddle and with this he could ride as skillfully as before. In the lean, last years of his life, he could be seen hopping along under an old beaver hat in San Francisco to and from Biggs and Kibbe's corner to Martin Horton's. Something in his appearance stamped him as a remarkable man.

Major Horace Bell, noted western ranger, lawyer, author, and editor of early Los Angeles, relates that he saw Pegleg near a Mother Lode town, lying drunk on the roadside, straddled by his half-breed son who was pounding him in an effort to arouse him from his stupor.

Smith had little success as a prospector, but saw in man's lust for gold, ways to get it easier than the pick and shovel method.

In the pueblo days of Los Angeles, Smith was a frequent visitor at the Bella Union, the leading hotel. Always surrounded by a spellbound group, he lived largely. When his money ran out he always had a piece of high-grade gold quartz to lure investment in his phantom mine.

And so we have the Lost Pegleg, located anywhere from Shoshone to Tucson. Nevertheless, no adequate story of the movement of civilization westward can ignore South Pass and Pegleg Smith.

About 25 miles east of Shoshone and set back from the road under willows and cottonwoods, an old house identifies a landmark of Pahrump Valley—the Manse Ranch, once owned by the Yundt family.

The original Yundt was among the first settlers, contemporary with Philander and Cub Lee and Aaron Winters. Yundt was a squaw man and his children, Sam, Lee, and John followed the father in taking squaws for their wives.

Sam Yundt was operating a small store at Good Springs and making a precarious living when a sleek and talented promoter secured a mining claim nearby and induced Sam to enlarge his stock in order to care for the increased business promised by supplying provisions for the mine's employees. Sam, with visions of quick, profitable 100 turnovers, stocked the empty shelves. For a few months the bills were paid promptly, then lagged. Sam yielded to plausible excuses and carried the account. Finally his own credit was jeopardized and wholesalers began to threaten suits. Then he heard the sheriff had an attachment ready to serve. In his desperation Sam went to the debtor. "I'm ruined," he pleaded. "You fellows will have to raise some money or we'll all quit eating."

The fellow said, "All I can give you is stock in the Yellow Pine. It's that or nothing."

Sam Yundt had done with next to nothing all his life, took the stock and waited for the sheriff. Then the miracle—pay dirt and Sam Yundt was rich, and now he did the natural thing. He decided he would live at a pace that matched his means.

George Rose, an old friend, had a mine in the Avawatz and he needed money. He went to Sam. "Now that you're rich," he told Sam, "you'll be taking life easy. I've got some swamp land on the coast near Long Beach. Best duck shooting I know of and I'll sell it cheap."

Sam didn't want it but he bought it just to accommodate his friend. In a little while the swamp land was an oil field and oil added another fortune to Yellow Pine's gold. Sam put his squaw Nancy, away, moved to the city and married a white woman. Nancy was provided for and for years she could be seen driving all over the desert in her buggy.

A later owner of the Manse was one of whom the writer has a revealing memory. A battered Ford stopped at Shoshone and an unshaven individual stepped out, went into the store and came out with a loaf of bread and a chunk of bologna. Dirty underwear showed through a flapping rent in his patched overalls as he tore off a piece of bread and a chunk of the bologna and had his meal. The uneaten portions he tossed into the tool box, wiped his hands on his thighs and his mouth on his hand.

"Jean Cazaurang," Brown chuckled, "won't pay six bits for lunch in the dining room. Worth \$2,000,000."

When the dinner gong sounded Cazaurang went to his tool box, retrieved the rest of the bologna, twisted a hunk from the bread loaf, tossed the rest back into the tool box. This time he saved a dollar. He curled himself up in the Ford that night and saved \$2.00. Besides the Manse Ranch he had a 10,000 acre ranch in Mexico, stocked with sheep, cattle, and horses, and had several mines.

Jean's end was not a happy one. One payday at his ranch, the good looking and likable young Mexican who worked for him, came for his money. Jean counted out the money from a poke and poured it into the palm 101 of the Mexican. The Mexican counted it and with a smile looked at Jean. "Pardon me, Señor ... it's two bits short."

"Be gone," ordered Jean.

"But Señor, I have worked hard. My wife is hungry and I am hungry. My children are hungry."

"Be gone," again shouted Jean and whipped out his gun.

But the Mexican was young, lean, and lithe and he seized Jean's wrist and when he turned the wrist loose Jean Cazaurang was dead. And then the Mexican made one mistake. Instead of going to the sheriff he became panic stricken and taking the body to a nearby ravine, he heaved it into the brush where it was found later, feet up.

But Jean Cazaurang had saved two bits.

A big luxuriously appointed hearse came for Jean and people said it was the first decent ride he'd ever had in his life.

Sentiment was with the Mexican, but he drew a short term for bungling.

Because in one will Jean left his property to his wife and in another to his housekeeper, the estate was tied up in court, where it remained for 11 years—fat pickings for lawyers. Finally the widow was awarded one half the estate under community property law, but the widow was dead. The housekeeper got the other half, and so ends the story of Jean Cazaurang and two bits.

Rarely did desert ranches show other profits than those which one finds in doing the thing one likes to do, as in

the case of a recent owner of the Manse—the wealthy Mrs. Lois Kellogg—the soft-voiced eastern lady who fell in love with the desert, drilled an artesian well, the flow of which is among the world’s largest. Small, cultured, she yet found thrills in driving a 20-ton truck and trailer from the Manse to Los Angeles or to the famed Oasis Ranch 200 miles away in Fish Lake Valley—another desert landmark which she bought to further gratify her passion for the Big Wide Open.

And there you have a slice of life as it is on the desert—one miserably dying in his lust for money, one fleeing its solitude; another seeking its solace.

## Chapter XV

### The Story of Charles Brown

The story of Charles Brown and the Shoshone store begins at Greenwater. In the transient horde that poured into that town, he was the only one who hadn’t come for quick, easy money. On his own since he was 11 years old, when he’d gone to work in a Georgia mine, he wanted only a job and got it. In the excited, loose-talking mob he was conspicuous because he was silent, calm, unhurried.

There were no law enforcement officers in Greenwater. The jail was 130 miles away and every day was field day for the toughs. Better citizens decided finally to do something about it. They petitioned George Naylor, Inyo county’s sheriff at Independence to appoint or send a deputy to keep some semblance of order.

Naylor sent a badge over and with it a note: “Pin it on some husky youngster, unmarried and unafraid and tell him to shoot first.”

Again the Citizens’ Committee met. “I know a fellow who answers that description,” one of them said. “Steady sort. Built like a panther. Came from Georgia. Kinda slow-motioned until he’s ready for the spring. Name’s Brown.”

The badge was pinned on Brown.

Greenwater was a port of call for Death Valley Slim, a character of western deserts, who normally was a happy-go-lucky likable fellow. But periodically Slim would fill himself with desert likker, his belt with six-guns, and terrorize the town.

Shortly after Brown assumed the duties of his office, Slim sent word to the deputy sheriff at Death Valley Junction that he was on his way to that place for a little frolic. “Tell him,” he coached his messenger, “sheriffs rile me and he’d better take a vacation.”

After notifying the merchants and the residents, who promptly barricaded themselves indoors, the officer found shelter for himself in Beatty, Nevada.

So Slim saw only empty streets and barred shutters upon arrival and since there was nothing to shoot at he headed through Dead Man’s Canyon for Greenwater. There he found the main street crowded to his liking and the saloons jammed. He made for the nearest, ordered a drink and whipping out his gun began to pop the bottles on the shelves. At the first blast, patrons made a break for the exits. At the second, the doors and windows were smashed and when Slim holstered his gun, the place was a wreck. 103

Messengers were sent for Brown, who was at his cabin a mile away. Brown stuck a pistol into his pocket and went down. He found Slim in Wandell’s saloon, the town’s smartest. There Slim had refused to let the patrons leave and with the bartenders cowed, the patrons cornered, Slim was amusing himself by shooting alternately at chandeliers, the feet of customers and the plump breasts of the nude lady featured in the painting behind the bar. Following Brown at a safe distance, was half the population, keyed for the massacre.

Brown walked in. “Hello, Slim,” he said quietly. “Fellows tell me you’re hogging all the fun. Better let me have that gun, hadn’t you?”

“Like hell,” Slim sneered. “I’ll let you have it right through the guts—”

As he raised his gun for the kill, the panther sprang and the battle was on. They fought all over the barroom—standing up; lying down; rolling over—first one then the other on top. Tables toppled, chairs crashed. For half an hour they battled savagely, finally rolling against the bar—both mauled and bloody. There with his strong vice-like legs wrapped around Slim’s and an arm of steel gripping neck and shoulder, Brown slipped irons over the bad man’s wrists. “Get up,” Brown ordered as he stood aside, breathing hard.

Slim rose, leaned against the bar. There was fight in him still and seeing a bottle in front of him, he seized it with manacled hands, started to lift it.

“Slim,” Brown said calmly, “if you lift that bottle you’ll never lift another.”

The bad boy instinctively knew the look that pages death and Slim’s fingers fell from the bottle.

Greenwater had no jail and Brown took him to his own cabin. Leaving the manacles on the prisoner he took his shoes, locked them in a closet. No man drunk or sober he reflected, would tackle barefoot the gravelled street littered with thousands of broken liquor bottles. Then he went to bed.

Waking later, he discovered that Slim had vanished and with him, Brown's number 12 shoes. He tried Slim's shoe but couldn't get his foot into it. There was nothing to do but follow barefoot. He left a blood-stained trail, but at 2 a.m. he found Slim in a blacksmith shop having the handcuffs removed. Brown retrieved his shoes and on the return trip Slim went barefoot. After hog-tying his prisoner Brown chained him to the bed and went to sleep. 104

Thereafter, the bad boys scratched Greenwater off their calling list.

Slim afterwards attained fame with Villa in Mexico, became a good citizen and later went East, established a sanatorium catering to the wealthy and acquired a fortune.

Among the first arrivals in Greenwater was a lanky adventurer known to the Indians as Long Man and to whites for his ability to make money in any venture and an even more marvelous inability to keep it. He was Ralph Jacobus Fairbanks. Broke at the time, he was seeking the quickest way to a "comeback."

Foreseeing that the biggest names in copper meant a rush, he had taken a look at the little stagnant spring with a green scum that was to give the town its name.

"Not enough water in it to do the family washing," he decided and with uncanny talent for seeing opportunity where others would starve to death, he was soon peddling water at a dollar a bucket. He had hauled it 40 miles uphill from Furnace Creek wash.

A hopeful, but late arrival who expected to find the town crowded with killers was an undertaker who came with a huge stock of coffins. The prospect of a quick turnover seemed to guarantee success, but in two years Greenwater had exactly one funeral and he sold but one coffin. Disgusted he stacked the caskets in the center of his shop; left and was never again heard of.

Fairbanks came into town one day with his sweat-stained 16 mule team, noticed the abandoned coffins, picked out the largest and best and gave Greenwater its first watering trough, which was used as long as the town lasted.

Fairbanks soon made enough money to acquire a hotel, store, and a bar, which became a popular rendezvous. Fairbanks was born of well-to-do parents, in a covered wagon en route to Utah in 1857. Of the thousands who flocked into Greenwater, only he and Charles Brown were to remain in Death Valley country and wrest fortunes from America's most desolate region. To Greenwater he brought his wife, Celestia Abigail, who shared his spirit of adventure, but fortunately for him she possessed a caution which he lacked. Among their children was a beautiful and vivacious daughter, Stella.

Fairbanks, who was of the quick, go-getting type, didn't care for Brown. Born in the North, he was critical of the slow-moving, silent, young Georgian and unacquainted with the Deep South's drawl, he referred to him as "that damned foreigner." 105

The reputation of the Fairbanks camaraderie spread, and Mrs. Fairbanks, who understood the longing of a youngster for a home-cooked meal, invited Brown to dinner.

There were other young fortune seekers in Greenwater who were also occasional guests at the Fairbanks dinners—among them a Yankee from Maine—Harry Oakes, of whom the world was to hear later. Allen Gillman, known as the Rattlesnake Kid, because of his stalking rattlesnakes to indulge his hobby of making hat bands and trinkets, later to become associated with Bernarr McFadden. Wealthy young mining engineers. Bank clerks with futures. Brown apparently had none.

"He'll get out of the country like he came in—afoot and broke," rivals told Stella. So when romance came, there was still a long trail ahead.

Then came Greenwater's first warning of trouble. A few miners were laid off; a few padlocks appeared on a few cabins; a few merchants complained. Soon it was noticed that the tinny pianos from which slim-fingered "professors" swept the two-step and the waltz were gathering dust while the girls lolled in empty honkies. But when Diamond Tooth Lil padlocked her door and joined the rush to a new copper strike at Crackerjack in the Avawatz Mountains the wiser knew that Greenwater was through.

With no guests Fairbanks told off on his fingers, departed patrons, mine owners, doctors, lawyers. "Just Charlie left. Wonder what's keeping him?" Celestia Abigail knew. She knew that the big Georgian was desperately in love with Stella and didn't care how many of her suitors left.

With mines closing and few official duties, Brown loaded a burro with supplies and with Joe Yerrin went on a prospecting trip. Their course led across Death Valley. They were caught in a heat that was a record, even for the Big Sink, and ran out of water. Fortunately they were within a few miles of Surveyor's Well—a stagnant hole north of Stovepipe. The burros were also suffering and Brown and Yerrin staggered to water barely in time to escape death.

The well there is dug on a slant and looking down they saw a prospector kneeling at the water, filling a canteen and blocking passage.

"Reckon you fellows are thirsty," he greeted. "I'll hand you up a drink. Have to strain it though. Full of wiggletails." He pulled his shirt tail out of his pants, stretched it over a stew pan, strained the water through it and handed the pan up to Brown. "Now it's fit to drink," he said proudly.

"It was no time to be finicky," Charlie said. "We drank."

Brown and Yerrin combed hill and canyon but failed to find anything of value. Yerrin knew of another place. "You can have it," Brown said. "I left a good claim."

Yerrin eyed him a long moment, then grinned: "Stella, huh?"

The sage in Greenwater streets was rank now and again Ralph Fairbanks looked out over the dying town. "Ma, we're getting out," he said. He emptied his pockets on the table; counted the cash. "Ten dollars and thirty cents. Can't get far on that—"

He was interrupted by a knock at the door. There stood a stranger who wanted dinner and lodging for the night. During the evening the guest disclosed that he was en route to his mining claim near a place called Shoshone, 38 miles south. It was near a spring with plenty of water, warm, but usable. He wanted to put 50 miners to work but first he had to find someone willing to go there and board them.

"Maybe we'd go," Fairbanks said. "What'll you pay for board?"

"A dollar and a half a day. Figures around \$2250 a month."

Ralph looked at Ma. She nodded. "It's a deal," he said.

The next morning the guest left.

Fairbanks turned to his wife. "I can haul these abandoned shacks down there in no time. Charlie's not working, I can get him to help."

Ralph Fairbanks had stayed with Greenwater to the bitter end. Now he hauled it away.

The road to the new site was over rough desert, gutted with dry washes. Brown slept in the brush, put the shacks up while Fairbanks went for others. Both worked night and day to get the place ready. Finally they had lodging for 50 men, a dining room, and quarters for the family. With \$2250 a month they could afford a chef and Ma could take it easy. Stella could go Outside to a girl's school.

Then like a bolt of lightning came the bad news. The Greenwater guest, they learned, was just an engaging liar, with no mine, no men. He was never heard of again.

Without a dollar they were marooned in one of the world's most desolate areas. Stumped, Fairbanks looked at Brown. "I've been rich. I've been poor. But this is below the belt. What'll we do?"

"I can get a job with the Borax Company," Brown said. "But you?"

"We have that canned goods we brought to feed that liar's hired men. I'll figure some way to live in this God-forsaken hole."

From the dining room, prepared for the \$2250 monthly income, he lugged a table, set it outside the door facing the road. Then he went to the pantry, filled a laundry basket with the cans of pork and beans, tomatoes, corned beef, and milk brought from Greenwater. He arranged them on the table, wrenched a piece of shook from a packing crate and on it painted in crude letters the word, "Store." He propped it on the table and went inside. "Ma," he announced, "we're in business." 107

You could have hauled the entire stock and the table away in a wheelbarrow and every person in the country for 100 miles in either direction laid end to end would not have reached as far as a bush league batter could knock a baseball.

The wheelbarrow load of canned goods went to the Indians living in the brush and the prospectors camped at the spring. Another replaced it and the "store" moved then into the dining room prepared for the non-existent boarders. Powder, a must on the list of a desert store, was added. The desert man, they knew, needed only a few items but they must be good. Overalls honestly stitched. Bacon well cured. Shoes sturdily built for hard usage.

"If we sell a shoddy shirt, an inferior pick or shovel to one of our customers," they told the wholesaler, "we will never again sell anything to him nor to any of his friends."

Soon the prospectors were telling other prospectors they met on the trails: "Square shooters—those fellows. Speak our language...." The squaws and the bucks told other squaws and bucks. Soon new trails cut across the desert to Shoshone and soon the store outgrew the dining room in the Fairbanks residence.

From Zabriskie, now an abandoned borax town a few miles south of Shoshone, an old saloon and boarding house was cut into sections and hauled to Shoshone. It had been previously hauled from Greenwater where it had served as a labor union hall and club house. It was deposited directly across the road from the original store.

So began in 1910 an empire of trade that is almost unbelievable.

Charlie had at last coaxed the right answer from Stella but there wasn't enough in the business at the start to support two families, plus the score of children and grandchildren of Fairbanks. At Greenwater he had known all the moguls of mining and he had only to ask for a job to get one. Retaining his interest in the Shoshone store he became superintendent of the Pacific Borax Company's important Lila C. mine and thus formed a connection which grew into valuable friendships with the executives. The Shoshone business grew and soon required his entire time and that of Stella.

Born in Richfield, Utah, Stella Brown grew up in Death Valley country and a reel of her life would show an exciting story of triumph over life in the raw; in desolate deserts and in boom towns where bandits and bawdy women rubbed elbows with the virtuous, millionaire with crook, and caste was unknown. If a girl went wrong; if an Indian was starving; a widow in need—there you would find her. Some day somebody will write the inspiring story of Stella Brown. 108

Not all those who were told to see Charlie were seeking directions or suffering from toothache. When General Electric desperately needed talc, its agents were so advised. When Harold Ickes came out to promote President Roosevelt's conservation ideas and officials of the War Department sought critical material, they too were given the old familiar advice and took it, and one day I saw the President of the Southern Pacific Railroad stand around for an hour while Charlie waited for a Pahrump Indian to make up his mind about a pair of overalls.

Today the store that started on a kitchen table requires a large refrigerating plant and lighting system, three large warehouses, two tunnels in a hill. About a dozen employees work in shifts from seven in the morning till ten at night, to take care of the store, cabins, and cafe. Three big trucks haul oil, gas, powder, and provisions to mines in the region. Out of canyon, dry wash, and over dunes they come for every imaginable commodity, and get it.

A millionaire city man who vacations there sat down on the slab bench beside Brown, aimlessly whittling. "Listen, Charlie," he said. "Why don't you get out of this desolation and move to the city where you can enjoy yourself?"

"Hell—" Charlie muttered, and went on with his whittling.

The new store stands upon the site where Ma Fairbanks' kitchen table displayed the canned goods brought from Greenwater. Modern to the minute and air-cooled it would be a credit to any city.

Again I heard the old familiar, "See Charlie," and while he was telling someone how to get to a place no one around had ever heard of, I glanced over the Chalfant Register, a Bishop paper, and noticed a letter it had published from a lady in Wisconsin seeking information about a brother who had gone to Greenwater more than 40 years ago. She had never heard of him since.

When Charlie joined me I called his attention to the letter. "I saw it," he said. "Nobody answered and the editor sent the letter to me. I have just written her that the brother who came to find out what happened, died suddenly at Tonopah, only a few hours by auto from Greenwater. The other brother was killed in a saloon. I knew him and the man who killed him."

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## Chapter XVI Long Man, Short Man

Before Tonopah, the first, and Greenwater, the last of the boom camps, Indians roaming the desert from Utah westward were showing trails to two hikos, who were to become symbols for the reckless courage needed to exist in the wasteland. They were known as Long Man and Short Man.

Previous pages have given part of the story of Long Man.

Coming into Death Valley country in the late Nineties, Ralph Jacobus Fairbanks wanted to know its water holes, trails, and landmarks. He hired Panamint Tom, brother of Hungry Bill, as a guide. Because Tom's name was linked with Bill's in stories of missing men, Fairbanks carried his six-gun.

Panamint Tom was also armed. When they reached the rim of Death Valley and started down, Fairbanks said, "Tom, this is Indian country. You know it. I don't. You go first...."

Taking no chance on a surprise night attack, he directed the layout of the camp so that their beds were safely apart. Each slept with his gun. Around the camp fire, Tom nonchalantly confessed that he'd had to kill five white men.

The mission accomplished, they started back. When they came out of the valley Tom said, "Long Man, this is white man's country. You know it. I don't. You go first." In after years, referring to their trip, Tom said, "Long Man, you heap 'fraid that time." "I was," Fairbanks confessed. "Me too," Tom said.

When the Goldfield strike was made, Fairbanks saw that a supply station on the main line of travel was a surer way to wealth than the gamble of digging. He knew of a ranch with good water and luxuriant wild hay at Ash Meadows. Hay was worth \$200 a ton. The owner had abandoned the ranch, however, and moved into the hills. Fairbanks could get little information concerning his whereabouts. "Up there somewhere," he was told, with a gesture indicating 50 miles of sky line. But he wanted the hay and started out and by patient inquiry located his man just before daylight on the second day. "What will you give for it?" the man asked. 110

"Well," Fairbanks parried, "you know it'll cost me as much as the ranch is worth to get rid of that wild grass." Having only a vague idea of its real worth he had decided to offer \$4000, but sensed the man's eagerness to sell and started to offer \$1000. Suddenly it occurred to him that someone else might have made an offer. "I'll go \$2000 and not a nickel more."

"You've bought a ranch," the owner said.



Elated, Fairbanks wrote a contract by candlelight on the spot. Both signed and they started back to find a notary. "I determined the fellow should not get out of my sight until the deed was recorded. If he wanted a drink of water, so did I. If he wished to speak to someone, I wanted a word with the same man."

Finally the deal was closed and Fairbanks started home. Outside, he met Ed Metcalf, chuckling.

"What's so funny, Ed?"

Metcalf pointed to the departing seller. "He was just telling me about being worried to death all morning for fear a sucker he'd found would get out of his sight. He's been trying to unload his ranch for \$500 and some idiot gave him \$2000."

Fairbanks also operated a freighting service to the boom towns in the gold belt as far north as Goldfield and Tonopah. Rates were fantastic and he made a fortune. He opened Beatty's first cafe in a tent.

Money was plentiful and after a trip with a 16 mule team over rough roads to Goldfield, he was ready for a relaxing change to poker. When the white chips are \$25, the reds \$50, and the blues \$500 the game is not for pikers and he would bet \$10,000 as calmly as he would 10 cents.

In such a game one night he found himself sitting beside a player who had removed his big overcoat with wide patch pockets and hung it on his chair. Fairbanks noticed the fellow had a habit of gathering in the discards when he wasn't betting and his deal would follow. He also noticed intermittent movements of the fellow's deft fingers to the big patch pocket and soon saw that every ace in the deck reposed in the pocket.

Later in the game, Fairbanks opened a jackpot. Every man stayed. The crook raised discreetly and most of the players stayed. Fairbanks bet \$1000.

"Have to raise you \$5000," the crook said.

Fairbanks met the raise. "... and it'll cost you \$5000 more," he said evenly.

With the confidence that came from the cached aces, the sharper shoved out the five, smiled exultantly as he spread four kings and a deuce and reached for the pot. 111

"Not so fast," Fairbanks said as he laid four aces and a ten on the table.

The crook gave him a quick look. Fairbanks' eyes were steady. Neither said a word. The crook couldn't. He knew that Fairbanks' long fingers had found the big patch pocket.

When three men and a jackass no longer made a crowd in Shoshone, Ralph Fairbanks became restless. With a population of 20—half of it his own progeny, he felt that civilization was closing in on him. "Charlie, I've been in one place too long...." He had now become "Dad Fairbanks" to all who knew him.

The automobile was being increasingly used in desert travel and transcontinental trips were no longer a daring adventure or the result of a bet. Sixty miles south of Shoshone there was a wretched road that pitched down the washboard slope of one range into a basin, then up the gully-crossed slopes of another. Part of the transcontinental highway, it was a headache to the traveler. Radiators usually boiled down hill and up.

To this desolate spot went Dad Fairbanks. The hot blasts from the dunes of the Devil's Playground and the dry bed of Soda Lake made summer a hell and the freezing winds from Providence Mountains turned it into a Siberian winter.

Here in 1928 Dad Fairbanks built cabins and a store and installed a gas pump. Water was hauled in. "Coming or going," he said, "when they reach this place they've just got to stop, cool the engine, and fill up for the hill ahead." The place is Baker on Highway 91.

Here, as at Shoshone, sales technique was tossed into the ash can. Stopping for dinner one day I met Dad coming out of the dining room. "How's the fare?" I asked.

"Are you hungry?"

"Hungry as a bear...."

"All right. Go in. A hungry man can stand anything." Then in an undertone he added: "Employment agent sent me the world's worst cook. Take eggs."

Later as we talked in the sheltered driveway a Rolls-Royce limousine drove up and a well-fed and smartly tailored tourist stepped out and spoke to Dad: "Do you know me?" he asked.

Dad looked at him hesitantly. "Face is familiar."

"You loaned me \$300, 25 years ago."

"I loaned a lotta fellows money."

"But I never paid it back."

"A helluva lot of 'em didn't," Dad said. 112

The stranger reached into his pocket, pulled \$1000 from a roll and handed it to Dad. "I'm Harry Oakes," he said. "Where's Ma?"

So they went over to Dad's house and with Ma Fairbanks who had shared all of Dad's fortunes, good and bad, they sat down and Oakes talked of the long trail that led from 300 borrowed dollars to an annual income of five million.

Harry Oakes had gone to Canada and learning that the legal title to a mining claim would expire at midnight on a certain date, he and his partner W. G. Wright sat up in a temperature of forty below, to relocate the Lakeshore Mine—Canada's richest gold property.

Born in Maine, Harry Oakes became a subject of England and was at this time Canada's richest citizen, with an estimated fortune of \$200,000,000.

It was a long way from the Niagara palace back to Greenwater and Shoshone and as Ma Fairbanks and Dad and Harry sat in the plain little desert cottage, I couldn't keep from wondering why a man with \$200,000,000 would wait 25 years to repay that \$300.

In his native town of Sangerville in Maine, Harry Oakes was criticized when, as a youngster with every opportunity to pursue a successful career according to the staid Maine formula, he became excited by gold. "Quick easy money." "Just a dreamer." He talked big, acted big, and was big.

But Harry Oakes started out in life to make a fortune by finding a gold mine and you can't laugh aside the determination and courage with which he stuck to his purpose until he succeeded.

Dad Fairbanks spent nearly 50 years in Death Valley country and it is a bit ironical that at last, the Baker climate drove him from the desert to Santa Paula and later, of all places, to Hollywood.

"I should never have believed it of you," I kidded.

"Hell—" Dad retorted, "I wanted solitude. Haven't you got enough sense to know that the loneliest place on Godamighty's earth is a city?"

He died in 1943 and at the funeral were the state's greatest men and its humblest—bankers, lawyers, doctors, beggars, muckers and miners, and with them, those he loved best—sun-baked fellows from the towns and the gulches along the burro trails. No man who has lived in Death Valley country did more to put the region on the must list of the American tourist and none won more of the regard and affections of the people.

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## Chapter XVII

### Shorty Frank Harris

No history of Death Valley has been written in this century without mention of the Short Man—Frank (Shorty) Harris—and none can be. Previous pages have given most of his story. After his death at least two hurried writers who never saw him have stated that Shorty discovered no mines, knew little of the country.

From a page of notes made before I had ever met him, I find this record: "Stopped at Independence to see George Naylor, early Inyo county sheriff and now its treasurer. We talked of early prospectors. Naylor said: 'I have known all of the old time burro men and have the records. Shorty Harris has put more towns on the map and more taxable property on the assessors' books than any of them.'"

I first met Shorty at Shoshone. Entering the store one day, Charles Brown told me there was a fellow outside I ought to know, and in a moment I was looking into keen steady eyes—blue as water in a canyon pool—and in another Shorty Harris was telling me how to sneak up on \$10,000,000. Thus began an acquaintance which was to lead me through many years from one end of Death Valley to the other, with Shorty, mentor, friend, and guide.

Of course I had heard of him. Who hadn't? In the gold country of western deserts one could find a few who had never heard of Cecil Rhodes or John Hays Hammond, but none who had not heard of Shorty Harris. Wherever mining men gathered, the mention of his name evoked the familiar, "That reminds me," and the air thickened with history, laughter, and lies.

He was five feet tall, quick of motion. Hands and feet small. Skin soft and surprisingly fair. Muscles hard as bull quartz. With a mask of ignorance he concealed a fine intelligence reserved for intimate friends in moments of repose.

It is regrettable that since Shorty's death, writers who never saw him have given pictures of him which by no stretch of the imagination can be recognized by those who had even a slight acquaintance with him. Authors of books properly examine the material of those who have written other books. In the case of Shorty this was eagerly done—so eagerly in fact, that each portrayal is the original picture altered according to the ability of the one who tailors the tale. All are interesting but few have any relation to truth.

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Shorty Harris was so widely publicized by writers in the early part of the century that when the radio was invented, he was a "natural" for playlets and columnists. It was natural also that the iconoclast appear to set the world right. He employed Shorty to guide him through Death Valley. "I want to write a book," he explained, "and I have only three weeks to gather material."

The trip ended sooner. "What happened?" I asked Shorty when I read the book and was startled to see in it a statement that Shorty became lost; had never found a mine; and never even looked for one.

"Did he say that?" Shorty laughed.

"And more of the same," I said.

"Well, let's let it go for what it's worth.... He bellyached from the minute we set out."

Those who knew Shorty best—Dad Fairbanks, Charles Brown, Bob Montgomery, George Naylor, H. W. Eichbaum, and the old timers on the trails had entirely different impressions. There was, however, around the barrooms of Beatty and other border villages a breed of later comers—"professional" old timers always waiting and often succeeding in exchanging "history" for free drinks. Though they may have never known Shorty in person, they were not lacking in yarns about him and rarely failed to get an audience.

There were also among Shorty's friends a few who had another attitude. "What has he ever done that I haven't?" the answer being that nothing had been written about them.

With variations the original pattern became the pattern for the succeeding writer. In the interest of accuracy it is not amiss to say that Shorty Harris was not buried standing up. The writer saw him buried. It is not true that he ever protested the removal of the road from the site of the place where he wished to be buried, because he never knew that he would be buried there. Nor did he have the remotest idea that a monument would be erected to him, because the idea of the monument was born after his death, as related elsewhere.

He did not leave Harrisburg on July 4, 1905 to get drunk at Ballarat. Instead, he went to Rhyolite to find 115 Wild Bill Corcoran, his grubstaker.

He did enjoy the yarns attributed to him and their publication in important periodicals. But he was also painfully shy and ill at ease away from his home. Even at the annual Death Valley picnics held at Wilmington, near Los Angeles, he could never be persuaded to face the crowds.

One cannot laugh aside the part he played nor the monument that honors one of God's humblest. His strike at Rhyolite brought two railroads across the desert, gave profitable employment to thousands of men, added extra shifts in steel mills and factories making heavy machinery and those of tool makers. The building trades felt it, banks, security exchanges, and scores of other industries over the nation—all because Shorty Harris went up a canyon. And it is not amiss to ask if these historians did their jobs as well.

At my home it was difficult to get Shorty to accept invitations to dinners to which he was often invited by service clubs, but in the Ballarat cabin he was as sure of himself as the MacGregor with a foot upon his native heath and an eye on Ben Lomond.

His passion for prospecting was fanatical. I asked him once if he would choose prospecting as a career if he had his life to live over.

"I wouldn't change places with the President of the United States. My only regret is that I didn't start sooner. When I go out, every time my foot touches the ground, I think 'before the sun goes down I'll be worth \$10,000,000.'"

"But you don't get it," I reminded him.

He stared at me with a sort of "you're-too-dumb" look. "Who in the hell wants \$10,000,000? It's the game, man—the game."

Nor is the picture of his profligacy altogether true. Despite Shorty's disregard for money he had a canniness that made him cache something against the rainy day. At Lone Pine Charlie Brown was packing Shorty's suit case before taking him to a doctor. "Shorty, what's this lump in the lining of your vest?"

"Oh, there was a hole in it. Poor job of mending I guess," Shorty answered guilelessly.

"I'll see," Charlie said and ripping a few stitches removed \$600 in currency.

Shorty's last years furnish a story of a man too tough to die. He had had three major operations, when in 1933 I received the following telegram: "Wall fell on me. Hurry. Bring doctor. Shorty Harris." It had been sent by Fred Gray from Trona, 27 miles from Ballarat, nearest telegraph station.

My wife and I hurried through rain, snow, sleet; over washed out desert and mountain roads. Outside the cabin in the dusk, shivering in a cold wind, we found two or three of Shorty's friends and Charles and Mrs. 116 Brown, who had also made a mad dash of 150 miles over roads—some of which hadn't been traveled in 30 years.

Puttering around his cabin, Shorty had jerked at a wire anchored in the walls and brought tons of adobe down upon himself. He was literally dug out, his ribs crushed, face black with abrasions. With rapidly developing pneumonia he had lain for 60 hours without medical attention and with nothing to relieve pain. We learned later from Dr. Walter Johnson, who had preceded us, that if a hospital had been within a block it would have been fatal to move him. All agreed that Death sat on Shorty's bedside.

"A cat has only nine lives," Fred Gray said gravely, and outside in the gathering gloom we planned his funeral. Because of the isolation of Ballarat and lack of communication we arranged that when the end came, Fred Gray would notify Brown and bring the body down into Death Valley for burial. There we would meet the hearse.

Because bodies decompose quickly in that climate, time was important. While we planned these details, my wife, who had been at Shorty's bedside, joined us. "Shorty's not going to die," she said. "He's planning that trip up Signal Mountain you and he have been talking about."

I tiptoed into the room. He was staring at the ceiling, seeing faraway canyons; the yellow fleck in a broken rock. Suddenly he spoke: "I'm losing a thousand dollars a day lying here. Why, that ledge—"

A week after returning to our home we received another telegram from Trona asking that we come for him. He had insisted upon being laid in the bed of a pickup truck and taken across the Slate Range to Trona, where we met him.

At our home he lay on his back for weeks, fed with a spoon. Always talking of putting another town on the map. Always losing a million dollars a day. He was miraculously but slowly recovering when an Associated Press dispatch bearing a Lone Pine date made front page headlines with an announcement of his death.

Though the report was quickly corrected, his presence at our house brought reporters, photographers, old friends, and the merely curious. At the time the Pacific Coast Borax Company's N.B.C. program was featuring stories based on his experiences over a nation-wide hook-up. Among the callers also were moguls of mining and tycoons of industry who had stopped at the Ballarat cabin to fall under the spell of his ever ready yarns.

Among these guests, one stands out.

It was a hot summer day when I saw on the lawn what appeared to be a big bear, because the squat, bulky figure was enclosed in fur. Answering the door bell I looked into twinkling eyes and an ingratiating smile. 117  
"They told me in Ballarat that Shorty Harris was here." I invited him in.

"I'll just shed this coat," he said, stripping off the bearskin garment. "... sorta heavy for a man going on 80." He laid it aside. "It's double lined. Fur inside and out. You see, I sleep in it. Crossed three mountain ranges in that coat before I got here. May as well take this other one off too." He removed another heavy overcoat, revealing a cord around his waist. "Keep this one tied close. Less bulky...."

Under a shorter coat was a heavy woolen shirt and his overalls concealed two pairs of pants. He went on: "I was with Shorty at Leadville. My name's Pete Harmon. We ought to be rich—both of us. Why, I sold a hole for \$2500 in 1878. Thought I was smart. They've got over \$100,000,000 outa that hole. I was at Bridgeport when I heard Shorty was sick, so I says, 'I'll just step down to Ballarat and see him.' (The 'step' was 298 miles.) When I got there Bob Warnack tells me he's in Los Angeles. When I get there they tell me he's with you. So I just stepped out here."

He had "stepped" 481 miles to see his friend.

I ushered him in and left them alone. After an hour I noticed Pete outside, smoking. I went out and urged him to return and smoke inside, but he refused. "It's not manners," he insisted.

Later I happened to look out the window and saw him empty the contents of a small canvas sack into his hand. There were a few dimes and nickels and two bills. He unfolded the currency. One was a twenty. The other, a one. He put the coins in the sack and came inside. A few moments later, from an adjacent room I heard his soft, lowered voice: "Shorty, I'm eatin' reg'lar now and got a little besides. I reckon you're kinda shy. You take this."

"No—no, Pete. I'm getting along fine...."

I fancy there was a scurry among the angels to make that credit for Pete Harmon.

Late in the afternoon Pete donned his coats. "I'd better be going. I've got a lotta things on hand. A claim in the Argus. When the money comes in, well—I always said I was going to build a scenic railroad right on the crest of Panamint Range. Best view of Death Valley. It'll pay. How far is it to San Diego?"

"A hundred and forty miles...."

"Well, since I'm this far along I'll just step down and see my old partner. Take care of Shorty...." And down the road he went.

With humility I watched his passage, hoping that the good God would go with him and somehow I felt that of all those with fame and wealth or of high degree who had gone from that house, none had left so much in my heart as Pete. 118

During this period of convalescence Shorty was often guest in homes of luxury and when at last I took him to Ballarat I was curious to see what his reaction would be to the squalor of the crumbling cabin.

When we stepped from the car, he noticed Camel, the blind burro drowsing in the shade of a roofless dobe. "Old fellow," he said, "it's dam' good to see *you* again...." I unloaded the car, brought water from the well and sat down to rest. Shorty sat in a rickety rocker braced with baling wire. I regarded with amusement the old underwear which he'd stuffed into broken panes; the bare splintered floor; the cracked iron stove that served both for cooking and heating. The wood box beside it. The tin wash pan on a bench at the door.

Then I noticed Shorty was also appraising the things about—the hole in the roof; the box nailed to the wall that served as a cupboard. A half-burned candle by his sagging bed. For a long time he glanced affectionately from one familiar object to another and finally spoke: "Will, haven't I got a dam' fine home?"

For ages poets have sung, orators have lauded, but so far as I'm concerned, Shorty said it better.

The last orders from the surgeon had been, "Complete rest for three months."

In the late afternoon we moved our chairs outside. The sun still shone in the canyons and after he had seen that all his peaks were in place, he turned to me: "I'm losing \$5,000,000 a day sitting here. Soon as you're rested, we'll start. You'll be in shape by day after tomorrow, won't you?"

I restrained a gasp as he pointed to the side of a gorge 8000 feet up on Signal Mountain. "No trip at all...."

No argument could convince him that the trip was foolhardy and on the third day we started through Hall's Canyon opposite the Indian Ranch. The ascent from the canyon is so steep that in many places we had to crawl on hands and knees. The three and a half miles were made in seven hours, but on the return the inevitable happened. Shorty, exhausted, staggered from the trail and collapsed. When he rose, he wobbled, but managed to reach a bush and rolled under it. I ran to his side. It seemed the end. "You go ahead," he said weakly. "I'm through."

I had given him all my water and exacting a promise that he would remain under the bush, I started for help at the Indian Ranch, to bring him out.

Coming up, I had paid no attention to the trail and was uncertain of my way—which was further confused by criss-crossed trails of wild burros and mountain sheep. Coming to a canyon that forked, I was not sure which to take and panicked with fear took a sudden uncalculated choice and started up a trail. The desert gods must have guided my feet, for it proved to be the right one and an hour later I came upon the green seepage of water. 119

I dug a hole; let the scum run off then drank slowly and lay down to rest. In my last conscious moment a huge rattler passed within a few inches of my face. But rattlers were unimportant then and I went to sleep.

The swish of brush awoke me and I saw Shorty staggering down the trail. He fell beside the water and was instantly asleep. Time I knew, was the measure of life and I allowed him twenty minutes to rest, then awoke him and made him go in front. On a ledge, he slumped again, his body hanging over the cliff with a 1000 foot fall to rocks below.

I managed to catch him by the seat of his trousers as he began to slip, and dragged him back on the trail. Somehow I got him to the bottom. There the canyon widens upon a level area covered with dense growth. Walking ahead I suddenly missed him. He had crawled from the trail and it required an hour to find him and this I did by the noise of his rattly breathing.

I half carried, half dragged him to the car and lifted him in. He was asleep before I could close the door and remained unconscious for the entire 11 miles of corduroy road to Ballarat. There Fred Gray and Bob Warnack lifted him from the car and laid him on his bed. None of us believed that Shorty Harris would ever leave that bed alive.

The next morning I tiptoed softly out of the room, went over to the old saloon and had breakfast with Tom, the caretaker. Afterward we sat outside smoking and talking of Hungry Hattie's feuding and her sister's mining deals, when we heard steady thumping sounds coming from Shorty's place. We looked. Bareheaded, Shorty Harris was chopping wood.

Shorty was born near Providence, Rhode Island, July 2, 1856. He had only a hazy memory of his parents. His father, a shoemaker, died impoverished when Shorty was six years old. "... I went to live with my aunt. If she couldn't catch me doing something, she figured I'd outsmarted her and beat me up on general principles."

At nine he ran away and obtained work in the textile mills of Governor William Sprague, dipping calico. The village priest taught him to read and write and apart from this, his only school was the alley. The curriculum of the alley is hunger, tears, and pain but somehow in that alley he found time to play and learned that with play came laughter. Thenceforth life to Shorty Harris was just one long playday. 120

In 1876 he started West and crawled out of a boxcar in Dodge City, Kansas. About were stacks of buffalo hides, bellowing cattle, "chippies," gamblers, cow hands, and a chance for youngsters who had come out of alleys.

"... Among those I remember at Dodge City were my friends Wyatt Earp and a thin fellow with a cough. If he liked you he'd go to hell for you. He was Doc Holliday—the coldest killer in the West. I had a job in a livery stable. Job was all right, but too much gunplay. Cowboys shooting up the town. Gamblers shooting cowboys."

Flushed with his pay check, Shorty wandered into a saloon and met one of the percentage girls—a lovely creature, not altogether bad. They danced and Shorty suggested a stroll in the moonlight. And soon Shorty was in love.

"Shorty," she asked, "why be a sucker? Why don't you go to Leadville? You might find a good claim."

"I'm broke," he told her.

"I've got some money," she said, and reached into her purse.

"I'm no mac," he snapped.

Finally she thrust the bills into his pocket.

At Leadville he went up a gulch. Luck was kind. He found a good claim and going into Leadville sold it for

\$15,000. Later it produced millions. Within a week he was penniless. "Why, all I've got to do is to go up another gulch," he told sympathetic friends.

On this trip his feet were frozen and he was carried out on the back of his partner. Taken to the hospital, the surgeon told him that only the amputation of both feet could save his life.

Telling a group of friends about it in the Ballarat cabin later, Shorty of course had to add a few details of his own: "Dan Driscoll came to see me and I told him what the sawbones said. 'Why hell,' Dan says. 'Won't be nothing left of you. You've got to get outa here. When that nurse goes, I'll take you to a doc who'll save them feet.' And the first thing I knew I was in the other hospital.

"The doc whetted his meat cleaver, picked up a saw and was about to go to work, when he found there was nothing to dope me with. 'I'll fix it,' Doc says, and wham—he slapped me stiff. I don't know what he did, but when I came to I was good as new."

After selling a second claim to Haw Tabor, Shorty was again in the money and remembered the girl in Dodge City. Returning, he looked her up, took her to dinner. They danced and dined and Shorty toasted her in "bubble water." "I reckon everybody in Dodge City thought a caliph had come to town. No little girl suffered for new 121 toggery. No bum lacked a tip. In a week I was broke again.

"Going down to the freight yard to steal a ride on the rods I met the girl and the next I knew, I was begging her to marry me. 'Shorty, you don't know anything about my past, and still you want to marry me?'

"'You don't know anything about my past either,' I said. But it was no go."

Years afterward when Shorty and I were camped in Hall Canyon, I asked him if he would actually have married a girl like her.

"Who am I to count slips?" he bristled. "I did ask her," and he swabbed a tear that had dried fifty years ago.

In 1898, after working for a grubstake he started on the trip that led at last to Death Valley, by way of the San Juan country—one of the world's roughest regions. "I walked through Arizona, to Northern Mexico—every mile of it desert. A labor strike in Colonel Green's mines threw me out of a job and I started back. Ran out of water and lived five days on the juice of a bulbous plant—la Flora Morada. Each bulb has a few drops.

"On the Mojave I ran out of water again. Finally saw a mangy old camel drinking at a pool. I had enough sense left to know there were no camels around and went on till I flopped. A fellow picked me up. I told him I'd been so goofy I'd seen a camel and water, but I knew it was just a mirage. 'You damned fool,' he said. 'It was a camel and you saw water. Hi Jolly turned that camel loose.'"

Shorty reached Tintic, Utah, and from there walked over a waterless desert to the Johnnie mine, where he was given shelter, food, and clothing.

Bishop Cannon of the Mormon Church sent him into the Panamint to monument a gold claim. "I was the only fool they could find to cross Death Valley in mid summer. I found the claim but it proved to be patented land."

Shorty was recuperating from his last operation at my home when he came into the house one morning with fire in his eyes and a paper in his hand. "Read that and let's get going." (It has been erroneously stated that Shorty couldn't read. Though he had little schooling and a cataract impaired his sight, he could read to the end.)

The paper announced a strike in Tuba Canyon near Ballarat. "Why, I know a place nobody ever saw but me and a few eagles...." His losses increased from a thousand to a million dollars a day because he wasn't on the job, and in May we started for Ballarat by the longer route through Death Valley.

When we reached Jim Dayton's grave, he asked me to stop and getting out of the car, he walked into the brush, returning with a few yellow and blue wild flowers, laid them on Dayton's grave. "God bless you, old fellow. You'll have to move over soon and make room for me." 122

Then turning to me, he said: "When I die bury me beside old Jim." Raising his hand and moving his finger as if he were writing the words, he added: "Above me write, 'Here lies Shorty Harris, a single blanket jackass prospector.'"

It was his way of saying he had played his game—not by riding over the desert with a deluxe camping outfit, but the hard way—with beans and a single blanket. He was also saying, I think, goodbye to the Death Valley that he loved; its golden dunes, its creeping canyons and pots of gold.

About one o'clock in the morning, Sunday, November 11, 1934, the phone awakened me. At the other end of the line was Charles Brown. Shorty Harris lay dead at Big Pine. "He just went to sleep and didn't wake up," Charlie said.

Shorty had died Saturday morning, November 10, and Charlie had arranged for the remains to be brought down into Death Valley and buried beside James Dayton Sunday afternoon.

Out of Los Angeles, out of towns and settlements, canyons, and hills came the largest crowd that had ever assembled in Death Valley, to wait at Furnace Creek Ranch for the hearse that would come nearly 200 miles over the mountains from Big Pine. It was delayed at every village and by burro-men along the road, who wanted a last look upon the face of Shorty.

At one o'clock the caravan arrived and then began the procession down the valley. The sun was setting and the shadows of the Panamint lay halfway across the valley when the grave was reached. Brown had sent Ernest Huhn from Shoshone the night previous, a distance of about 60 miles, to dig the grave.

On the desert a man dies and gets his measure of earth—often with not so much as a tarpaulin. With this in mind Ernie had made the hole to fit the man, but with the coffin it was a foot too short. While waiting for the grave to be lengthened, the casket was opened and in the fading twilight Shorty's friends passed in file about the casket, while the Indians, silhouetted against the brush paid silent tribute to him whom their fathers and now their children knew as "Short Man."

So began the first funeral ever held in the bottom of Death Valley. Drama, packed into a few moments of a dying day. No discordant ballyhoo. No persiflage.... "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want...." A bugler stepped beside the grave and silvered notes of taps went over the valley. The casket was lowered into the grave as the stars came out, and he was covered with the earth he loved. Thoughtful women placed wreaths of athol and desert holly and, with his face toward his desert stars, Shorty Harris holed-in forever.

123

Going back to Shoshone with the Browns, I told Charlie of the time I had stopped at Jim Dayton's grave with Shorty. "I made up my mind then that I would do something about his last wish. There's no liar like a tombstone, but Shorty deserves a marker."

"I'll join you," Charlie said.

Charlie consulted Park officials and they approved. Chosen to write the epitaph, I knew from the moment the task was assigned to me what it would be. In order to get the reaction of others to the use of the word "jackass" on the monument, I decided to try it out on the Browns. "This epitaph," I said, "may be unconventional, but unless I am mistaken it will be quoted around the world."

I read it. "It's all right," Mrs. Brown laughed. Charlie approved. The epitaph, as predicted has been quoted and pictures of the plaque published around the world.

It has been stated that the Pacific Coast Borax Company paid for the monument. Actually it was provided by the Park Service. I had the bronze tablet made in Pomona, California, and Charlie Brown insisted that he pay for it. "Shorty left a little money," he said. "Whatever is lacking, I will pay myself."

On March 14, 1936, the monument was dedicated. Streamers of dust rolled along every road that led into the Big Sink trailing cars that were bringing friends from all walks of life to pay tribute to Shorty. At the grave the rich and the famous stood beside the tottering prospector, the husky miner, the silent, stoic Indian. Brown was master of ceremonies. Telegrams were read from John Hays Hammond and other distinguished friends. Old timers, whose memories spanned 30 years, one after another wedged through the crowd to tell a funny story that Shorty had told or some homely incident of his career.

One was revealing: "We had the no-countest, low-downest hooch drinking loafer on the desert at Ballarat. We called him Tarfinger. He came over to Shorty's cabin one day and said he was hungry. Shorty loaned him \$5.00. When I heard about it I went over. I said, 'You know he's a no-good loafing thief.' I figured I was doing Shorty a favor. Instead, he blew up. 'Well, he can get as hungry as an honest man, can't he?'"

They understood what O. Henry meant when he sang:

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*"Test the man if his heart be  
In accord with the ultimate plan,  
That he be not to his marring,  
Always and utterly man."*

The epitaph Shorty Harris wanted seemed fitting: "*Above me write, 'Here lies Shorty Harris, a single blanket jackass prospector.'*"

As I turned away I thought of the monuments erected to dead Caesars who had left trails of blood and ruin. Shorty Harris simply followed a jackass into far horizons, and by leaving a smile at every water hole, a pleasant memory on every trail, attained a fame which will last as long as the annals of Death Valley.

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## Chapter XVIII

### A Million Dollar Poker Game

Herman Jones, young Texan with keen blue eyes and a guileless grin, dropped off the train at Johnnie, a railroad siding, named for the nearby Johnnie mine. At the ripe age of 21 he had been through a shooting war between New Mexico cattle men, and needing money to marry the prettiest girl in the territory, he had come for gold.

Finding it lonesome on his first night he sought the diversion of a poker game in a saloon and gambling house. He bought a stack of chips, sat down facing the bar and a moment later another stranger entered, inquired if he could join the game.

Told that \$20 would get a seat, the stranger standing with his back to the bar was reaching for his purse when Herman saw the bartender pick up a six-gun. With his elbows on the bar and his pistol in two hands, he aimed the gun at the back of the stranger's head and pulled the trigger.



The victim dropped instantly to the floor, his brains scattered on the players. The poker session adjourned and Jones was standing outside a few moments later when he was tapped on the shoulder. "Come on," he was told. "We're giving that fellow a floater." Herman didn't know what a floater was, but decided it was best to obey orders and followed the leader into the saloon.

Approaching the bartender, the spokesman pulled out his watch. "Bob," he said quietly. "It's six o'clock. It won't be healthy around here after 6:30." He set a canteen on the bar and walked out.

Without a word, the bartender pulled off his coat, gathered up the cash, called the painted lady attached to his fortune and said, "Sell out for what you can get. I'll let you know where I am." Picking up his hat he left. No one ever learned the cause of the murder or the identity of the dead.

With no luck in the Johnnie district or at Greenwater, Herman left the latter place on a prospecting trip in partnership with another luckless youngster previously mentioned—Harry Oakes. 126

On a hill overlooking the dry bed of the Amargosa River about four miles north of Shoshone, he saw a red outcropping on a hill so steep he decided nothing that walked had ever reached the summit, and for that reason he might find treasure overlooked.

Herman, being lean and agile, climbed up to investigate. Oakes remained under a bush below. Jones returned with a piece of ore showing color. A popular song of the period was called "Red Wing" and because he liked sentimental ballads, Herman named it for the song. Camp was made at the bottom of the hill. Oakes assumed the dish washing job to offset an extra hour which Herman agreed to give to work on the trail. Somebody told Oakes how to bake bread and while Herman was wheeling muck to the dump, Harry experimented with his cookery. The bread turned out to be excellent and Oakes took the day off to show it to friends.

"That's the sort of fellow Harry was," Herman says. "You just couldn't take him seriously."

The Red Wing didn't pay and when abandoned, all they had to show for their labor was a stack of bills. On borrowed money, Oakes left the country. Herman remained to pay the bills.

A few miles east of Shoshone is Chicago Valley, which began in a startling swindle, and ended in fame and fortune for one defrauded victim.

A convincing crook from the Windy City found government land open to entry and called it Chicago Valley. It was a desolate area and the only living thing to be seen was an occasional coyote skulking across or a vulture flying over. The promoter needed no capital other than a good front, glib tongue, and the ability to lie without the flicker of a lash.

A few weeks later Chicago widows with meager endowments, scrub women with savings, and some who coughed too much from long hours in sweat shops began to receive beautifully illustrated pamphlets that described a tropical Eden with lush fields, cooling lakes, and more to the point, riches almost overnight. For \$100 anyone concerned would be located.

Soon people began to swing off The Goose, as the dinky train serving Shoshone was called, and head for Chicago Valley. Among the victims was a widow named Holmes with a family of attractive, intelligent children. One of these was a vivacious, beautiful teen-ager named Helen.

The Holmes were handicapped because of tuberculosis in the family. This in fact had induced the widow to invest her savings. 127

Herman Jones used to ride by the Holmes' place en route to the Pahrump Ranch on hunting trips and owning several burros, he thought the Holmes' children would like to have one. Taking the donkey over, he told Helen, "You can use him to work the ranch too. Better and faster than a hoe...." He brought a harness and a cultivator, showed her how to use the implement.

It was inevitable that investors in Chicago Valley would lose their time, labor, and money.

Thus when Helen Holmes returned the burro to Herman one day, Herman was not surprised when she told him she was on her way to Los Angeles to look for a job.

"But what can you do?"

"I wish I knew. I can get a job washing dishes or waiting on table."

Shortly afterward he heard from her—just a little note saying she was a hello girl on a switchboard. "Knew she'd land on her feet," Herman grinned, and having a bottle handy he gurgled a toast to Helen. He had to tell the news of course and with each telling he produced the bottle.

So he was in a pleasant mood when somebody suggested a spot of poker. To mention poker in Shoshone is to have a game and in a little while Dad Fairbanks, Dan Modine, deputy sheriff, Herman, and two or three others were shuffling chips over in the Mesquite Club.

Herman had the luck and quit with \$700. "Fellows," he said as he folded his money, "take a last look at this roll. You won't see it again."

"Oh, you'll be back," Fairbanks said.

But Herman didn't come back. Instead he went to Los Angeles, found Helen at the switchboard. She confided excitedly that she had a chance to get into the movies as soon as she could get some nice clothes.

"Fine," Herman said. "When can I see you?" He made a date for dinner, had a few more drinks and when he met her he had a comfortable binge and a grand idea. "... Listen Helen. You wouldn't get mad at a fool like me if I meant well, would you?"

"Why Herman—you know I wouldn't," she laughed.

"I'm a little likkered and it's kinda personal...."

"But you're a gentleman, Herman—drunk or sober...."

"I've been thinking of this picture business. I nicked Dad Fairbanks in a poker game. You know how I am. Lose it all one way or another. You take it and buy what you need and it'll do us both some good."

The refusal was quick. "It's sweet of you Herman, but not that. I just couldn't."

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"You can borrow it, can't you ... so I won't drink it up?"

The argument won and soon theater goers all over the world were clutching their palms as they watched the hair-raising escapes from death that pictured "The Perils of Pauline"—the serial that made Helen Holmes one of the immortals of the silent films. She died at 58, on July 8, 1950.

When Charlie Brown became Supervisor in charge of Death Valley roads, he wanted a foreman who knew the country. Herman Jones had hunted game, treasure, fossils, artifacts of ancient Indians all over Death Valley and knew the water courses, the location of subterranean ooze, the dry washes which when filled by cloudbursts were a menace. Brown made him foreman of the road crew.

At Shoshone, Herman Jones, grey now, was tinkering with a battered Ford when a big Rolls-Royce stopped. He looked around at the slam of the door, stared a moment at the man approaching, dropped his tools, wiped his hands on a greasy rag. "Well, I'll be—" he laughed. "Harry Oakes—where've you been all these years?"

"Oh, knocking around," grinned Oakes. "Wanted to see this country again."

They sat in the shade of a mesquite, talked over Greenwater days and the homely memories that leap out of nowhere at such a time.

Oakes noticed Herman's Ford. Then he pointed to the \$20,000 worth of long, sleek Rolls-Royce. "Herman, I'm going back to New York in a plane. I want to make you a present of that car."

Herman Jones, dumbfounded for a moment, looked at his Ford, smiled, and shook his head. "Thanks just the same, Harry. That old jalopy's plenty good for me." No amount of persuasion could make him accept it.

Knowing that Herman Jones could use any part of \$20,000, I marvelled that he didn't accept the proffered gift. Then I remembered that the Redwing had produced only sweat and debts and Jones had paid the debts through the bitter years.

In the little town of Swastika in the province of Ontario, Canada, you will be told that Oakes was booted off the train there because he was dead-beating his way. The country had been prospected, pronounced worthless and nobody believed there was pay dirt except a Chinaman.

Harry Oakes had an ear for anybody's tale of gold and listened to the Chinaman. He was 38 years old. Lady Luck had always slammed the door in his face but this time, (January, 1912) she flung it open. Eleven years later Oakes was rich.

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He had always talked on a grand scale even when broke at Shoshone. With a taste for luxury he began to gratify it. He bought a palatial home at Niagara Falls and served his guests on gold platters. As his fortune increased he gave largely to charities and welfare projects such as city parks, playgrounds, hospitals. These gifts lead one to believe that the belated payment of \$300 borrowed from Dad Fairbanks was a calculated delay so that Harry Oakes could enjoy the little act he put on at Baker.

During World War I he gave \$500,000 to a London hospital, was knighted by King George V in 1939. He became a friend of the Duke of Windsor and at his Nassau residence was often the host to the Duke and his Duchess, the amazing Wallis Warfield, Baltimore girl who went from a boarding house to wed a British king.

Sir Harry Oakes was murdered in the palatial Nassau home, July 7, 1943, allegedly by a titled son-in-law who was later acquitted—a verdict denounced by many.

*In connection with the story of Helen Holmes told above, it should be explained that the original title was "Hazards of Helen" and following an old Hollywood custom, Pathe produced a new version called "Perils of Pauline." In this the heroine's part was taken by Pearl White.*

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## Chapter XIX

### Death Valley Scotty

A strictly factual thumbnail sketch of Walter Scott would contain the following incidents:

He ran away from his Kentucky home to join his brother, Warner, as a cow hand on the ranch of John Sparks—afterward governor of Nevada. He worked as a teamster for Borax Smith at Columbus Marsh. He had a similar job at Old Harmony Borax Works.

In the Nineties he went to work with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He married Josephine Millius, a candy clerk on Broadway, New York, and brought her to Nevada.

He became guide, friend, companion, and major domo for Albert Johnson—Chicago millionaire who had come to the desert for his health. He did some prospecting in the early part of the century, but never found a mine of value.

America was mining-mad following the Tonopah and Goldfield strikes and Scotty went East in search of a grubstake. He obtained one from Julian Gerard, Vice President of the Knickerbocker Trust Company and a brother of James W. Gerard who had married the daughter of Marcus Daly, Montana copper king and who was later U.S. Ambassador to Germany.

Scotty staked a claim near Hidden Spring and named it The Knickerbocker. He gave Gerard glowing reports of a mine so rich its location must be kept secret.

Scotty appeared in Los Angeles unheard of, in a ten gallon hat and a flaming necktie and with the natural showman's skill, tossed money around in lavish tips or into the street for urchins to scramble over.

This was the well-staged prelude to the charter of the famed Scotty Special for a record-breaking run from Los Angeles to Chicago. Though Scotty stoutly denies it, he was lifted to fame by a big and talented sorrel-headed sports editor and reporter on the Los Angeles Examiner, named Charles Van Loan, and John J. Byrnes, passenger agent of the Santa Fe railroad. Scotty meant nothing to either of these men, but the publicity Byrnes saw for the Santa Fe did, and the red necktie, the big hat, the scattering of coins, and the secret mine made the sort of story Van Loan liked. 131

Here Scotty's trail is lost in the fantastic stories of writers, press agents, and promoters. Several years afterward when his yarns began to backfire, Scotty swore in a Los Angeles court that E. Burt Gaylord, a New York man, furnished \$10,000 for the Scotty Special's spectacular dash across the continent—the object being to promote the sale of stock in the "secret mine."

More remarkable than any yarn Scotty ever told is the fact that although headlines made Scotty, headlines have failed to kill the Scotty legend.

You may toss our heroes into the ash can, but we dust them off and put them back. Likable, ingratiating, Scotty will brush aside any attack with a funny story and let it go at that.

In a law suit for an accounting against Scotty, Julian Gerard asserted he was to have 22½% of any treasure Scotty found. Judge Ben Harrison decided in Gerard's favor, but the only claim found in Scotty's name was the utterly worthless Knickerbocker and Gerard got nothing. The claim showed little sign of ever having been worked. A few broken rocks. A few holes which could be filled with a shovel within a few moments.

Passing the claim once, I stopped to talk with a native: "This is the scene of the Battle of Wingate Pass," he told me. "In case you never heard of it, it was fought for liberty, Scotty's liberty—that is. Gerard got suspicious about Scotty's mine and decided to send his own engineers out to investigate. He ordered Scotty to meet them at Barstow and show them something or else. It worried Scotty a little, not long. He'd learned about Indian fighting with Buffalo Bill and met the fellows as ordered. When he led them to his wagon waiting behind the depot, the Easterners took a look at the wagon, another look at Scotty and one at each other. The wagon had boiler plate on the sides, rifles stacked army fashion alongside. Outriders with six-guns holstered on their belts and Winchesters cradled in their arms.

"Don't let it worry you,' Scotty said. 'Piutes on the warpath. Old Dripping Knife, their Chief claims my gold belongs to them. Dry-gulched a couple of my best men last week.'

"The Easterners turned white and Scotty gave 'em another jolt. 'Butchered my boys and fed 'em to their pigs. But we are fixed for 'em this trip. They sent word they aim to exterminate us. Maybe try it, but I've got lookouts planted all along. Let's go....' He shunted them aboard, shaking in their knees and headed out of Barstow.

"The party had reached that hill you see when suddenly out of the brush and the gulches and from behind the rocks came a horde of 'redskins,' yelling and shooting. Scotty's men leaped from their saddles and the battle was on. The Easterners jumped out of the wagon and hit the ground running for the nearest dry wash and that was the closest they ever got to Scotty's mine. You've got to hand it to Scotty." 132

The story made front page from coast to coast and it was several days before the hoax was revealed. Unexplained though undenied, was the statement that Albert Johnson was in Scotty's party listed as "Doctor Jones." It is assumed that he had no guilty knowledge of the hoax.

The most astounding achievement of Scotty's career was attained when he interested in an imaginary Death Valley mine, Al Myers, a hard-bitten prospector and mining man who had made the discovery strike at Goldfield; Rol King, of Los Angeles, bon vivant and manager of the popular Hollenbeck Hotel, and Sidney Norman who as mining editor of the Los Angeles Times knew mines and mining men.

These were certainly not the gullible type. But with a yarn of gold, Scotty induced them to hazard a trip into Death Valley in mid-summer when the temperature was 124 degrees.

Scotty may have missed the acquisition of a good mine when he failed to find one lost by Bob Black. While hunting sheep in the Avawatz Range, Bob found some rich float. "Honest," Bob said, "I knocked off the quartz and had pure gold." He tried to locate the ledge but he couldn't match his specimen. Later he returned with Scotty, but a cloudburst had mauled the country. They found the corners of Bob's tepee, but not the ledge. They made several later attempts to find it, but failed.

Bob always declared that some day he would uncover the ledge and might have succeeded if he hadn't met Ash Meadows Jack Longstreet one day when both were full of desert likker. Bob passed the lie. Jack drew first. Taps for Bob.

All kinds of stories have been told to explain Albert Johnson's connection with Scotty. The first and the true one is that Johnson, coming to the desert for his health, hired Scotty as a guide, liked his yarns and his camping craft and kept him around to yank a laugh out of the grim solitude.

But that version didn't appeal to the old burro men. They could believe in the hydrophobic skunks or the Black Bottle kept in the county hospital to get rid of the old and useless, but not in a Santa Claus like Albert Johnson. "It just don't make sense—handing that sort of money to a potbellied loafer like Scotty...."

Albert Johnson was able to afford any expenditure to make his life in a difficult country less lonely. He could have searched the world over and found no better investment for that purpose than Scotty. 133

Genial, resourceful, and never at a loss for a yarn that would fit his audience, Scotty was cast in a perfect role. As a matter of fact, whatever it cost Johnson for Scotty's flings in Hollywood, or alimony for Scotty's wife, it probably came back in the dollar admissions that tourists paid to pass the portals of the Castle for a look at Scotty. Of course they seldom saw Scotty—never in later years. Mrs. Johnson was an intensely religious woman and didn't like liquor and that disqualified Scotty.

"This is Scotty's room," the attendant would say. "And that's his bed."

"Oh, isn't he here?"

"Not today. Scotty's a little under the weather. Went over to his shack so he wouldn't be disturbed...."

Mrs. Johnson was killed in an auto driven by her husband in Towne's Pass when, to avoid going over a precipice, he headed the machine into the wall of a cut.

In 1939 Albert Johnson testified that he first met Scotty in Johnson's Chicago office when a wealthy friend appeared with Scotty, who was looking for a grubstake. Johnson said he gave Scotty "something between \$1000 and \$5000." When the attorney asked him to be more definite, Johnson replied that at the time, his income was between one-half million and two million dollars a year and the exact amount consequently was of no importance then. "Since then," Johnson testified, "I have given him \$117,000 in cash and about the same in grubstakes, mules, food, and equipment."

They went together into the mountains as Johnson explained, "because I was all hepped up with his ... claims." Further explaining his connection with Scotty, he said: "I was crippled in a railroad accident. My back was broken. I was paralyzed from the hips down. Through the years I got to have a great fondness for him."

Albert Johnson, whose fortune came from the National Insurance Company, died in 1948, leaving a will that contained no mention of Scotty.

But one laurel none can deny Walter Scott. He did more to put Death Valley on the must list of the American tourists than all the histories and all the millions spent for books, pamphlets, and radio broadcasts.

The almost incredible case of Jack and Myra Benson proves that P. T. Barnum was not wholly wrong in his dictum regarding the birthrate of suckers.

Newly married in Montana they loaded their car and set out to seek fortune in the West. "We didn't know anything about gold," Jack confided. "If anyone had told us to throw a forked stick up a hillside and dig where it fell, we would have done it." 134

Near Parker, Arizona, they were having supper in camp when another traveler stopped and asked permission to erect his tent nearby. Myra invited him to share their supper and during the meal the stranger told them he was a chemist and that he had prospected over most of the West. He had found a clay that cured meningitis, he said, and this had led to fortune. In one town he had found the entire population, including doctors and nurses down and out. The clay had cured them within a week. Among the cured, was the son of a rich woman who had given him \$5000.

Grateful for the fate that had brought this man into their lives, the Bensons confided that they had hoped to reach the California gold fields, but car trouble had depleted their cash and asked if he knew of any place where they could pan gold.

"Go to Silver Lake, in San Bernardino County, California," he advised them, "and your troubles will be over. On the edges of the lake is a thick mud. Get some tanks and boil it. You'll have a residue of gold."

Jack and Myra set out over the Colorado Desert; then climbed the Providence Mountains to worry through the deep blow sand of the Devil's Playground. After three gruelling weeks they reached the lake. There they boiled the mud. Then an old prospector became curious about their unusual performance. The world slipped out from under the Bensons when he told them they were the victims of a liar.

With \$5.00 they headed for Death Valley; found themselves broke and gasless at Cave Spring. Jack knocked upon the door of a shack he saw there. The woman who opened the door was Jack's former school teacher, Mrs. Ira Sweatman, who was keeping house for her cousin, Adrian Egbert—there for his health.

Those who traveled the Death Valley road by way of Yermo and Cave Spring will remember that every five miles tacked to stake or bush were signs that read: "Water and oil." This was Adrian Egbert's fine and practical way of aiding the fellow in trouble.

Myra and Jack later acquired a claim near Rhodes Spring, a short distance from Salsbury Pass road into Death Valley and moved there to develop it. I had been away from Shoshone with no contacts and returning was surprised to find Myra there. I inquired about Jack.

"Why, haven't you heard?" she asked, and from the expression in her eyes I knew that Jack was dead.

As best I could, I expressed my condolence, knowing how deeply she had loved.

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She said: "He went up to the tunnel to set off three blasts. I heard only two. He was to come after the third blast. I knew something was wrong and went up. Bigod, Mr. Caruthers, Jack's head was blown off to hellangone...."

Myra's language failed to mask the grief her welling eyes disclosed.

Only once in her long, helpful life did Myra ever stoop to deception. The old age pension law was passed and Myra was entitled to and needed its benefits, but Myra wouldn't sign the application. She made one excuse after another, but finally Stella Brown got at the bottom of her refusal. Myra had been married to Jack for 40 years and just didn't want him to find out that she was a year older than he. Mrs. Brown at last persuaded her to put aside her vanity.

"Hell—" Jack grinned when told about it. "I knew her age when I married her."

On cold winter nights Myra could always be found in the Snake House where a chair beside the stove was reserved for her. One night I said jestingly: "You never play poker. What are you doing here?"

She whispered: "Wood's hard to get. I'm saving mine."

Then came one of those mornings when one's soul tingles with the feel of a perfect desert day and Myra was up early. She came to the store.

"What got you up at this hour?" Bernice asked.

"I felt too dam' good to stay indoors...."

There were a few old timers in the store and these surrounded her—because she was the kind who could tell you that it was hotter than hell, in a thrilling way. She bought a few groceries and started back to her cabin. Friendly eyes followed her passage along a path across the playground of the little school. Children sliding down the chute or riding teeter boards, waved affectionately. Myra was seen to falter in her step, then sag to the sand. The children ran to her aid and in a moment Shoshone was gathering about her. Myra Benson was dead.

Sam Flake, nearing 80, on the fringe of the crowd paid his simple tribute in a voice a bit shaky, but in language hard as the rock in the hills: "Dam' her old hide—us boys are going to miss Myra...." He turned aside, his hand pulling at the bandana in his hip pocket and Shoshone understood.

Though she was buried 500 miles away, every man, woman, and child in Shoshone wanted a token of love to attend her and about the grave that received her casket was a wilderness of flowers.

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## Chapter XX

### Odd But Interesting Characters

In these pages the reader has seen familiar names—the favored of Lady Luck—but what of those who failed—the patient, plodding kind of whom you hear only on the scene? They too followed jackasses into hidden hills; made trails that led others to fortunes which built cities, industries, railroad; endowed colleges and made science function for a better world. To these humbler actors we owe more than we can repay.

For nearly half a century John (Cranky) Casey roamed the deserts of California and Nevada looking for gold. His luck was consistently bad. Grim, tall, erect, with a deep slow voice, he was noted for picturesque speech which gained emphasis from an utterly humorless face. Congenitally he was an autocrat—his speech biting.

A prospector whom Casey didn't like died and friends were discussing the disposition of the remains. "Chop his feet off," suggested Casey, "and drive him into the ground with a doublejack...."

From others one could always hear tales of fortunes made or missed; of veins of gold wide as a barn door. But no

trick of memory ever turned Casey's bull quartz into picture rock. "Never found enough gold to fill a tooth," he would say.

Casey's leisure hours were spent over books and magazines, chiefly highbrow—particularly books and journals of science.

A tenderfoot was brought in unconscious from Pahrump Valley. A city doctor happened to be passing through and after an examination of the victim, turned to the men in overalls and hobnail shoes, who'd brought him in: "He's suffering from a derangement of the hypothalamus."

"Why in the hell don't you say he had a heat stroke?" Casey barked.

A notorious promoter had a city victim ready for the dotted line. "Double your money in no time.... Samples show \$200 to the ton...." Assuming all prospectors were crooked he called to Casey sitting nearby: "Casey, you know the Indian Tom claim?" "Yes, I know it," Casey thundered. "Not a fleck of gold in the whole dam' hill." 137

In the thick silence that followed, the beaten rascal flushed, looked belligerently at Casey but Casey's big, hard fists he knew, could almost dent boiler plate and the long arms wrapped about a barrel, could crush it flat.

In time Casey acquired an ancient flivver. Only his genius as a mechanic kept it going. There were lean years when it bore no license and he kept to little-traveled roads. The car, like Casey, was cranky and phlegmatic. One day as he was coming into Shoshone it balked in the middle of the road, coughed, shivered, and died. Inside the store it was 120 degrees. Out on the road where Casey stopped it was probably 130. For two hours he patiently but vainly tried to coax it back to life. Finally he stood aside, wiped the grease from his gnarled hands, calmly stoked his pipe and shoved the car from the road. Then he gathered an armful of boulders and with a blasting of cussing that shook Shoshone he let go with a cannonade of stones that completed its ruin.

At the age of ten Casey had been taken from the drift of a city's backwash and put in an orphanage. Nothing was known of his parentage or of relatives. He came to the desert after a colorful career as a conductor on the Santa Fe. The late E. W. Harriman, having gained control of the Southern Pacific system had his private car attached to a Santa Fe train for an inspection tour. At a siding on the Mojave Desert, Harriman wanted the train held a few moments. His messenger went to Casey, explaining that Harriman was the new boss of the Southern Pacific.

"This is the Santa Fe," Casey bristled, looking at his watch. "I'm due in Barstow at 11:05 and bigod I'll be there."

Aboard his train he was a despot and a stickler for the rules, demanding that even his superiors obey them. This finally was his downfall and he came to the desert.

Elinor Glyn, who made the best seller list with "Three Weeks" in the early part of the century, came to Rawhide and Tex Rickard, spectacular gambler undertook to show her a bit of life a la Rawhide. He took her to the Stingaree district and later to a reception in his own place. The state's notables were presented to the lady along with Nat Goodwin, Julian Hawthorne, and others internationally known.

Tex saw Casey standing alone at the end of the bar and knowing he was a voracious reader he went to Casey: "Come on and meet the author of Three Weeks...."

"I've read it," Casey said. "They've hung folks for less."

Casey's method of getting a job when his grub ran out was unique and unfailing. He would storm into the store and turn loose on Charlie, in charge of the roads and long his friend. "Who's keeping up these roads? Chuck holes in 'em big as the Grand Canyon ... disgrace—" 138

"Been waiting for you to come in," Charlie would say with a sober face. "Get a shovel and fix 'em."

A good conscientious worker, Casey would put the road in shape, pay his debts and again head into the horizon.

You who spin through Death Valley or along its approaches owe much to Casey, who made many of the original road beds the hard way—with pick and shovel.

At last Casey got the old age pension and his latter years were the best. His home, a dugout in the bank of a wash near Tecopa. With no rent, with books and magazines and the solitude he loved, he lived happily. "When I croak," he often said, "just put me in my dugout. Toss a stick of dynamite in after me. Shut the door and cave in the goddam' hill."

One night he went to Tecopa. Friends were doing a spot of drinking and far behind in his score with the years, Casey joined them. There was nothing out of line. Just yarns and memories and Casey had a lot of these. Tonopah. Goldfield. Rawhide. Ely. Foundling days.

"... They put me in a religious school. Had no relatives. In those days they whaled hell outa you just to see you squirm. 'Casey,' the teacher would ask, 'who swallowed the whale?' How did I know? Then he'd drag me off by the ear and blister my bottom. I shoved off one night. Been on the loose ever since."

As he drank from his bottle of beer he suddenly slumped—and died instantly. Because of the intense heat, Maury Sorrells, now Supervisor but then Coroner, ordered immediate burial.

Someone recalled Casey's wish to be put in the dugout and the hill blown up and started for the dynamite. But Whitey Bill McGarn warned that it would violate the law. One-eyed Casey—no relation, but long a friend, suggested a wake until the grave was dug. "It will be daylight then and we'll plant him in the wash right in front

of his dugout.”

This was done as the sun came over the hills and I like to think that somewhere in the after life, all is well with Casey.

Ben Brandt, previously mentioned, was a big blond man with child-like blue eyes, huge gnarled hands and the strength of an ox. He wore enormous boots, but when he bought new ones he always complained that they lacked traction and would go immediately to the dump, salvage an old tire casing and add two inches of reinforcement to the soles, with half a pound of hobnails. Ben then was ready for travel—provided he could find his burros. 139

Near remote Quail Springs Ben dug a 4×4 mine shaft 75 feet deep, without aid. Descending by ladder he would fill a 10 gallon bucket with dirt, climb out and bring it to the surface. Day after day, month after month Ben applied the power of two strong arms and two strong legs. “With an engine you could do it in half the time,” Ben was told. “I’ve got plenty of time,” Ben drawled.

Ben disdained gold in quartz formation. “I like placer. It’s a poor man’s game. If you find gold you put it in your poke and you’ve got spending money.”

Ben kept five burros and being industrious, never lacked a grubstake. He avoided argument except upon one subject, and that was burros versus Fords in prospecting. “I can get anywhere with my burros. I find stalled flivvers all over the desert and my burros drag ‘em in.”

Ben believed that a burro had at least some of the intellectual powers of man. “Read a clock good as you,” he said. “I worked my burro, Solomon, on a hoist. He didn’t like it. I got up every morning at daylight, by an alarm clock. Slept out and kept the clock on a boulder at my head and got up when the alarm went off. One morning I woke up with the sun shining straight down in my eyes. It was noon. That burro had sneaked up and taken that clock down the canyon a mile away. Don’t tell me they can’t think! I sold him. Too smart.”

I asked Ben once what he would do if he suddenly found a million dollar claim. “I would build a monument a thousand feet high on top of Telescope Peak and dedicate it to burros.”

Such a monument would inadequately express the debt today’s world owes that little beast. Here are some of the things that link your life to the burro:

The springs and the mattress in the bed you were born on. The talc that powdered you. The soap that bathed you. The ring you slipped on the finger of the girl you love. The paint on your house. The glass in your windows. The tile in your bathroom. The enamel ware in your kitchen. The prescription your druggist fills. The fillings the dentist puts into your teeth. The coin and the currency you spend. The auto you ride in and finally the casket in which you leave this world.

Wars have been won or lost and the credit of nations stabilized because a burro carried a prospector’s grub into faraway hills.

Ben’s burros strayed and he’d just returned with them after a two days’ hunt. He was sitting on the bench mopping his brow when Louise Grantham, the girl with the mine in the Panamint, came up. She needed pack animals to get the ore down to the road. She’d tried before, to trade her Ford pickup for Ben’s burros, but he’d never shown a flicker of interest. In a voice pitched for Ben’s ears, she said to Ernie Huhn: “If Ben didn’t waste so much time hunting those jacks, he might find a mine.” 140

Ben cocked an ear, but made no comment.

“Now take that Quail Springs hole,” Louise went on. “If he had my pickup he could take off a wheel, put on a belt and haul up the muck in one tenth the time, and instead of hoofing it in the sun he could ride in a cool cab and haul his supplies in.”

There comes a weak moment in everyone’s life and this was Ben’s. He traded the burros for the Ford and one of the best prospectors on the desert was ruined forever.

Ben had a mortal fear of women and nothing could convince him that any unattached woman wasn’t always lying in wait for any loose man.

Ben went into the Johnnie country to prospect and passing through I looked him up. He was living in a tin shack in the canyon leading to the old Johnnie Mine. I asked Ben about his luck.

“Last prospecting I did was right out there.” He pointed to the slope in front of his house. “Good placer ground too.”

“Why did you quit?”

“Woman,” Ben grumbled. “Don’t know yet what come over me, but I took a woman for a partner.” He pointed to a boulder a few hundred yards away. “There’s where I wanted to start digging. It’s rich dirt. She wanted to start up there near her shack.”

“Well, what difference did it make?” I asked.

“I see you don’t know women. I hadn’t been working up there by her house no time before she called me to get her a bucket of water. Bucket was half full. Next day she wanted a board in the kitchen floor nailed down. Didn’t



need any nail. "There's some fresh apple pie on the table," she says. I told her I didn't like pie. I'm crazy about pie but I knew her game. She calculated if I ate with her two—three times I'd be a dead pigeon. So I told her she could have the claim and walked off."

Ben struck a happier note when he informed me that he didn't need to work any more and at last had attained the one ambition of his life. "Come inside and I'll show you." Beaming as only a man can when he sits on top of the world, he approached a table and it flashed over me that I would see a certified check for a fortune.

There was a cloth over the table and he carefully wiped his big hands before touching it. He wet his big, broad thumb and forefinger and gave them an extra wipe on the sides of his shirt, a wide smile on his face and I had a vicarious thrill that a man who could barely read and write had at last achieved that which he most wanted in life. He started to remove the cloth, but paused. "Always said if I ever struck it rich, first money I spent would be for one of these dinkuses." 141

He flipped the cloth aside. I stared incredulous. It was a portable typewriter.

He replaced the cover with the gentle care of a mother putting her baby to bed and I left him, sure that God was in his heaven with an eye on Ben.

Contemporary with Ben was Joe Volmer, who lived in a dugout in Dublin Gulch. I had seen royalty from afar and once I had dined with a sultan on horsemeat and fried bananas, but no king ever attained the majesty of Joe. He was tall, erect, wore a white sailor's hat and carried a cane. His mustache was always waxed to a needle point, after the manner of Kaiser Wilhelm. Though he increased his small pension by selling home brew, he always managed to give the impression that he was descending to your level when he accepted the two bits you left on his table.

He was neat as he was lordly and forever scrubbing his pots and pans. He kept the dugout immaculate and when I first saw him standing on the ledge in front of his door, calmly surveying the valley below, he posed like an Alexander the Great, with the world conquered and trussed at his feet.

I had never seen him until one day a tourist came into the store and asked Charlie for a stop-watch. Charlie told him he didn't carry stop-watches. Shortly after the tourist had gone, Joe came in for a stop-watch. "Don't keep 'em," Charlie said. "Helluva store," Joe barked and strode out.

"A curious coincidence," I said. "Two calls for a stop-watch in the same day away out here."

"It's no coincidence," Charlie said. "Just Joe Volmer. He's in every day asking for something he knows I haven't got."

After Joe left, Jack Crowley came for his mail. Brown was in the cage set apart for the post office. He had just received several sheets of six-cent stamps—twice as many as he needed. "Jack," he said, "when you see Joe tell him I'm out of six-cent stamps." Within an hour Joe shoved a five dollar bill through the window. "Give me five dollars' worth of six-cent stamps," he ordered. Brown picked up the bill, filled the order and never again did Joe ask for merchandise not in stock.

Joe sold a claim and decided he needed a refrigerator to keep the beer cold. So he picked up a Monkey Ward catalogue and ordered a big white enamel number large enough for a hotel. Joe thought a refrigerator was just a refrigerator and he strutted around telling everybody. He had to widen the dugout door and waiting customers were more than eager to help him get the machine in place. He loaded the shelves and told them to come back in a couple of hours and cool their innards. 142

They came with their tongues hanging out. Joe set out the glasses and passed the bottles. Herman Jones picked one up and shook it. The cork hit the ceiling. "Hotter'n hell," Herman said. "What sort of cooler is that?" He went over and looked. "Gas. You dam' fool. Nearest gas is Barstow."

Until Joe's death he used the refrigerator to store pots and pans.

Discovered in his dugout in a serious condition, Joe was rushed to Death Valley Junction 28 miles away, where the Pacific Coast Borax Company maintained a hospital which was in charge of Dr. Shrum, who was rather realistic and somewhat cold blooded.

Just as they had gotten Joe in the doctor's office, another patient was brought in. Dr. Shrum looked at the new comer and then at Joe. "Take Joe out," he ordered. "He's going to die anyway."

Joe was wheeled outside and a moment later was dead.

George Williams, a Spanish American war veteran, retired to Shoshone on a pension of \$50. Since food was cheap, George had more money than he knew what to do with. He kept five burros. He never prospected, but roamed the country and thought nothing of taking a 300 mile trip across the roughest terrain in the region. After spending his summers in the high country, he would return to Shoshone in winter. There he had a five acre ranch fenced in and a neat cabin.

Every day George would come to the store and buy a pound of chocolates. "I've got a sweet tooth," he would explain.

Charlie, sure that no one could eat as much chocolate as George bought, was a bit curious as to what George did

with it and trailed him one day through the mesquite to find George feeding the candy to his burros.

George was not a drinker, but on one occasion he joined a party and went on a bender. He awoke next morning with a horrible hangover and was so humiliated that he left Shoshone and never returned. He went over to Sandy and died in the '30s.

One day George started to tell me a story as we sat on the bench. His burros were grazing in the nearby salt grass. Every time he reached the climax of his yarn, he would jump up to go after a straying burro. When he retrieved that one, another would wander off and George would leave me again.

For one entire summer I listened to the beginning of that yarn and every morning would remind him of it.

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"Where was I?" he'd say. "Oh, yes, I was telling you about the girl climbing out of the fellow's window just before daylight. Well, she went—"

Then George would jump up and start for a burro, and I never learned what happened to the torrid romance after the girl crawled out of her lover's window.

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## Chapter XXI Roads. Cracker Box Signs

Any resemblance that a Death Valley highway bore to a road was a coincidence prior to 1926, and few tourists traveled over them unless two cars were along. "Just follow the wheel tracks and keep your eyes peeled for the cracker box signs along the road," was the usual advice to the novice who didn't know that tracks left by Mormons' wagons nearly a century before may be seen today.

One of these led me to the bank of a mile-wide gash made by cloudbursts. To locate the missing link I climbed the nearest mountain and on a lonely mesa came at last upon a piece of shooK nailed to a stake and stuck into the ground. But it had nothing to do with roads. A crude inscription read:

Montana Jim  
July 1888  
A dam good pal

Reverently I stepped aside. Never again would I see a finer tribute to man. A few rocks bleached white in the sun outlined a sunken grave. Crossed upon it were Jim's pick and shovel. It was not difficult to recreate what had happened there. Jim and his friend looking for gold. Jim's faltering and the sun beating him down. Jim's partner knowing that Jim's moniker would identify him better than a surname to anyone who passed that way interested in Jim. Out in the desert 100 miles from human habitation he couldn't call an undertaker, so he dug a hole, wrapped Jim in his canvas, rolled him in and hoped that God would reach down for Jim.

At that period it was not an uncommon experience for the early tourist to lose his way by doing the natural thing at a crossroads and take the one which showed the sign of most travel. Often he would find later that he had followed a trail to a mine miles away. Often too, it led to disaster.

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The story of roads begins at Shoshone with Brown. In his trips in and around the valley, he erected signs to prevent the traveler from losing his way and his life. "I would like to see Death Valley country," people would say to him, "but everyone tells me to stay out."

Inyo county had little revenue and that was used in the more populous Owens Valley 150 miles west. The east side (the Shoshone area) was totally neglected. Letters and petitions protesting the unfair distribution of county funds were tossed into the waste basket. "Roads in that cauldron? Who would use 'em? Nobody ever goes there but a few old prospectors."

This was true but it was also true that on Owens Valley's west side the lakes and forests of the High Sierras were attracting a paying crop of vacationists and the supervisors knew it would be political suicide to divert this traffic from its towns and resorts. The county-wide opinion as to chance for relief was expressed in the slang of the day by a loafer on the bench at Shoshone: "About as much as a wax mouse would have against an asbestos cat in a race through hell. They have the votes and elect the supervisors."

The east side had never had a member on the board. In the Shoshone precinct were less than 40 voters. In Death Valley a few prospectors who would have battered down the gates of hell if they thought gold lay beyond, poked around in its canyons. A few Indians. A few workmen for the Borax Company. In 1924 Brown put his suitcase in his car, filled the tank and said to those about: "Fellows, I'm running for Supervisor." "You'll be the mouse," quipped a friend.

"I'll let 'em know somebody lives over here anyway...."

Skirting the urban strongholds of the gentlemen in office Brown knocked at every door in the district. He berated none nor claimed he had all the answers to an obviously difficult problem. "... Roads built there will lead here. Everybody will gain...." Then to the next cabin and the next canyon until he'd seen every voter.

Before the opposition knew he had been around, he was back in Shoshone selling bacon and beans.

When the votes were counted the overlords of the west side gasped. "Who the hell's this Brown? Didn't even know he was running...."

Taking office January 1, 1925, he found that the beaten incumbent had spent all the money allocated for road maintenance in his own bailiwick before retiring. Nevertheless, Brown convinced the new board his election proved that the people of the entire county agreed with him that the Death Valley area could no longer be neglected and managed to get a niggardly appropriation which would not have built a mile of decent mountain road, and his district had three challenging mountain ranges to cross. 146

With this appropriation he was expected to care for a mileage four times greater than that of the west side and was thus responsible for not only eastern approaches but maintenance of 150 miles of road from Darwin, all roads in the valley and those which furnished the north and south approaches. He managed to get \$5000 after two years. With this he procured road machinery on a rental basis and succeeded in making a fair desert road. Then he began a one-man crusade to exploit Death Valley as a tourist attraction. "We need only roads a tourist can travel."

He worked just as diligently for all of Inyo's roads. "We have one of the world's best vacation lands," he told the west-siders. "You have an abundance of beautiful lakes and streams in a setting of mountains impressive as any in the world. On our side we offer the appeal of the Panamint, the Funeral Range, and spectacular Death Valley. Tourists will come to both of us if we give them a chance and they will be our best crop."

By 1926 his crusade for roads had spread beyond Inyo county lines. San Bernardino county, through which passes Highway 66, a main transcontinental artery, joins Inyo on the south. Its board of supervisors was in session one day when Brown strode in. Most of them he knew. He wanted their advice, he told them. "Your county and mine need more roads to bring more people. The easiest way into Death Valley is through your county from Baker. The distance from Baker to the Inyo county line is 45 miles. If you will build the road to the Inyo line, I will build it from that point to Furnace Creek, 71 miles. Such a road would open Death Valley to the public and the tourists who will travel will spend enough money in your towns to pay your share of the cost."

San Bernardino supervisors agreed to consider it but were not enthusiastic. One of America's largest counties, San Bernardino had also one of its largest road problems.

Brown kept plugging, arranging meetings, convincing residents that the county's portion of the road would be over flat country and over roads already passable, and its construction inexpensive.

Finally San Bernardino county supervisors agreed and by April, 1929, he had 71 miles of passable road. The result was that Death Valley was no longer remote as the Congo and tourists began to come.

To Shoshone it meant a few more windshields to wipe; a few more cars to crawl under. Another soft answer to frame for the sightseer cursing the desolation. Another shed for the store that started on the kitchen table. 147

In 1932 Brown went before the State Highway Commission and urged that all the roads he had built in Death Valley be taken over by the state. The law was passed.

Death Valley became a National Monument February 11, 1933, by order of President Franklin Roosevelt. At that time America was groping its way through depression, worrying about its dinner and its debts as a result of the stock market crash of 1929.

In the nation's hobo jungles the seasoned "bindle stiff" made room for the newcomer who had always lived on the right side of the tracks. Freight trains carried a new kind of bum when the adolescent female crawled into a car alongside an adolescent male, vainly seeking work anywhere at anything.

To save them and others like them C.C.C. camps were organized and one of these recruited largely from New York City's Bowery, was sent to Death Valley with headquarters at Cow Creek, a few miles north of Furnace Creek Inn.

The new park was under the supervision of Col. John R. White, later superintendent of the entire National Park System and to Ray Goodwin, assistant superintendent was assigned the task of building additional roads and trails to points of interest to connect with the State System which Brown had built.

Then began in earnest the flow of tourist traffic to the "God-forsaken hole" for which Brown had worked for 14 long and difficult years. But he soon found that to the problems of a small desert community he had added those of a whole county. They were the aftermath of what has since been called in a marvelous understatement by Morrow Mayo, historian of Los Angeles, "The Rape of Owens Valley."

In the early part of the century, the city of Los Angeles had secretly acquired nearly all sources of water in Inyo and Mono counties. An amazed world applauded the engineering feat by which water was siphoned over mountain ranges to flow through ditches and tunnels, a distance of 259 miles.

The enterprise was announced by its promoters as the answer to the desperate need for water. It is now known that this need was only a mask to hide a scheme to make Los Angeles pay the cost of bringing water to 108,000 acres of waterless land in San Fernando valley so that the owners could make a profit of a hundred million dollars through its subdivision and sale. This they did.

The shameful story glorifies by comparison the cattle wars of the early West when one side hired its Billy the Kids to kill off the other—the only difference being that in the Owens Valley feud the Billy the Kids were the Big Names of Los Angeles who used unscrupulous politicians and laws cunningly passed instead of six-guns. 148

As a consequence, Los Angeles owns the towns, ranches, and cattle ranges so that merchants, householders, ranchers, and renters have no title except in a relatively few instances, to the land upon which they live or to the house or store they occupy. Los Angeles could sell or lease or refuse to sell or lease land to cattlemen, homes to residents or stores to merchants and sell or refuse to sell water to those who had lived all their lives and would die on the devastated land.

As a result, the relations between the city and the Displaced Persons of the two counties were those of victor and vanquished.

In 1935 the city succeeded in getting an act passed by the legislature which prevented any town from becoming incorporated without the consent of 60 per cent of the property owners. The purpose of the act seemed fair enough when it was announced that it was designed to save the towns from both political demagogues and crackpots running amuck in California and it became a law.

But there was more than the eye could see. Its real object had been to strengthen the strangle hold of the Los Angeles Water and Power board upon Owens Valley. Since it owned the towns it could now prevent their incorporation. There had been some feeling of security under a resolution of the Water and Power Board which had declared that merchants, cattlemen, and residents—all of them lessees, would be given preference in new leases and renewals of old ones.

In 1942 the resolution became a scrap of paper, and ranchers, cattle men and householders were advised that their leases would hereafter be renewed by a method of secret bidding.

Thus the residents of Owens Valley learned that the labor of years had brought no security. As one beaten old timer told me, "We've been kicked around so much I'm used to it. I helped blow those ditches two-three times, to turn that water loose on the desert. I know when I'm licked."

Resentment in Mono county, which provided more of the water taken by Los Angeles than Inyo, was even more aroused and smoldering hatreds were ready again to blow up a ditch. The two counties constitute the 28th Senatorial district.

Brown's success in the Assembly had not gone unnoticed in the neighboring county of Mono. "We need that fellow Brown," a prominent citizen said, and others repeated it.

Again Charlie put his suitcase in his car, filled the tank. "We've never had anybody from this side at Sacramento," he told a friend standing by. "I'm running for the Senate." 149

"Know anybody up there?"

"I'm going and get acquainted," he said and headed across the valley.

Most of Mono county is isolated by the High Sierras. Again the door to door technique. No torches. No brass bands. Just the old eye-to-eye-talk-it-over system. As always he let the voter do the talking and he listened, but when he slid into his car the voter was ready to tell his neighbor: "I like that fellow. Doesn't claim to know it all." He told his banker, his grocer, his butcher, baker, and barber.

Result? I was in the Senate Chamber at Sacramento later, when I heard one of a group of men huddled nearby say, "This is an important bill that concerns everybody on the east side of the Sierras. We'd better see Charlie." I nudged the man reading a document at my side. "Those fellows want to see you, Senator."

He had received the nomination of both the Democratic and Republican parties and had secured the passage of an act which denies a municipality holding more than 50 per cent of the property of another subdivision of the state, proprietary power over the security and stability of such subdivision. Moreover he was on the all-powerful Rules Committee, the Fish and Game, Local Government, Natural Resources, Social Welfare, and Election Committees, friend and frequent adviser of Governor Warren.

Honeymooning Secretary Ickes was combining business with pleasure when he reached California and wanting to see how his Park System was functioning, he took his bride to see Death Valley. Besides, he had some plans affecting the Inyo area.

The fight was having tough sledding in the legislature despite President Roosevelt's approval. Then he talked to people less biased. "You'd better see Charlie...."

"Who the hell's Charlie?" asked Harold.

"Senator from Death Valley...."

With Ray Goodwin, Superintendent of the Death Valley Monument to guide him, he was taken to all the show places. "Now," said Mr. Ickes, "I want to see Brown."

At Shoshone Charlie's toggery is strictly for work which includes tending the gas pump, stove repairing, plumbing, and what-have-you. He was flat on his back under the dripping oil of a balky car when Mr. Goodwin stepped from the limousine.

"Charlie," Mr. Goodwin called, "Mr. Ickes is here to see you." Receiving no answer, he walked over to the car and added that Mr. Ickes was in a hurry. Still, no answer. "It's Secretary Ickes, Department of the Interior. This is important." 150

"So's this," Brown grunted. When he'd finished, he crawled out and wiping the grime from his hands, joined Goodwin at the waiting car. After being introduced to the bride and the self-styled "Old Curmudgeon" the latter explained his plan to add certain lands in Charlie's district, to the Forest Reserve. "... You're opposing me. You're a Democrat, aren't you?"

"I came from Georgia," Charlie drawled.

"You're for Roosevelt, aren't you?"

"Within reason," Charlie answered.

Then Mr. Ickes, with the assurance of the perfectionist began to sell his idea.

"Do you know of any reason why the area designated as Forest Reserve should not be protected as any other of our natural resources?" he concluded.

"Just one," Charlie said.

"What's that?" Ickes snapped.

"Your forest is nearly all brush land without a tree on it big enough to shade a lizard."

Charlie was similarly dressed when a well tailored and impatient tourist with a carload of friends whom he was evidently trying to impress, drove up for gas.

Always unhurried, Charlie came to the pumps, slowly reached for the hose and as lazily checked the oil.

"Say, fellow—" the tourist barked. "Senator Brown is a friend of mine. Get a move on or you'll be looking for a job."

Without the flicker of an eyelid, Charlie quickened, jumped for a cleaning rag and briskly polished the windshield. When he brought the tourist's change he apologized for his slowness and begged him not to report it to Senator Brown. "Jobs are hard to get and I have a wife and ten children to support."

Touched with remorse, the tourist looked at the change. "Just give it to the kids and forget it."

When the Pacific Coast Borax Company built its swanky Furnace Creek Inn on the western slope of the Funeral Range overlooking Death Valley, it began to look about for places that would give the most spectacular and comprehensive view of the Big Sink as a means of entertaining guests, and far enough away to keep them from boredom.

All the old timers who had wandered over the ranges were called in. Each suggested the place that had impressed him more than others. Each of these places was visited and after weeks of deliberation a spot on Chloride Cliff toward the northern end of Death Valley was chosen and the bigwigs started back to Los Angeles. 151

When they stopped at Shoshone for gas and water, Clarence Razor, an engineer of the company was still thinking of the chosen site and asked Brown, long his friend, if he knew of any view of the valley better than the one at Chloride Cliff.

"I don't pay much attention to scenery," he told Razor. "To me it's all just desert or mountain. But I know one view that made me stop and look. Kinda got me. The chances are most folks would rave over it."

"Could you find it?"

"Sure could...."

Razor called the others, repeated Charlie's story and added: "You're in a hurry, but knowing Charlie as I do, I believe we'd better turn around and go back if he'll guide us."

Charlie agreed. It was a long, tortuous climb, even to the base of the peak. There Charlie went ahead and then beckoned them. Holding to bushes they walked or crawled to stand beside him; took one look and caught their breath. A mile below them lay the awesome Sink. White salt beds spread like a shroud over its silent desolation. Billowed dunes, gold against the dark of lava rock. Here a pastelled hill. There a brooding canyon. Beyond, the colorful Panamint under the golden glow of the sun.

"This is the place," they said.

"... You can tell 'em too," said Charlie pointing, "that right down there is Copper Canyon. If such stuff interests them, they can see the footprints of the camels and elephants and a lot of historic junk like that."

So you who thrill at Dante's View may thank Charles Brown of Shoshone.

When first elected to the senate, his colleagues were quick to see the qualities that had appealed to voters when they elected him supervisor. He had frequently been before that body in his fight for roads and tax reforms. They knew too that better schools for all rural areas either wholly or largely were the result of his efforts, and soon he was on the Rules Committee—a place usually assigned to those who come from the more populous districts of the state, because its five members through its power to appoint all standing and special committees, largely decide what legislation reaches the governor.

In 1950 Brown announced his candidacy for reelection under the state law that enables a candidate to seek the nomination of two parties.

The slot machine had been outlawed in California by the previous legislature and Brown had been largely instrumental in securing the passage of the law. Since the slot machine is a three billion dollar business in the nation, the gamblers opposed him as part of a general plan to secure repeal of the law and reinstate the one-arm bandits. 152

Since Mono county adjoins Nevada, gambling interests of that state contributed without stint, to retire Brown to private life. He had been in office for 25 years and opposed by this powerful group, guided by both brains and cunning, the odds apparently were against him. While the opposition boasted that he was through, Brown was calling at cabins in the hills and gulches, meeting friends on busy village streets and again when the vote was counted, it was discovered that voters have memories. He had won the nomination of both the Democratic and Republican parties by almost two to one and under the law, was re-elected.

Due to his priority standing and the retirement of older senators, the big fellow who walked 150 miles to get a job at Greenwater in order to save the fare to eat on, automatically shares with two men the power to control the legislation of the state.

Hell, like gold, is where you find it—either in people or places. A lady of wealth and aristocratic background in route to Furnace Creek's luxury inn, stopped at Shoshone for gas. Worn out by the long drive over the corduroy road, she looked about her and then at Charlie in greasy overalls. "How on earth," she asked in genuine distress, "do you make a living in this God-forsaken-hole?"

"It's hard ma'am," Charlie said gloomily. "But we get a few pennies from tourists, a little flour from mesquite beans, and stay alive one way or another, hoping to get out."

The gracious lady opened her purse, thrust a five dollar bill into Charlie's hand and went her way.

"It really made her happy," Charlie chuckled, "and I just didn't have the heart to give it back."

What is it that man wants of these "God-forsaken-holes" on the desert? I sought the answer one day when Shoshone was having a holiday. George Ishmael, as native as an Indian, was chosen to barbecue the steer. A well-to-do tourist begged the job of digging the big pit. "Want to flex my muscles...." Another cut the wood. At a depth of four feet, water was struck and rose a foot over the bottom. "That's all right" George said. He tossed a dozen railroad ties into the hole, floated them into position, covered them with dirt, built the fire, lowered the carcass of the steer, covered it with green leaves and filled the hole. "An unforgettable feast," agreed the scores who had come from places 100 miles away.

Sitting beside me was a prominent Los Angeles attorney, eminent in the councils of the Democratic party in both state and nation. "Why," he asked, "will a man wear himself out in the city when he can really live in a little place like this?" 153

"I thought of suicide at first," said Patsy, young matron with three healthy little stairsteps. "My husband said 'for heaven's sake, go out for a month and have a good time.' I went. Back in a week."

A Vermont girl said she had come to escape a straightlaced code that constantly reminded her sin was everywhere. "Here I've got an even break with the devil...."

All had found something that clicked with something inside of them which challenged something in civilization. Maybe it was expressed in the dogma of the Tennessee judge reared in the hill country of the Cumberland river. As he stepped from his plane on his annual vacation he was cornered by a reporter: "Judge, you're 94 years old. What do you think of this modern world?"

"Best one I know about."

"No criticism?"

"None whatever. Maybe a few minor changes. Just now we are being educated out of common sense into ignorance; lawed out of patriotism; taxed into poverty; doctored to death and preached to hell...."

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## Chapter XXII Lost Mines. The Breyfogle and Others

The most famous lost mine in the Death Valley area is the Lost Breyfogle. There are many versions of the legend, but all agree that somewhere in the bowels of those rugged mountains is a colossal mass of gold, which Jacob Breyfogle found and lost.

Jacob Breyfogle was a prospector who roamed the country around Pioche and Austin, Nevada, with infrequent excursions into the Death valley area. He traveled alone.

Indian George, Hungry Bill, and Panamint Tom saw Breyfogle several times in the country around Stovepipe Wells, but they could never trace him to his claim. When followed, George said, Breyfogle would step off the trail

and completely disappear. Once George told me about trailing him into the Funeral Range. He pointed to the bare mountain. "Him there, me see. Pretty quick—" He paused, puckered his lips. "Whoop—no see."

Breyfogle left a crude map of his course. All lost mines must have a map. Conspicuous on this map are the Death Valley Buttes which are landmarks. Because he was seen so much here, it was assumed that his operations were in the low foothills. I have seen a rough copy of this map made from the original in possession of "Wildrose" Frank Kennedy's squaw, Lizzie.

Breyfogle presumably coming from his mine, was accosted near Stovepipe Wells by Panamint Tom, Hungry Bill, and a young buck related to them, known as Johnny. Hungry Bill, from habit, begged for food. Breyfogle refused, explaining that he had but a morsel and several hard days' journey before him. On his burro he had a small sack of ore. When Breyfogle left, Hungry Bill said, "Him no good."

Incited by Hungry Bill and possible loot, the Indians followed Breyfogle for three or four days across the range. Hungry Bill stopped en route, sent the younger Indians ahead. At Stump Springs east of Shoshone, 155 Breyfogle was eating his dinner when the Indians sneaked out of the brush and scalped him, took what they wished of his possessions and left him for dead.

Ash Meadows Charlie, a chief of the Indians in that area confided to Herman Jones that he had witnessed this assault. This happened on the Yundt Ranch, or as it is better known, the Manse Ranch. Yundt and Aaron Winters accidentally came upon Breyfogle unconscious on the ground. The scalp wound was fly-blown. They had a mule team and light wagon and hurried to San Bernardino with the wounded man. The ore, a chocolate quartz, was thrown into the wagon.

"I saw some of it at Phi Lee's home, the Resting Spring Ranch," Shorty Harris said. "It was the richest ore I ever saw. Fifty pounds yielded nearly \$6000."

Breyfogle recovered, but thereafter was regarded as slightly "off." He returned to Austin, Nevada, and the story followed.

Wildrose (Frank) Kennedy, an experienced mining man obtained a copy of Breyfogle's map and combed the country around the buttes in an effort to locate the mine. Kennedy had the aid of the Indians and was able to obtain, through his squaw Lizzie, such information as Indians had about the going and coming of the elusive Breyfogle.

"Some believe the ore came from around Daylight Springs," Shorty said, "but old Lizzie's map had no mark to indicate Daylight Springs. But it does show the buttes and the only buttes in Death Valley are those above Stovepipe Wells.

"Kennedy interested Henry E. Findley, an old time Colorado sheriff and Clarence Nyman, for years a prospector for Coleman and Smith (the Pacific Borax Company). They induced Mat Cullen, a rich Salt Lake mining man, to leave his business and come out. They made three trips into the valley, looking for that gold. It's there somewhere."

At Austin, Breyfogle was outfitted several times to relocate the property, but when he reached the lower elevation of the valley, he seemed to suffer some aberration which would end the trip. His last grubstaker was not so considerate. He told Breyfogle that if he didn't find the mine promptly he'd make a sieve of him and was about to do it when a companion named Atchison intervened and saved his life. Shortly afterward, Breyfogle died from the old wound.

Indian George, repeating a story told him by Panamint Tom, once told me that Tom had traced Breyfogle to the mine and after Breyfogle's death went back and secured some of the ore. Tom guarded his secret. He covered the opening with stone and leaving, walked backwards, obliterating his tracks with a greasewood brush. Later when Tom returned prepared to get the gold he found that a cloudburst had filled the canyon with boulders, 156 gravel and silt, removing every landmark and Breyfogle's mine was lost again.

"Some day maybe," George said, "big rain come and wash um out."

Among the freighters of the early days was John Delameter who believed the Breyfogle was in the lower Panamint. Delameter operated a 20 mule team freighting service between Daggett and points in both Death Valley and Panamint Valley. He told me that he found Breyfogle down in the road about twenty-eight miles south of Ballarat with a wound in his leg. Breyfogle had come into the Panamint from Pioche, Nevada, and said he had been attacked by Indians, his horses stolen, while working on his claim which he located merely with a gesture toward the mountains.

Subsequently Delameter made several vain efforts to locate the property, but like most lost mines it continues to be lost. But for years it was good bait for a grubstake and served both the convincing liar and the honest prospector.

Nearly all old timers had a version of the Lost Breyfogle differing in details but all agreeing on the chocolate quartz and its richness.

That Breyfogle really lost a valuable mine there can be little doubt, but since he is authentically traced from the northern end of Death Valley to the southern, and since the chocolate quartz is found in many places of that area, one who cares to look for it must cover a large territory.



One mine that had never been found turned up in a way as amazing as most of them are lost.

At Pioche, Nevada, an assayer was suspected of giving greater values to samples than they merited. It is known as the "come on."

In order to trap the suspect, a prospector broke off a piece of old grindstone and ordered an assay. "If he gives that any value, it's proof enough he's a crook," he told his friends.

Proof of guilt came with the assayer's report. The grindstone was incredibly rich in silver, it said.

"We've got the goods on him now," the outraged prospector announced and it was decided to give the assayer a coat of tar and feathers. Wiser counsel was accepted, however, and it was decided to give him no more business. The fellow was faced with the alternative of starving or leaving the country, when he learned the reason of the boycott. Conscious of no error in his work, he made another and more careful assay. This time the samples yielded even higher values.

It was agreed by all mining engineers of that day that rock like the samples never carried silver or gold. But the assayer knew his furnace hadn't lied and he couldn't believe grindstone makers were mixing silver with sand to make the stones. So he traced the grindstone to the quarry it came from. The result was the Silver King, one of the richest silver mines. 157

THE LOST GUNSIGHT. The first lost mine in Death Valley, preceding that of Breyfogle's by four or five years, was the Gunsight.

A survivor of the Jayhawkers or the Bennett-Arcane party of '49 (it is not clear to which he belonged) after escaping death in the valley, saw a deer or antelope and on the point of starvation, took his gun from its strap to shoot the animal. Seeing that the sight had been lost, he picked up a thin piece of shale and wedged it in the sight slot. Later he took the weapon to a gunsmith who removed the makeshift sight and upon examination found it to be almost pure silver. "Where I picked it up," said the owner, "there was a mountain of it."

So begins the history of the Lost Gunsight and the story spread as stories will, until ten years later it reached the ears of Dr. Darwin French of Oroville, previously mentioned. The doctor became excited and in the spring of 1860 organized a party to locate the fabulous mountain of silver. Though he searched bravely he failed to find it. However, he brought back the first authentic account of what others with a flair for lost mines could expect in the way of weather, topography, Indians, edible game, vegetation, and water. On this trip, however, he discovered silver in the Coso Range.

The following year, 1861, Dr. S. G. George who had been with the French party, decided he could find the Lost Gunsight and organized an expedition which crossed Panamint Valley, explored Wild Rose Canyon and reached the highest spot in Death Valley. But Dr. George's valiant efforts were no luckier than those of Dr. French.

William Manly, author of "Death Valley in Forty-Nine" also tried but gained only another tragic experience and came nearer losing his life than he did with the Forty-Niners. Lost and without water and beaten to his knees, he was deserted by companions and escaped death by a miracle. How many have lost their lives trying to find the Gunsight no one knows. There are scores of sunken mounds on lonely mesas which an old timer will explain tersely: "He was looking for the Gunsight."

Dr. French, after his failure, pursued another and even more intriguing lost mine. With a ready ear for tales of treasure, he heard of a tribe of Indians in the Death Valley area who were making bullets for their rifles out of gold. Accordingly he organized another party to find the gold.

For eleven months Dr. French and his hand-picked comrades combed the country. The gold they found would have loaded no gun, but you may add the Lost Bullet to your list of lost mines. A member of this party was John Searles, for whom Searles' Lake is named. 158

Because early prospectors searched for Breyfogle's lost mine throughout the region where he was found scalped, an interesting digression is not amiss.

A few miles east of Shoshone, there is a Gunsight mine named, of course, by the discoverer in the hope that he'd found the one so long lost. It adjoins the Noonday and was a valuable property which belonged to Dr. L. D. Godshall of Victorville.

The Noonday produced five million dollars and was operated until silver and lead took a price dive. A 12 mile railroad was built from Tecopa to haul the ore. The steel rails were later hauled away and the ties went into construction of desert homes, sheds, fences, and firewood. For years the two properties could have been bought for what-have-you.

Then came Pearl Harbor and a young Kentuckian, Buford Davis, looking around for lead or any essential ores that Uncle Sam could use, dropped off at Shoshone. Charles Brown told him of the Gunsight and the Noonday. Davis inspected the properties, bought them for a relatively small down payment. He chose to begin operations on the Noonday and sent Ernie Huhn, an experienced miner to deepen the shaft.

"Honest to God," Ernie told me, "I hadn't dug a foot when I turned up the prettiest vein of lead I'd ever seen."

In the next six years the Noonday produced approximately a gross of nine million dollars and a net of probably six million dollars.

These figures were given me by Don Kempfer, mining engineer and Shoshone resident, from estimates which he believed accurate.

In 1947 with the rich rewards attained but as yet unenjoyed, Buford Davis made a hurried airplane trip to Salt Lake. Returning, he was only a few moments from a safe landing when the plane crashed and all aboard were killed.

Today, (1950) the property belongs to Anaconda and is considered one of its most valuable mines.

For those interested in lost mines I offer the list that follows. (The names are my own.)

**THE LOST CHINAMAN:** When John Searles was struggling to make a living out of the ooze that is called Searles' Lake he had a mule skinner known as Salty Bill Parkinson—a fearless, hard-bitten individual who was the Paul Bunyan of Death Valley teamsters.

While loading a wagon with borax, Salty Bill and Searles noticed a man staggering down from the Slate Range. They decided he was supercharged with desert likker and paid scant attention as he wobbled across the flat from the base of the range. A moment later he fell at their feet. They saw then that he was a Chinaman; that his tongue was swollen, his eyes red and sunken; that he clutched at his throat in a vain effort to speak. He could make no intelligible sound and lapsed into unconsciousness. They thought he had died and was left on their hands for burial. 159

Salty Bill afterwards stated that he'd said to Searles: "Fremont, Carson, or the Mormons old Bill Williams, for whom Bill Williams River, Bill Williams Mountain, and the town of Williams, Arizona, are named was at Resting Springs. He'll spoil in an hour. I'll go for a shovel while you choose a place to plant him.' I'd actually turned to go when Searles called me back." Searles had seen some sign of life and after removing a canvas bag strapped to his body they took him to a nearby shed, gave him a few spoonfuls of water and eventually he was restored to consciousness. He lay in a semi-stupor all the afternoon and was obsessed with the idea that he was going to die. His chief concern was to get to Mojave so that he could take a stage for a seaport and die in China or failing, arrange for the burial of his bones with those of his ancestors.

He had been working at Old Harmony Borax Works, picking cotton-ball borax with other Chinese employed by the company, but tiring of abuse by a tough boss, he'd asked for his wages and walked out. Some Piutes told him of a short cut across the Panamint and this he took.

En route he picked up a piece of rich float, stuck it into his bag. Farther on his journey he ran out of water and became hopelessly lost. He managed to reach the Slate Range, however, and from the summit saw Searles' Lake. Though in no condition to stand the rough trip to Mojave he begged to be sent there and yielding finally, Salty Bill, ready to leave with his load, threw the Chinaman on his wagon and started on his trip.

Before reaching Mojave, the Chinaman's condition became worse and Salty Bill stopped the team in answer to his yells. The canvas sack lay alongside the stricken Chinaman and reaching for it, he brought out a lump of ore.

"Never in my life," said Salty Bill, "have I seen ore like that."

The Chinaman gave the ore to Salty, thanked him for his friendly treatment, told him that at a place in the Panamint where "the Big Timber pitches down into a steep canyon," he had found the float. Again he expressed his belief that he was going to die and exacted a promise from Salty that if death came before reaching Mojave, Salty would see that his remains be shipped to China, adding that any Chinaman in Mojave would provide money if needed. "You find the gold and keep it," he told Salty. "For me—no good. No can..." 160

The journey was completed and Salty learned that the Chinaman did die at Mojave and that a countryman there saw that the remains were sent to the Flowery Kingdom.

Salty Bill showed the ore to John Searles and Searles, usually indifferent to yarns of hidden ledges, was even more excited than Salty. For four or five years the two men made trips in search of the place where Big Timber pitches into a canyon. After these, other tireless prospectors sought the elusive ledge but the Lost Chinaman is still lost.

**THE LOST WAGON.** Jim Hurley went to Parker, Arizona. Broke, he wanted quick money and was looking for placer. The storekeeper was a friend of Jim and had previously staked him.

"I'm looking for a place to wash out some gold, but I've no money and no grub..."

Jim was told of a butte on the Colorado Desert. "It's good placer ground and you ought to pan a few dollars without much trouble...." He provided Jim with bacon and beans and feed for his burros.

Jim set out, found the butte, but no gold and decided to try a new location. On the way out he saw behind some bushes an old wagon that seemed to be half buried in blow sand. Thinking it would be a good feeding place for his burros, he went over. On the ground nearby he saw the bleached skeleton of a man. He threw aside a half-rotted tarpaulin in the wagon bed and discovered fifteen sacks of ore.

It was obvious that the wagon had stood there for a long time. He examined the ore and saw that it was rich and of a peculiar color. He loaded the ore on his burros, returned to Parker and sent it to the smelter. He received in return, \$1800. Losing no time, Jim returned to find the source of the ore and though for the next five years he looked at intervals for a quartz to match that found in the wagon, he could find nothing that even resembled it. Where it came from no prospector on the desert would even venture an opinion, but all declared they had seen no

quartz of that peculiar color and all of them knew the country from Mexico to Nevada.

But Jim added to his store an adventure and a memory and there is no treasure in this life richer than a memory.

THE LOST GOLLER. This, I believe, is a lost mine that really exists and though the location has been prospected from the days of Dr. Darwin French in 1860, none have looked for it except the one who lost it in 1850. He was John Goller, who came to California with the Jayhawkers. 161

Goller was a blacksmith and wagon maker and was the first American to establish such a business in the pueblo of Los Angeles. After convincing the native Californian that his spoke-wheel wagon would function as effectively as the rounded slabs of wood, the only vehicles then used, he made a comfortable fortune and no one in the pueblo had a reputation for better character.

Crossing the Panamint, Goller, though strong and husky, became separated from his companions and barely escaped with his life. Coming down a Panamint canyon he found some gold nuggets and filled his pockets with them. After crossing Panamint Valley and the Slate Range, he was found by Mexican vaqueros of Don Ignacio del Valle, owner of the great Camulos Rancho. After his recovery he proceeded to Los Angeles. In showing the nuggets to friends he said, "I could have filled a wagon with them."

Goller, because of his means was soon able to take vacations which were devoted to looking for the lost location, and though he searched for years he found no more nuggets. Finally he found a canyon which he believed might have been the site, but no wagon load of nuggets.

John Goller was a solid, clear-thinking man—not the type to chase the rainbow. Gold is known to exist in the canyon and some mines have been operated with varying success, but none have been outstanding. It is quite possible that cloudbursts for which the Panamint is noted washed Goller's gold away or buried it under an avalanche of rock, dirt, and gravel. Manly, with his forgivable inclination to error refers to Goller as Galler and discounts the story.

"Some day," said Dr. Samuel Slocum, a man who made a fortune in gold, "somebody will find a fabulously rich mine in that canyon." It is located about 12 miles south of Ballarat and is called Goler canyon—one of the l's in Goller's name having been dropped.

THE LOST SPOOK. A spiritualist with tuberculosis came to Ballarat and employed an Indian known as Joe Button as packer and guide. He told Joe to lead him to the driest spot in the country. Joe took him into the Cottonwood Range and left him. The invalid remained for several weeks, returned to Ballarat en route to San Bernardino, presumably for supplies. He was reticent as to his luck but he had several small sacks filled with ore and in his haste to catch the stage, dropped a piece of quartz from a loosely tied sack. It was almost solid gold and weighed eight ounces.

While in San Bernardino he died. His relatives sold the remaining ore, which yielded \$7200. They tried to find the claim but failed. 162

Shorty Harris heard of it months afterward and looked up Joe Button. With his own burros, Joe's pack horses, and an Indian known as Ignacio, he set out. Cloudbursts had washed out the previous trails, filled gulches, levelled hills and so transformed the country that the Indian was unable to find any trace of his previous course; gave up the hunt and turned back.

Shorty cached his supplies and with the meager description Joe could give him, searched for weeks. At last he came upon a camp where he discovered a collection of pamphlets dealing with the occult, but no trails. It was apparent that these had been destroyed by floods and for two months Shorty searched for the diggings. A brush pile aroused his suspicions and removing it, he found the hole. "The ore had Uncle Sam's eagle all over it," Shorty said, "and the world was mine."

"I returned to my camp, started spending the money. A million dollars for a rest home for old worn-out prospectors. Fifty thousand a year for all my pals...."

Shorty ate his supper, spread his blankets and went to sleep with his dream. In the middle of the night he awoke. Something was running over his blanket. He raised up and in the moonlight recognized the only thing on earth he was afraid of—the "hydrophobic skunk."

"I started packing right now," Shorty said, "and walked out. There's a mine there and whoever wants it can have it. I don't."

THE LOST CANYON has some evidence of reality. Jack Allen, a miner and prospector of almost superhuman endurance, got drunk at Skidoo and filled with remorse and shame the morning after, decided to leave and seek a job at the Keane Wonder Mine, about 40 miles northeast across Death Valley. To save distance, Allen took a short cut over Sheep Mountain and in going through a canyon he picked up a piece of quartz and seeing a fleck of color, he broke it. Excited by its apparent richness he filled his pockets, noted his bearings and went on his way. When he reached the Keane Wonder he took the ore to Joe McGilliland, the company's assayer, who became more excited than the finder. "I'll put it in the button for half," Joe said.

Allen agreed. The assay showed values as high as \$20,000 to the ton. He closed his office and ran out to find Jack working in the mine. "Chuck this job," he cried. "Go back to that claim quick as you can. Get your monuments up and record the notices."

Jack Allen bought a burro, loaded his supplies and went back only to discover that a cloudburst had destroyed all his landmarks.

Both Shorty Harris and “Bob” Eichbaum, who established Stove Pipe Wells resort, considered this the best chance among all the legends of lost mines. It is wild, rough, and largely virgin country and because of that the hardest prospectors always passed it by. 163

THE LOST JOHNNIE. An Indian known as Johnnie used to come into York’s store at Ballarat about once a month with gold in bullion form. He would sell it to York or trade it for supplies. Frequently he had credits amounting to a thousand or more dollars.

Other Indians soon learned of Johnnie’s mine and would trail him when he left town, but none were able to outsmart him. That it was near Arastre Spring was generally believed. Upon one occasion Johnnie was seen leaving the old arastre and disappear in the canyon. Immediately evidence that the arastre had been used within the hour was discovered. For years no prospector worked in that region without keeping his eyes peeled for Johnnie’s bonanza.

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## Chapter XXIII Panamint City. Genial Crooks

The first search for gold in Death Valley country was in Panamint Valley.

From the summit of the Slate Range on the road from Trona, one comes suddenly upon an enchanting and unforgettable view of the Panamint. If you are one who thrills at breath taking scenery you will not speak. You will stand and look and think. Your thoughts will be of dead worlds; of the silence spread like a shroud over all that you see.

Below, a yellow road twists in and out of hidden dry washes, around jutting hills to end in the green mesquite that hides the ghost town of Ballarat. There the Panamint lifts two miles—its gored sides a riot of pastelled colors.

If you have coached yourself with trivia of history it will require imagination’s aid to accept the fact that from this wasteland came fortunes and industries of world-wide fame. From New York to San Francisco on envied social thrones, sit the children and grandchildren of those who with pick and shovel, here dug the family fortune in ragged overalls.

Only recently a descendant of one of these, living in a city far removed, informed me her mansion was for sale, “because the neighborhood is being ruined...” A sheep herder newly rich on war profits, was moving in.

Eleven miles north of Ballarat, Surprise Canyon, which leads to Panamint City, opens on a broad, alluvial fan that tilts sharply to the valley floor.

In April, 1873, W. T. Henderson, whose first trip into Death Valley country was made to find the Lost Gunsight, came again with R. B. Stewart and R. C. Jacobs. In Surprise Canyon they discovered silver which ran as high as \$4000 a ton and filed more than 80 location notices.

Henderson was an adventurer of uncertain character who had roamed western deserts like a nomad. 165 During the Indian war that threatened extermination of the white settlers in Inyo county, Thieving Charlie, a Piute, was induced by outnumbered whites to approach his warring tribesmen under a flag of truce and succeeded in getting eleven of them to return with him to Camp Independence for a peace talk. Henderson, with two companions waylaid and murdered them.

He had been a member of the posse organized by Harry Love to shoot on sight California’s most famous bandit—Joaquin Murietta and boasted that he fired the bullet which killed the glamorous Joaquin. It was he who cut off and pickled the bandit’s head as evidence to get the reward. At the same time he pickled the hand of Three Fingered Jack Garcia, Joaquin’s chief lieutenant, and the bloodiest monster the West ever saw. Garcia had an odd habit of cutting off the ears of his victims and stringing them for a saddle ornament. The slaying of Joaquin was not a pretty adventure and as the details came out, Henderson renounced the honor.

The grewsome vouchers which obtained the reward became the attraction for the morbid on a San Francisco street and there above the din of traffic one heard a spieler chant the thrills it gave “for only two measly bits....” The exhibit was destroyed in the San Francisco fire and earthquake of 1906.

In his book, “On the Old West Coast” Major Horace Bell states that Henderson confided to him there was never a day nor night that Joaquin Murietta did not come to him and though headless, would demand the return of his head; that Henderson was never frightened by the apparition, which would vanish after Henderson explained why he couldn’t return the head and his excuse for cutting it off.

Bell quotes Henderson: “I would never have cut Joaquin’s head off except for the excitement of the chase and the orders of Harry Love.”

To give credence to the ghost story he says of Henderson, “He was for several years my neighbor and a more genial and generous fellow I never met....” Major Bell, it is known, was not always strictly factual.

Following the Surprise Canyon strike, Panamint City was quickly built and quickly filled with thugs who lived by their guns; gamblers and painted girls who lived by their wits.

An engaging sidewalk promoter known as E. P. Raines, who possessed a good front and gall in abundance, but no money, assured the owners of the Panamint claims that he could raise the capital necessary for development. He set out for the city, registered at the leading hotel, attached the title of Colonel to his name; exchanged a worthless check for \$25 and made for the barroom. It was no mere coincidence that Mr. Raines before 166 ordering his drink, parked himself alongside a group of the town's richest citizens and began to toy with an incredibly rich sample of ore. It was natural that members of the group should notice it. Particularly the multimillionaire, Senator John P. Jones, Nevada silver king.

Soon the charming crook was the life of the party. His \$25 spent, he actually borrowed \$1000 from Jones. Having drunk his guests under the table, Mr. Raines went forth for further celebration and landed broke in the hoosegow. Hearing of his misadventure, his new friends promptly went to his rescue. "... Outrage ... biggest night this town ever had...."

To make amends for the city's inhospitable blunder, Raines was taken to his hostelry, given a champagne bracer and made the honor guest at breakfast. "Where's the Senator?" he asked. Informed that Senator Jones had taken a train for Washington, Raines quickened "Why, he was expecting me to go with him...." He jumped up, fumbled through his pockets in a pretended search for money. "Heavens—my purse is gone!" Instantly a half dozen hands reached for the hip and Mr. Raines was on his way.

It required but a few moments to get \$15,000 from the Senator and his partner, Senator William R. Stewart, for the Panamint claims. He also sold Jones the idea of a railroad from a seaport at Los Angeles to his mines and this was partially built. The project ended in Cajon Pass. The scars of the tunnel started may still be seen.

Jones and Stewart organized the Panamint Mining Company with a capital of \$2,000,000. Other claims were bought but immediate development was delayed by difficulties in obtaining title because many of the owners were outlaws, difficult to find. A few were located in the penitentiary and there received payment. For some of the claims the promoters paid \$350,000.

On June 29, 1875, the first mill began to crush ore from the Jacobs Wonder mine. Panamint City became one of the toughest and most colorful camps of the West. It was strung for a mile up and down narrow Surprise Canyon. It was believed that here was a mass of silver greater than that on the Comstock and shares were active on the markets.

The most pretentious saloon in the town was that of Dave Nagle, who later as the bodyguard of U. S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen J. Field, killed Judge David Terry, distinguished jurist, but stormy petrel of California Vigilante days. Judge Terry had represented, then married his client, the Rose of Sharon—Sarah Althea Hill—in her suit to determine whether she was wife or mistress of Senator Sharon, Comstock millionaire. Feuding 167 had resulted with Field, the trial judge. Meeting in a railroad dining room, Judge Terry slapped Justice Field's face and Nagle promptly killed Terry.

Poker at Panamint City was never a piker's game. Bets of \$10,000 on two pair attracted but little comment. Gunning was regarded as a minor nuisance, but funerals worried the town's butcher. He had the only wagon that had survived the steep canyon road into the camp. "I bought it," he complained, "to haul fresh meat, but since there's no hearse I never know when I'll have to unload a quarter of beef to haul a stiff to Sourdough Canyon."

Panamint City attained an estimated population of 3,000. Harris and Rhine, merchants, having the only safe in the town permitted patrons to deposit money for safe keeping and often had large sums. On one occasion they had the \$10,000 payroll of the Hemlock mine.

A clerk arriving early at the store, suddenly faced two gentlemen who directed him to open the safe and pass out the money. "Just as well count it as you fork it over," one ordered. The clerk had counted \$4000 when he was told to stop. "This'll do for the present," the spokesman said. "We'll come back and get the rest."

"Yeh," added his partner. "Too damned many thugs in this town."

They sallied forth on a spending spree. The down-and-out along the mile-long street received generous portions of the loot and a widow whose husband had been killed in a mine explosion, received \$500.

These bandits, Small and McDonald, thereafter became incredibly popular and the legend follows that what they stole from those who had, they shared with those who hadn't.

Wells-Fargo and Company offered a reward of \$1000 for their capture, but their arrest was never accomplished. Invariably they were apprised of the approach of pursuers and simply retired to some convenient canyon. The bandits further endeared themselves to the citizenry when Stewart and Jones arranged for the importation of a hundred Chinese laborers.

This aroused the ire of the white miners and a meeting was called to protest. "This is a white man's town," was the cry of labor.

Small and McDonald agreed. "Just leave it to us," they told the leaders. "No use in a lotta fellows getting hurt." They stationed themselves at the mouth of the canyon and when the coolies arrived, a sudden volley from the bandits' six-guns brought the caravan to a halt. The frightened Chinamen leaped from the hacks and fled in panic across the desert and Panamint remained a white man's town.

Engaged at work around their hideout, Hungry Bill stopped to beg for food. They told the Indian to wait until they finished their task. His sullen impatience angered Small who booted him down the trail. Hungry Bill left cursing and told a prospector whom he met that he would return shortly with his tribesmen and assassinate the entire population. 168

Panamint City was warned but Small and McDonald declared that since they had started the trouble, they alone should end it. Accordingly, they set out for Hungry Bill's ranch to stop the attack before it started. But near Hungry Bill's stone corral they were ambushed by the Indians. The bandits shot their way into the corral and barricading themselves, killed and wounded about half of the renegades, after which the remainder fled.

Panamint City harbored a hoard of unsung assassins who merely lay in wait, shot the unwary victim down, took his poke, rolled the body into a ravine, went up town to spend the money.

One killer who came decided to dominate the field and with that in view he set forth to establish himself quickly as a gunman not to be trifled with. He chose to display his prowess upon an inoffensive, quiet faro dealer known as Jimmy Bruce, who, it was easy to see, "was just a chicken-livered punk." The publicity of a well-done murder in such a setting would give prestige.

Armed with two guns, the bully contrived to start an argument with Bruce. The indoor white of the gambler seemed to grow whiter as the rage of his towering tormenter reached the climax. The players moved out of range. The bartenders ducked under the counter. Patrons helpless to intervene, fled from the kill.

A shot rang out. Cautiously, the bartenders lifted their heads. On the floor lay the bad man. Mr. Bruce was calmly lighting a cigar.

There was consternation among the killers. They swore vengeance. After five of them had fallen before Bruce's gun, he was let alone.

The silent faro dealer, it was learned too late, was surpassingly quick on the trigger.

A spot somewhat distant from the regular cemetery was chosen for the burial place and it became known as Jim Bruce's private graveyard.

Remi Nadeau, a French Canadian, was the first to haul freight into Panamint City. Nadeau was a genius of transportation. There was no country too rough, too remote, too wild for him. He came to Los Angeles in 1861 from Utah and teamed as far east as Montana.

The Cerro Gordo mine, on the eastern side of Owens Lake in Inyo County began to ship ore in 1869 and Nadeau obtained a contract to haul the ore to Wilmington where it was shipped by boat to San Francisco. He soon had to increase his equipment to 32 teams, using more than 500 animals. For his return trip he bought such commodities as he could peddle or leave for sale at stations he built along the route. 169

In 1872, the contract having expired, Judson and Belshaw, owners of the mine, received a lower bid and Nadeau was left with 500 horses on his hands and heavily in debt. He wanted to dispose of his outfit for the benefit of his creditors but they had confidence in him and persuaded him to "carry on." Borax discovered in Nevada saved him. Meanwhile the lower bidder on the Cerro Gordo job proved unsatisfactory and Judson and Belshaw asked Nadeau to take the old job back. But now Nadeau informed them they would have to buy a half interest in his outfit and advance \$150,000 to construct relay stations at Mud Springs, Mojave, Lang's Springs, Red Rock, Little Lake, Cartago, and other points. They gladly agreed.

Shortly after Nadeau began hauling across the desert, he picked up a man suffering from gunshot and crazed from thirst. Taking the victim to his nearest station, he left instructions that he be cared for.

Sometime afterward, one of Nadeau's competitors whose trains had been held up several times by outlaws, wondered why none of Nadeau's teams or stations had been molested. At the time, Nadeau himself didn't know that the fellow whom he'd picked up on the desert was Tiburcio Vasquez, the bandit terror.

Vasquez naively condoned his banditry. It disgusted him at dances he said, to see the señoritas of his race favor the interloping Americans. He had a singular power over women. When Sheriff William Rowland effected his capture, women of Los Angeles filled his cell with flowers. He was hanged at San Jose.

Nadeau was now hauling ore from the Minnetta and the Modoc mines in the Argus Range on the west side of Panamint Valley. The Modoc was the property of George Hearst, the father of the publisher, William Randolph Hearst. These mines were directly across the valley from Panamint City and because of Nadeau's record for building roads in places no other dared to go, Jones and Stewart engaged him to haul out of Surprise Canyon, which was barely wide enough in places for a burro with a pack.

On a hill, locally known as "Seventeen"—that being the per cent of grade, located on the old highway between Ballarat and Trona, one may see the dim outline of a road pitching down precipitously to the valley floor. This road was built by Nadeau and one marvels that anything short of steam power could move a load from bottom to top.

Acquiring a fortune, Nadeau built the first three-story building in Los Angeles and the Nadeau Hotel, long the city's finest, retained favor among many wealthy pioneer patrons long after the more glamorous Angelus and Alexandria were built in the early 1900's. 170

The first ore from the Panamint mines was shipped to England and because of its richness showed a profit, but

difficulties arose in recovery processes which they did not know how to overcome. The mines would have paid fabulously under present day processes.

Finis was written to the story of Panamint after two hectic years and in 1877 Jones and Stewart had lost \$2,000,000 and quit. It would be more factual to state that since they had received from the public \$2,000,000 to put into it, who lost what is a guess.

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## Chapter XXIV Indian George. Legend of the Panamint

The previous chapter records accepted history of the silver discovery at Panamint City. Indian George Hansen had another version which he told me at his ranch 11 miles north of Ballarat. It fits the period and the people then in the country.

George, when a youngster lived in the Coso Range. East of the Coso there was no white man for 100 miles and renegades fleeing from their crimes and deserters from the Union army sought hideouts in the Panamint. Thus George was employed as a guide by three outlaws to lead them to safe refuge.

George, a Shoshone, had both friends and relatives among the Shoshones and the Piutes and took the bandits into Surprise Canyon where a camp for the night was chosen. While staking out his pack animals, George discovered a ledge of silver ore. Breaking off a chunk, he stuck it into his pocket, saying nothing about it until they were out of the locality. Then he showed the specimen and to promote a deal, gave one of them a sample. They wanted to see the ledge but George refused to disclose it. Then George said the three fellows stepped aside and after talking in whispers told him they didn't like the country and returning with him to the Coso Range, went on their way. Two or three months later they were back to bargain.

George had traded with the white man before. They had always given him a few dollars and a rosy promise. "Now me pretty foxy. So I say, 'no want money. Maybe lose.' Him say, 'what hell you want?'"

"'Heap good job all time I live.'"

"'Okay,' him say. 'We give you job.'"

"I show claim." George paused, a look of smoldering hate in his dark eyes, then added: "I get job. Two weeks. Him say, 'you fired.' I get \$50."

All Indians and many of the old timers believe that the ledge George found was that for which Jones and Stewart paid \$2,000,000. 172

George made another deal worthy of mention. The town of Trona on Searles' Lake needed the water owned by George's relative, Mabel, who herded 500 goats and sold them to butchers at Skidoo, Goldfield, and Rhyolite where they became veal steak or lamb chops. Trona offered \$30 a month for the use of the water. Mabel consulted George as head man of the Shoshones and advised Trona that the sum would not be considered. It must pay \$27.50 or do without. A superstition regarding numbers accounted for the price George fixed for the water.

My acquaintance with Indian George began on my first trip to Ballarat with Shorty Harris and was the result of a stomach ache Shorty had. I suggested a trip to a doctor at Trona instead.

"No, sir. I'll see old Indian George. If these doctors knew as much as these old Indians, there wouldn't be any cemeteries."

I asked what evidence he had of George's skill.

"Plenty. You know Sparkplug (Michael Sherlock)? He was in a bad way. Fred Gray put a mattress in his pickup, laid Sparkplug on it and hauled him over to Trona. Nurses took him inside. Doctor looked him over and came out and asked Fred if he knew where old Sparkplug wanted to be buried. 'Why, Ballarat, I reckon,' Fred said.

"Well, you take him back quick. He'll be dead when you get there. Better hurry. He'll spoil on you this hot weather.'"

"Fred raced back, taking curves on Seventeen with two wheels hanging over the gorge, but he made it; stopped in front of Sparkplug's shack, jumped out and called to me to bring a pick and shovel. Then he ran over to Bob Warnack's shack for help to make a coffin. Indian George happened to ride by the pickup and saw Sparkplug's feet sticking out. He crawled off his cayuse, took a look, lifted Sparkplug's eyelids and leaving his horse ground-hitched, he went out in the brush and yanked up some roots here and there. Then he went up to Hungry Hattie's and came back with a handful of chicken guts and rabbit pellets; brewed 'em in a tomato can and when he got through he funneled it down Sparkplug's throat and in no time at all Sparkplug was up and packing his flivver to go prospecting. If you don't believe me, there's Sparkplug right over there tinkering with his car."

George's age has been a favorite topic of writers of Death Valley history for the last 30 years.

I stopped for water once at the little stream flumed out of Hall's Canyon to supply the ranch. He was irrigating his alfalfa in a temperature of 122 degrees. I had brought him three or four dozen oranges and suggested that Mabel would like some of the fruit. 173



"Heavy work for a man of your age," I said.

He bit into an orange, eating both peeling and pulp. "Me papoose. Me only 107 years old."

There were less than a dozen oranges left when I began to cast about for a tactful way to preserve a few for Mabel. Seeing her chopping wood in the scorching sun I said, "I'll bet Mabel would like an orange just now. Shall I call her?"

"No—no—" George grunted. "Oranges heap bad for squaw," and speeding up his eating, he removed the last menace to Mabel.

Once George told me of watching the sufferings of the Jayhawkers and Bennett-Arcane party:

"Me little boy, first time I see white man. Whiskers make me think him devil. I run. I see some of Bennett party die. When all dead, we go down. First time Indians ever see flour. Squaws think it what make white men white and put it on their faces."

I asked George why he didn't go down and aid the whites. "Why?" he asked, "to get shot?"

"How many Shoshones are left?" I asked George.

He counted them on his fingers. "Nineteen. Soon, none."

George died in 1944 and it is safe I believe, to say that for 110 years he had baffled every agency of death on America's worst desert. Because his ranch was a landmark and the water that came from the mountains was good, it was a natural stopping place and he was known to thousands. Following a curious custom of Indians George adopted the Swedish name Hansen because it had euphony he liked.

The Panamint is the locale of the legend of Swamper Ike, first told I believe by Old Ranger over a nation-wide hookup, while he was M.C. of the program "Death Valley Days."

A daring, but foolhardy youngster, with wife and baby, undertook to cross the range. Unacquainted with the country and scornful of its perils, he reached the crest, but there ran out of water. He left his wife and the baby on the trail, comfortably protected in the shade of a bluff and started down the Death Valley side of the range to find water.

After a thorough search of the canyons about, he climbed to a higher level, scanned the floor of the valley. Seeing a lake that reflected the peaks of the Funeral Range he made for it under a withering sun. He learned too late that it was a mirage and exhausted, started back only to be beaten down and die.

After waiting through a night of terror, the young mother prepared a comfortable place for her baby and went in search of her husband. She too saw the blue lake and made for it, saw it vanish as he had. Then she discovered his tracks and undertook to follow him, but she also was beaten down and fell dead within a few feet of his lifeless body. 174

A band of wandering Cocopah Indians crossing the range, found the baby. They took the child to their own habitation on the Colorado river and named him Joe Salsuepuedes, which is Indian for "Get-out-if-you-can."

Joe grew up as Indian, burned dark by the desert sun. But he had an idea he wasn't Indian. Learning that he was a foundling, picked up in the Panamint, he set out for Death Valley, possessed of a singular faith that somehow he would discover evidence that he was a white man.

He obtained a job as swamper for the Borax Company. When he gave his name the boss said, "Too many Joe's working here. We'll call you Ike."

Early Indians, as you may see in Dead Man's Canyon, the Valley of Fire, and numerous canyons in the western desert had a habit of scratching stories of adventure or signs to inform other Indians of unusual features of a locality on the canyon walls—often coloring the tracing with dyes from herbs or roots. Knowing this, Swamper Ike was always alert for these hieroglyphs on any boulder he passed or in any canyon he entered.

One day Swamper Ike went out to look for a piece of onyx that he could polish and give to the girl he loved. While seeking the onyx he noticed a flat slab of travertine and on it the picture story of "Get-out-if-you-can."

Swamper Ike had justified his faith.

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## **Chapter XXV**

### **Ballarat. Ghost Town**

In the early 1890's gold discovered on the west side of the Panamint in Pleasant Canyon caused the rush responsible for Ballarat. For more than 20 years the district had been combed by prospectors holed in at Post Office Spring, about one half mile south of the site upon which Ballarat was subsequently built. Here the government had a small army post and here soldiers, outlaws, and adventurers received their mail from a box wired in the crotch of a mesquite tree.

The Radcliffe, which was the discovery mine was a profitable producer. The timbers and machinery were hauled from Randsburg over the Slate Range and across Panamint Valley, to the mouth of the canyon. There, under the direction of Oscar Rogers, it was packed on burros and taken up the steep grade to the mine site.

Copperstain Joe, a noted half-breed Indian made the next strike. With a specimen, he went to Mojave where he showed it to Jim Cooper. For five dollars and a gallon of whiskey he led Cooper to the site.

But his deal with Cooper interested me less than the cunning of his burro, Slick. Copperstain strode into a hardware store and asked for a lock. "It's for Slick's chain. Picks a lock soon as I turn my back—dam' him."

The merchant showed him a lock of intricate mechanism, "He won't pick this. Costs more, but worth it."

"I don't care what it costs," Copperstain said and bought it. Later he looped the chain around the burro's feet, fastened the links with the lock and tethered Slick to a stake. "That'll hold you—" he said defiantly.

The next morning he was back in the store, belligerent. "Helluva lock you sold me. Slick picked it in no time."

"Impossible."

"The burro's gone, ain't he?" Copperstain bristled, and reaching into his pocket, produced the lock. "See 176 that nail in the keyhole? I didn't put it there. Slick just found a nail—that's all."

The future of Pleasant Canyon seemed assured and it was decided to move the two saloons and grocery to the flats below, where a town would have room to grow.

When citizens met to choose a name, George Riggins, a young Australian suggested the new town be given a name identified with gold the world over. Ballarat in his native country met the requirement and its name was adopted.

Shorty Harris discovered The Star, The Elephant, the World Beater, The St. Patrick. In Tuba, Jail, Surprise, and Goler Canyons more strikes were made. It is curious that none were made in Happy Canyon.

The production figures of early mines are rarely dependable and the yield is often confused with that obtained by swindlers from outright sale or stock promotion. My friend, Oscar Rogers, superintendent, told me the Radcliffe produced a net profit of approximately \$500,000. Less authentic are figures attributed to the following:

The O. B. Joyful in Tuba Canyon, \$250,000; The Gem in Jail Canyon, \$150,000; and Shorty Harris' World Beater, \$200,000.

Among the noted of Ballarat residents was John LeMoyne, a Frenchman. He discovered a silver mine in Death Valley but the best service he gave the desert was a recipe for coffee. He walked into Ballarat one day and had lunch. The lady who owned the cafe asked if everything suited. "All but the coffee," John said.

"How do you make your coffee?" she asked.

"Madame, there's no trick about making good coffee. Plenty coffee. Dam' little water."

From one end of Death Valley country to the other, coffee is judged by John LeMoyne's standard. You may not always get it, but mention it and the waiter will know.

For years LeMoyne held his silver claim in spite of offers far beyond its value, which he believed was \$5,000,000. But once when the urge to return to his beloved France was strong and Goldfield, Tonopah, and Rhyolite excited the nation, he weakened and decided to accept an offer said to have been \$200,000. "But," he told the buyers, "it must be cash."

After a huddle, John's demand was met and a check offered. John brushed it aside. "But this eez not cash," he complained. No, he wouldn't go to town to get the cash. He had work to do. "You get eet."

Disgusted, the buyers left and John LeMoyne continued to wear his rags, eat his beans, and dream of La Belle France.

A young Shoshone Indian came into Keeler excited as an Indian ever gets, looked up Shorty Harris and said: "Short Man, your friend go out. No come back. Maybe him sick." It was midsummer, but LeMoyne had undertaken to reach his claim. 177

In the bottom of the valley, Shorty identified LeMoyne's tracks by a peculiar hobnail which LeMoyne used in his shoes. He followed the tracks to Cottonwood Spring and there found an old French pistol which he knew had belonged to LeMoyne. Convinced he was on the right trail, he went on and after a mile or two met Death Valley Scotty.

"I know why you're here," Scotty said. "I've just found his body."

LeMoyne was partially eaten by coyotes and nearby were his dead burros. Though tethered to the mesquite with slender cotton cords which they could easily have broken, the patient asses had elected to die beside him.

And there ended the dream of the glory trail back to the France he loved. Those who believe in the jinx will find something to sustain their faith in the record of John LeMoyne's mine.

After LeMoyne's death, Wild Bill Corcoran who had made and lost fortunes in the lush days of Rhyolite, set out

from Owens Valley to relocate it. Never a ranting prohibitionist, Bill believed that the best remedy for snake bite was likker in the blood when the snake bit. When he reached Darwin he was not feeling well and stopped long enough for a nip with friends and to get a youngster to drive his car and help at the camp.

It was midsummer, with record temperature but Bill wanted John LeMoyne's mine. Becoming worse in the valley he stopped in Emigrant Canyon and sent the boy back for a doctor. Bill crawled into an old shack under the hill. When the boy and the doctor came, they found Bill Corcoran on the floor, his hand stretched toward a bottle of bootleg liquor. His soul had gone over the hill.

One after another, five others followed Bill to file on LeMoyne's claim and each in turn joined Bill over the hill.

LeMoyne's Christian name was Jean. His surname has been spelled both Lemoigne and Lemoine. The claim from which Indians had formerly taken lead was filed upon by LeMoyne in 1882.

Joe Gorsline, a graduate of Columbia, with a background of wealth, came to Ballarat during the rush, looked over the town. "Wouldn't spend another day in this dump for all the gold in the mint," he announced. He had a few drinks, heard a few yarns, eyed a few girls in the honkies. It was all new to Joe, but something about the informalities of life appealed to him and in a little while he was renamed Joe Goose.

Then the town's constable shot its Judge and Ballarat chose him to succeed the deceased. Not liking the laws of the code, he made a batch of his own, which were never questioned. While watching the flow of time and liquor, he "went desert" and put aside the things that might have been for the more alluring things-as-they-are. 178

When Ballarat became a ghost town, Joe Gorsline took his body to the city, but his soul remained and years afterward when he died, a hearse came down the mountain and in it was Joe Gorsline, home again. He is buried in a little cemetery out on the flat and in the spring the golden sun cups, grow all around and you walk on them to get to his grave.

Adding a cultural touch to Ballarat was an English nobleman who "going desert" tossed his title out of the window, donned overalls and brogans and promptly earned the approving verdict, "An all right guy." Soon he was drinking with the toper and dancing with the demimonde. Like others, he did his own cooking and washing. He lived in a 'dobe cabin which, because it was on the main street, had its window shades always down.

But there was one little custom of his British routine he never abandoned and this was discovered by accident. He stopped in John Lambert's saloon one evening before going to his cabin for dinner. He left his watch on the bar and had gone before Lambert noticed it. An hour later Lambert, having an opportunity to get away, took the watch to the cabin. John thus reported what he saw: "He was eating his dinner and bigod—he had on a white shirt, wing collar, and swallow tail."

Ballarat chuckled but no one suggested a lynching party. They knew how deep grow the roots in the soil one loves. "Maybe," said Lambert, "that's why John Bull always wins the last battle. They give up nothing."

A familiar figure throughout Death Valley country was Johnny-Behind-the-Gun—small and wiry and as much a part of the land as the lizard. His moniker was acquired from his habit of settling disputes without cluttering up the courts. Johnny, whose name was Cyte, accounted for three or four sizable fortunes. Having sold a claim for \$35,000 he once bought a saloon and gambling hall in Rhyolite, forswearing prospecting forever.

Johnny advertised his whiskey by drinking it and the squareness of his game, by sitting in it. One night the gentleman opposite was overwhelmed with luck and his pockets bulged with \$30,000 of Johnny's money. Having lost his last chip, Johnny said, "I'll put up dis place. Ve play vun hand and quit."

Johnny lost. He got up, reached for his hat. "Vell, my lucky friend, I'll take a last drink mit you." He tossed the liquor, lighted a cigar. "Goodnight, chentlemen," he said. "I go find me anudder mine." 179

Johnny had several claims near the Keane Wonder in the Funeral Mountains, held by a sufferance not uncommon among old timers, who respected a notice regardless of legal formalities.

Senator William M. Stewart, Nevada mining magnate, had employed Kyle Smith, a young mining engineer to go into the locality and see what he could find. Smith, a capable and likable chap, in working over the districts, located several claims open for filing by reason of Johnny's failure to do his assessment work.

It is not altogether clear what happened between Johnny and Smith, but Smith's body was found after it had lain in the desert sun all day. There being no witnesses the only fact produced by sheriff and coroner was that Smith was dead. Johnny went free. Other escapades with Johnny-Behind-the-Gun occurred with such frequency that he was finally removed from the desert for awhile as the guest of the state.

In a deal with Tom Kelly, Johnny was hesitant about signing some papers according to an understanding. His trigger quickness was explained to Kelly who was not impressed. He went to Johnny and asked him to sign up. Johnny refused. Kelly said calmly, "Johnny, do you see that telephone pole?"

"Yes, I see. Vot about?"

"If you don't sign, you're going to climb it." Johnny signed. He put his gun away when he acquired a lodging house at Beatty, where he died in 1944.

Reminiscing one day in the old saloon he had owned, Chris Wichts slapped the bar: "I've taken as much as \$65,000 over this old bar in one month." He had none of it now but in a little cabin in Surprise Canyon with a

stream running by his door, and a memory that retained only the laughs of his life, he didn't need \$65,000.

"A city fellow came into the cafe one day. Snooty sort. I told him we had some nice tender burro steaks. He flew off the handle. Said he wanted porterhouse or nothing. I served him. When he finished he apologized for being rude and said his porterhouse was good as he ever ate. I went into the kitchen and came back with a burro shank, shoved it in his face and said, 'Mister, you ate the meat off this burro leg.' I thought he'd murder me."

One day when Ballarat travel was heavy, a dapper passenger dropped off the stage, entered the saloon, bought a drink and paid for it with a \$20 gold piece, getting \$19.50 in change. When he'd gone, Shorty Harris standing by said: "Chris, that money doesn't sound right."

Chris examined it. The gold piece had been split, hollowed out and filled with alloy. Chris worried awhile, then brightened when he noticed his place was full of loafers playing solitaire; pulling at soggy pipes; waiting for a "live one." "Boys," said Chris, "old Whiskers ain't getting much play. Let's go down and see him." 180

Whiskers was his competitor down the street.

A few moments later the bat-wing doors of Whiskers' place flew open and Chris and his bums swarmed in. Chris laid an arm on the bar. "What'll it be fellows?" Then he turned to the loafers along the walk "Line up, you guys and have a drink."

They did and when the drinks were downed, Chris laid the phony gold piece on the bar, received his change and with his crowd returned to his bar. An hour later he was still laughing to himself over the trick he'd played on Whiskers when his own sawed-off doors flapped open and Whiskers barged in, followed by his own mob of moochers. Whiskers ordered for the house and laid down the \$20. Chris gulped and gave the change.

That coin circulated in every store and saloon in Ballarat for more than a year. Everybody knew it was phony, but accepted it without question and came to regard it with something akin to affection. Then one day a gentleman in spats came along and the \$20 gold piece left forever.

Billy Heider, a slim, genial fellow who had been a hat salesman in a smart toggery shop in Los Angeles came not for gold but to escape alimony. His easy smile masked a stubbornness that nothing could conquer. "... she got a smart lawyer and dated the Judge," Billy said.

He hung his bench-made suit on a peg, slipped into overalls, cut off one sleeve of his tuxedo to cover a canteen, spread the rest on the floor beside his bed to step on in the morning and so—transition. Eventually he began to prospect, kept at it for 20 years; found nothing, but he beat alimony.

Usually mines were "salted" in shaft or tunnel to separate the sucker from his money, but it remained for a Ballarat woman to find a simpler way.

Michael Sherlock, known as Sparkplug, because of continual trouble with that feature of his automobile, gave me her formula: "She owned a claim in Pleasant Canyon that had a showing of gold. She wanted \$10,000 for it. A rich auto dealer came along to look at it. He was worth at least \$5,000,000. She told him to take his mining engineer and get his own samples and when he got back she'd have a chicken dinner waiting.

"They got the samples, came down, parked the car in front of her house, got their bellies full of chicken and went back to the city. A couple of days later the millionaire was back. Couldn't get his money into her hands quick enough. Word went out there would be work enough for all comers and we figured on boom times. But he couldn't find ore to match her samples." 181

"What happened?" I asked.

"While he was eating chicken dinner that night, her Indian hired man went out to his auto and switched samples."

I asked Sparkplug why he didn't sue her.

"If you had \$5,000,000 would you want the whole dam' state laughing at you?"

Randsburg, which boomed in the early Eighties as a result of gold strikes in the Yellow Aster, the King Solomon, and later the Kelly silver mine, soon became one of the principal eastern gateways to the Panamint and to Death Valley by way of Granite Wells and Wingate Pass.

A curious story of a man haunted by his conscience is that of William Dooley and told to me by Dr. Samuel Slocum, who had come to Randsburg from Arizona after making a fortune in gold.

A howling blizzard had driven everyone from the streets and the campers in Fiddlers' Gulch into Billy Hevron's saloon. Dr. Slocum, lost in the blinding snow and stumbling along the street, felt with his hands for walls he couldn't see, while a barroom noise guided him to the door.

At the bar he saw William Paddock, mining engineer. "Bill, you're the man I'm looking for. I can't find anyone who can tell me how to get to Goler Canyon in Panamint Valley. You've been there and I want you to draw me a map."

Paddock, finishing a drink ordered one for Slocum and introduced him to a man at his side: "This is Mr. Dooley," Paddock said, and the doctor saw a great hulk of a man with black whiskers, small eyes, and an uneasy look. Before a word was spoken Slocum sensed Dooley's instant dislike of him.

Slocum ordered a round of drinks. Dooley refused and walked to the farther end of the bar.

Paddock followed Dooley after a moment, talked with him and returned to his drink. He said to Slocum: "I'm in a curious situation. I don't know much about Dooley, but down in Mexico he saved my life. Now it's my turn to save his. He just killed a man in Arizona and came here to hide out. I'm taking him to Goler Canyon soon as this blizzard is over. He thinks you are a deputy U. S. Marshal and claims that he has seen you before and that you are no doctor."

"He may have seen me in Arizona at Gold Hill," Slocum said.

"The best way I can help you," Paddock continued, "is to sign the road as I go and after a day or two you can follow us." 182

On the day following Paddock's departure Doctor Slocum set out. The next day he came upon a newly-made grave, outlined with stone. On a redwood board used for the marker was carved this inscription:

*"Here lies Bill Dooley who died by giving Wm. Paddock the dam' lie."*

With no reason to shed tears, the Doctor following Paddock's signs, reached Goler Canyon, made camp and knowing that Paddock intended to occupy a stone cabin farther up the gulch, he started up the trail. He'd gone only a short distance when he saw Paddock approaching, waving his arms in a signal for Slocum to go back. The Doctor stopped.

When Paddock came down he said, "For God's sake, Doc, get back to your camp. Dooley is behind that big boulder above us with a Winchester trained on you."

"Why, I thought he was dead...."

"No," Paddock smiled grimly. "He worked all night digging that grave. Said it would throw you off his trail. I can't get it out of his head you're a marshal."

Slocum had made a gruelling trip to free and open country and he had no intention of being driven out. "I'll go up and talk to him," he said. Paddock warned him that it would be useless and might be fatal, but Slocum insisted and they went up the trail, Paddock going in front to shield him.

Dooley was outside the cabin with a rifle in the crook of his arm, his finger on the trigger.

Slocum was unarmed. He calmly assured Dooley he was not an officer; that he had no intention of disclosing Dooley's whereabouts, "But this is free country and I intend to stay."

Dooley's reaction was a noncommittal grunt. However, violence was avoided. When the Doctor returned to his camp, Paddock decided it would be best to accompany him as a measure of safety. Explaining to Dooley that he would remain with the Doctor to inspect a claim, he remained as a body-guard for three days. On the fourth he went up to the stone cabin and discovered Dooley had loaded his wagon with all the camp equipment and supplies, including a green water keg and left for parts unknown.

Just across the range was Hungry Bill's country. A year or so afterward Doctor Slocum, crossing the mountains into Death Valley, stopped at Hungry Bill's Six Spring Canyon Ranch and noticed a green cask. Hungry Bill said that he had found the keg floating on the ooze near Badwater. "Somewhere under that ooze," Doctor Slocum said, "lies Bill Dooley, his team, his wagon, and its load." 183

An interesting character of this area was Topy Johnson, who scouted for Senator George Hearst and later had charge of copper claims belonging to William Randolph Hearst, near Granite Wells.

While there, Topy employed Aunt Liza, a negro cook. Aunt Liza came from Randsburg with an enormous trunk. She was a good cook, but an awful thief and nearly everything Topy owned except the furniture disappeared piece by piece. When his razor vanished he looked through the trunk and found the loot. He didn't want to lose Aunt Liza, so he removed a few of the more needed things, leaving the rest to be recovered by instalments. Thereafter it was a game of losing and retrieving.

As strange a coincidence as I've ever heard attended the end of Topy Johnson. Sent to Mexico when Pancho Villa was overrunning the country, he fled to Mazatlan when Pancho announced he would shoot on sight both native and foreigners who were not in sympathy with his marauding.

All boats were crowded with refugees, both native and alien, but Topy was permitted to join the hundreds willing to sleep on deck. Topy unwittingly chose a spot over the saloon where drunken celebrants soon began shooting at the ceiling.

A shot penetrated the flooring of the craft's deck and Topy's abdomen. An American physician sleeping alongside was awakened by Topy's groans, attended him, but saw there was no hope. The physician asked his name, the object being to notify the victim's relatives.

"If my doctor were only here," Topy moaned, "he could save me."

"Who is your doctor?"

"Dr. Samuel Slocum, of Pasadena," Topy said, and died.

The physician was Dr. Slocum's nephew.

Thirty-four miles south of Ballarat at the end of a narrow canyon leading from Wingate Pass road into Death Valley, one comes upon a breath-taking riot of color. Pink hills. Blue hills. Hills of dazzling white, mottled with black and green. Yellow hills. Maroon and jade hills.

A gentleman of fine fancy and fluent tongue passed that way, learned that under the hills was a deposit of epsom salts. Then he went to Hollywood where salts met money. He talked convincingly of nature's drug store. "Just sink a shovel into the ground and up comes two dollars' worth of medicine recommended by every doctor in the country. No educating the public. Everybody knows epsom salts." 184

There was no flaw in that argument and Hollywood dipped into its pockets. A mono rail was strung from Searles' Lake over the Slate Range through Wingate Pass and up the slopes to the pink hills. There rose Epsom City. For awhile the balanced cars scooted along that gleaming rail, bearing salts to market—dreams of wealth to Hollywood.

But the world had enough salts, Epsom City failed. Nothing is left to remind one of the incredible folly but a few boards and a pile of bones. The bones are those of wild burros slaughtered by vandals who in a project as inhuman as ever excited lust for money, went through the country and killed the helpless animals, to be sold to manufacturers of chicken and dog food.

A singular character known as Dad Smith, who had come to California with John C. Fremont was one of the earliest settlers at Post Office Springs. Smith had been a scout with Kit Carson in the Apache wars in Arizona and returned to the lower Panamint in 1860, to hunt gold in Butte Valley, where, nearing 90 he dug a tunnel 100 feet in length. Found there delirious, with pneumonia, by Dr. Samuel Slocum, he was removed to the Doctor's camp where Mrs. Slocum nursed him through his convalescence. When he recovered he decided to give Mrs. Slocum a token of his gratitude.

At the time, Barstow and Daggett were the most convenient stations for prospectors in the southerly area. At Daggett they likkered at Mother Featherlegs'. At Barstow they bought at Judge Gooding's store or at Aunt Hannah's, and drank at Sloan and Hart's saloon. Dad's money, as was that of others, was left with them for safe keeping. So he walked every mile of a ten days' round trip to get a box of chocolates for Mrs. Slocum. A little chore like that made no difference to Dad. He encountered a desert rain and arrived at the Slocum cabin drenched. They persuaded him to remain overnight and led him to a tent.

Seeing that water dripped from Dad's blankets, Dr. Slocum went for dry bedding. When he returned, Dad had his own bedding spread on the ground. "Here, Dad—take this dry bedding...."

"Not on your life," Dad said as he crawled into his own. "I'd catch cold, sure as hell."

Two noted athletes of the period went into the Panamint for a vacation. When they asked for a guide, they were told to get Dad, but after looking him over they decided he lacked stamina, but engaged him when they could find no one else. The route was over the Panamint into Death Valley and back through Redlands Canyon—a trip to test the hardest.

On the third day Dad returned alone. Asked about his companions, he grumbled: "They're down and out. Now I've got to haul 'em in." 185

He took his burros, lashed the victims securely on the beasts and brought them in.

Remembered by oldsters, was Archie McDermot, a big fellow of unbelievable strength who was an all-purpose employee of Dr. Slocum.

While they were camped at Barstow one night, Archie went up town to pass a cheerful hour and during the course of the evening a brawl started and Archie suddenly found himself the object of a mass attack by five burly miners. Archie knocked them down as they came, threw them out and returned to his drinking. The constable went in to take Archie. Archie tossed him through the door. The officer didn't want to kill him, and collecting a posse of four brawny helpers, tried again. Archie pitched them out.

Being a friend of Slocum, the constable now went to see the Doctor. "Doc, can't you come down and do something about Archie? Knowing how you need him, I don't want to kill him...."

Doctor Slocum went, discovered that Archie, after throwing everybody out of the place, had seized the long heavy bar, turned it on its side and was sitting on the edge with a bottle in each hand. Doctor Slocum regarded the wreckage and then Archie. "Good Lord, Archie, what have you done?"

"Nothing, Doc," Archie said. "Just having a nip. Take one on the house...."

"What about this fight?"

"Fight?" repeated Archie. "Oh, that—some fellows tried to start a little ruckus but I didn't pay much attention to it."

But if Archie had no fear of a dozen live men, he was terrorized by a dead one.

Doctor and Mrs. Slocum, with Archie, were leaving their camp in the Panamint. The thermometer under the canopy of the vehicle registered 135 degrees—hot for an April day, even in Death Valley country. As they drove along, the Doctor noticed some clothing on a bush. "Seems strange," he said. "Let's look around."

Archie skirmished through the bushes. Presently he returned, his face white, horror in his eyes. He grabbed the wagon wheel, his quivering bulk shaking the heavily loaded vehicle. "For God's sake, Doc. Go and look!"

The Doctor saw a sight as pitiable as it is ever man's lot to see—a young fellow dying from thirst on the desert. His protruding tongue split in the middle. Unable to speak, though retaining a spark of life. The fingers of both hands worn to stubs.

Kneeling, Doctor Slocum asked the victim where he came from; where he wished to go. No sign came from the staring eyes. Finally the Doctor said, "We want to help you. We have water. We're going to take you home." At the mention of home, a feeble smile came, and two tears, the last two drops in that wasted body, rolled down his cheeks and dried in the desert sun and then he died. There was nothing to do but bury the body. 186

"You'll have to help me, Archie," the Doctor said.

A look of terror came into Archie's eyes. "Doc," he pleaded, "ask me anything but that..."

The man who'd cleaned up Barstow, quailed in superstitious fear at the thought of touching the dead.

They looked around for a place to dig a grave. But the country was covered with malpai and lava rock and they couldn't dig in it. The Doctor wrapped the body in a piece of canvas and Mrs. Slocum aided in lifting it into the wagon. She drove the team while the Doctor and Archie walked along, looking for loose earth and finally found a spot. Archie dug the grave. The Doctor lowered the body and Archie with shut eyes, filled the grave.

A press story of the finding brought a flood of letters from all parts of the country. Such stories always do. From mothers, wives, sweethearts—but none from men. It's always the woman who cares.

Such deaths are due to inexperience. This boy had no canteen. Just around the corner of a jutting hill was Lone Willow Spring.

Though scarcely a vestige remains, there was once a town at Lone Willow. Saloons and an enormous dance hall lured the Bad Boys and there the trail ended for scores reported as missing men.

Cyclone Wilson, a nephew of Shady Myrick who built a sizable export trade in gem stones, and for whom Myrick Springs is named, was taking a wagon load of Chinese coolies to work at Old Harmony. All Chinamen looked alike to Cyclone and he didn't know that these were newcomers. It was his custom to discharge his passengers at the foot of a steep hill near Lone Willow and require them to walk to the top.

As usual, upon reaching this grade he set his brakes and waited for the coolies to get out. None moved, then he ordered them out. The Chinamen sat in stony silence. He repeated the order with no result other than jabber among themselves. Angered, Cyclone reached for his long blacksnake whip. It had a "cracker" on the end of which was a buckshot. With unerring accuracy he aimed the whip at the nearest coolie and overboard he went. The others leaped out and drawing knives from their big loose sleeves, massed for assault.

Cyclone reached for a pistol—always carried on the wagon seat, and started shooting. His toll was five 187 Chinamen.

The cause of the murders, it was later learned, was due entirely to the fact that none of the Chinamen had understood a word Cyclone had spoken.

A Chinaman at Lone Willow, who spoke English made his countrymen bury the dead.

Today Ballarat is a ghost town and soon every trace of it will be gone. Roofless walls lift like prayerful arms to gods that are deaf.

In the late afternoon when the shadows of the Argus Range have crept across the valley, a few old timers come out of leaning dobes and stand bareheaded to look about. The afterglow of a sun is upon the peaks and the afterglow of dreams in their hearts. They people the empty streets with men long dead, some in unmarked graves in the little cemetery on the flat just beyond the town. Some on the trails, God only knows where. These dead they see pass in and out of the old saloons. These dead they hear again. Glasses tinkle, slippered feet dance again.

Tomorrow? Their pale eyes lift to the canyons and though dimmed a little, they see one hundred billion dollars.

What of Shoshone? It remains with changes of course. The shanties hauled from Greenwater have been hauled somewhere else. No longer do I step from my car as I have so often and call to those on the bench. "Move over, fellows" and hear their familiar greeting: "Where the hell *you* been?"

Instead, I drive to an air conditioned cabin and stroll back to the former site of the bench, so long the social center. There I see a sign over a door which reads, "Crowbar" and I enter a dreamy cavern with dimmed, rosy lights, hear the music of ice against glass and refuse to believe the startling sight of an honest-to-goodness old timer tending bar in a clean white shirt.

Likewise I balk at the white lines I walk between as I cross the asphalt road to the store.

But above Shoshone the same blue skies stretch without end over a world apart, and under them are the same uncrowded trails; the same far horizons for the vagabond's foot and the peace "which passeth all understanding."



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### ***The Author***

Nearly every newspaperman looks forward to the time when he can get away from the pressure of his journalistic job and retire to a little cottage by the sea, or a cabin in the mountains, and write a book.

The only difference between William Caruthers—Bill, to his friends—and a majority of the others is that he did write his book on the spot, preserved it and after retiring to his orange grove near Ontario, California he got around to the job of revision, which resulted in these pages.

Born on the banks of the Cumberland River in Tennessee, Caruthers' career as a journalist began when he became editor of the local weekly paper at the age of 16. He took the job, he explains, because no one else wanted it.

His family wanted him to be a lawyer, and in compliance with their wishes he returned to school and was admitted to the bar in Tennessee when he was 19. But he wanted to be a newspaperman, and vowed that when he won his first \$2,000 fee he would quit law. Successful as a young lawyer, the time soon came when he won a tough case against a big insurance company—and that was his chance. He closed his law office forever.

For a time he was editor of *Illustrated Youth and Age*, the largest monthly in the South. He wrote feature articles for the *Nashville American*, *Nashville Banner*, the old *New York World*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, fiction for *Collier's Weekly* and other important magazines. His writings have appeared in most Western magazines.

After coming to California he first went to work on the *Los Angeles Examiner*, quitting that job to become a publisher and his little magazine, *The Bystander*

gained nationwide circulation. While editing this magazine he became editor of Los Angeles' first theatrical magazine, *The Rounder*, which was a "must" on the list of early movie stars and soon discovered that the most lucrative field for a journalist was in ghost writing. As a "ghost" he addressed big political conventions, assemblies of governors and mayors and in one instance, a jury as the prosecutor. One eastern industrialist paid him a fabulous fee when the address Caruthers wrote for him brought a great ovation.

Finally his physician warned him to slow down. It was then—in 1926—that he came to the desert, and, during the intervening 25 years, has spent much of his time in the Death Valley region. He has witnessed the transition of Death Valley from a prospector's hunting ground to a mecca for winter tourists. This is a book of the old days in Death Valley.

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- Included a transcription of the text within some images.
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