

# Shoshone Museum Reader

*Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.*

Spring, 2007

Shoshone Museum

Association

P.O. Box 38

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Editor: Jennifer O. Viereck



## FEATURED LOCAL AUTHOR

*Robin  
Flinchum*

by Judy Palmer

A 10-year resident of Tecopa, Robin Flinchum had worked in Mexico and the Bay Area in the field of Women's Health before coming to the desert. A well-known local journalist, she has written regular stories for the Inyo Register and Pahrump Valley Times as well as feature articles for the Las Vegas Review Journal. She lives in Tecopa with her husband and son.

Robin has had a long standing interest in the women of Death Valley. In 2001 she presented the story of Bess Davis, Death Valley Junction's first school teacher, at the 6<sup>th</sup> Death Valley Conference on History and Natural History at Furnace Creek Visitors Center. The following year she and Judy Palmer organized the Death Valley Women's History exhibit at the Shoshone Museum which included Diamond Tooth 'Lil'.

Robin then spent many years scouring archives in museums, libraries, courthouses, private collections, and collaborating with fellow researchers. She also traveled around Southern California and Nevada searching for information. Her skillful use of the internet allowed her to communicate with other researchers, archivists and librarians all over the country. Such a series of books, in fact, probably couldn't have been written twenty years ago without access to internet resources.

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## **Death Valley Region Geology Driving Tour Raises \$1,000**

Many thanks to instructors Lauren Wright & Bennie Troxel, and everyone who participated in the two day geology course and tour in February. We had a full house, and around \$1,000 was raised for the Shoshone Museum and the Tecopa Basin Artist Group.

On Saturday evening, Lauren Wright also presented a collection of Marli Miller's photos taken along the Black Mountains front. The photos are included in the book "Geology of Death Valley", by Marli Miller and Lauren Wright. The book, as well as beautiful photo greeting cards, is available in the Shoshone Museum Gift Shop or by mail order.

A smaller group repeated the tour in April. We hope to offer this popular course again in the Fall of 2007.

## **Penguins at the Shoshone Museum!**



On April 28th, Sharon Schafer, recent artist-in-residence for the Antarctic Polar Arts Program, shared her extraordinary sketches, photographs, and memories in "Walking Among the Emperor Penguins."

Between guest donations and a gift from the artist of a percentage of art sales, over \$300 was raised and shared between event co-sponsors, the Shoshone Museum Ass. and the Amargosa Conservancy.

## **SUMMER MUSEUM HOURS:**

**Closed Wed. 10am-4pm Thurs-Tuesday**

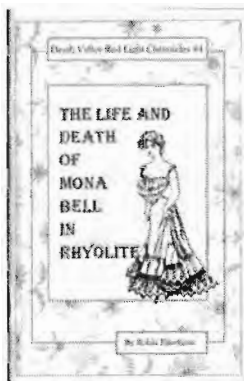
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### The Death Valley Red Light Chronicles

The Death Valley Red Light Chronicles is a series of booklets chronicling the lives of women who worked as prostitutes and madams in the early Death Valley mining camps. Each volume contains compelling original stories illustrated with rare photographs, maps, newspaper articles, and other contemporary items. Current titles are listed below and to the right.

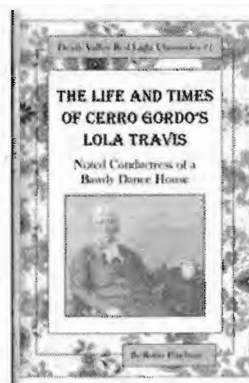
In a reflective moment, Robin explains why her work is so important. "I think it's really important to tell these women's stories. That is, to tell them as the stories of real people who inhabited the mining camps and who had pasts and futures that extended beyond the snapshot of history in which they usually appear. It is important to show that many of them were businesswomen working to gain control over their own destinies. This is an aspect of prostitution in the mining camps that is often overlooked in favor of the more tragic stories."

Buy or mail order one or all of the Red Light Chronicles from the Shoshone Museum for only \$6.95 each. Please add \$1.25 shipping and handling per book. Thanks!



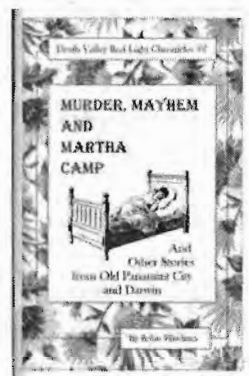
### The Life & Death of Mona Bell in Rhyolite

Mona Bell was just 20 when she arrived in Rhyolite on the arm of abusive, hard drinking gambler Fred Skinner. She spent a few months attempting to work her way up from dance hall prostitute to the proprietress of her own establishment. Then, on the night of January 3, 1908, Skinner's temper boiled into a rage, resulting in Mona's death and Rhyolite's most famous murder case.



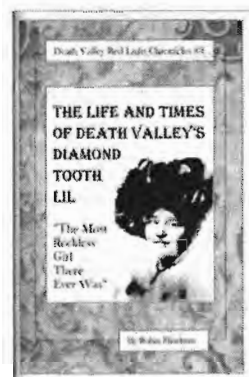
### The Life & Times of Lola Travis

In 1850, as the California gold rush lured thousand of hopefuls from all over the world, a 13 year old girl named Delores Treviso left her home in Chihuahua, Mexico, with two small brothers. Penniless, she made her way to the gold camps, where she supported her brothers by working in a dance hall. Twenty years later in Inyo County, she established dance halls and brothels in some of the most famous Death Valley boom towns on the 1870's and became one of the richest single women in the region.



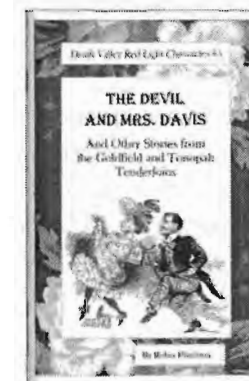
### Murder, Mayhem and Martha Camp

Death Valley's Panamint City was one of the wildest mining camps in the west in 1874. On a narrow side street called Maiden Lane, Madame Martha Camp presided over the most popular brothel in town. Martha lived in a world where prostitutes were afforded little protection under the law. Nevertheless, she managed, in a violent and chaotic environment, to prevail over these elements and even play a pivotal role in the capture of a murderer.



### Life & Times of Diamond Tooth Lil

Lil was one of the most colorful characters to emerge from the legends and lore of Death Valley's mining camps. Born Katie Fiella in Hungary in 1885, she was just 21 when she ventured into Goldfield on the night of the famous Gans-Nelson boxing match in 1906. From there, she would go to the camps of Rhyolite and Greenwater, making a legend for herself that would endure for decades to come. Here for the first time is the real story of her life and adventures.



### The Devil & Mrs. Davis

When Ruth Bush married the most prominent and well liked man in Tonopah's African American community, she thought she was leaving the red light district behind. It wasn't long, however, before George Davis, known to his friends as 'Devil', began insisting that she go back to work to keep him in fancy waistcoats and shiny shoes. When she resisted, he beat her so severely that few would later blame her when she put an end to it by shooting him three times at point

blank range. Ruth's is one of the many fascinating stories from the thriving Tonopah and Goldfield tenderloins of the 1900's and 1910's.



## Echoes from the Archives

Many thanks to all the new and old members that we've heard from since the last issue! The Shoshone Museum has had a successful and fun winter season. The February field trip led by Dr Lauren Wright was well attended and met with great enthusiasm.

The museum also sponsored a series of talks that packed the house, including 'The History of Old Tecopa' by George Ross and Ken Lengner, 'Death Valley's Dynamic Landscape' by Dr Lauren Wright and Marli Miller, and 'A Photographic Journey to Antarctica' by Sharon Schaefer.

The most exciting event for the SMA board was a two day workshop led by Art Wolf, of Wolf Consulting from Las Vegas, Nevada, who has extensive experience in museum management, planning and development. The purpose was to explore the possibility of building a new museum in Shoshone and to chart our course for the next decade. At the end of the two days, the group had created an outline of a Strategic Plan, including three, five and ten year goals.

The movement to build a new museum has been quietly afoot for several years, but in the last year it has gained momentum. As ideas proposed throughout the year by many different people were objectified by the group, it also became clear that a new name for the museum was in order. The *Museum of the Amargosa* was adopted unanimously.

Along with a new name, the group also crafted a new Mission Statement which more clearly states our goals. Our adopted Mission Statement now is: *The Mission of the Shoshone Museum Association is to tell the unique story of the Amargosa region and preserve its cultural and natural history.* We then adopted a Vision Statement to clarify the relationship between the present museum and its board and the new museum. This Vision Statement is: *The Vision of the Shoshone Museum Association is to plan, fund, construct and operate a new Museum of the Amargosa to realize our Mission.*

There are many talented and dedicated people who have committed their time and resources to this project, so STAY TUNED as we keep our members and friends informed about the progress of this exciting project.

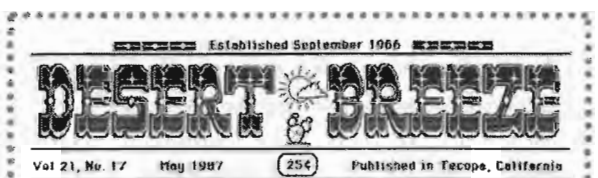
—Susan Sorrells, Board President

## TBAG Members Donate New Wildflower Bloom Exhibit

The most commonly heard question from people interested in visiting Death Valley this spring was "Are the flowers blooming yet?" The media coverage of the once-in-a-lifetime spring bloom in 2005 really captured people's attention and imagination.

2007 was the second dry year in a row, but we felt we should at least be able to show our visitors what that wonderful experience was like.

Over at the Tecopa Basin Art Gallery (TBAG), a number of shows have featured spectacular wildflower photography from 2005 and beyond. We joined forces, and artists Amy Noel, Frank King and Jennifer Viereck donated prints of many different flower species. Amy created a colorful display in the Natural History room of the Shoshone Museum. Media material from 2005 also describes the traditional uses of around 1,200 plants by the Shoshone and Paiute residents of the area. Prints of the photos can be ordered.



### OLD ISSUES OF DESERT BREEZE SOUGHT BY SHOSHONE MUSEUM

The Shoshone Museum is seeking copies of the old Desert Breeze newsletter, published by Leland Gritzner in Tecopa from 1966 until 1987. It was done on a typewriter and by hand, mimeographed, and usually about 2 double-sided pages.

We have some copies, but would like to complete the set. We will photocopy the originals and return them to you (or if you prefer, send us the photocopies). The newsletter contained local gossips, obituaries and article of historical interest and is a valuable local history resource.

# SMA Membership Form

## Membership Dues

Individual	\$ 15
Family	\$ 25
Business/	\$ 50
Nonprofit	
Lifetime	\$ 300
Mammoth	\$ 500
Donation:	\$ _____

Make checks payable to:  
Shoshone Museum Association.  
Mail to:  
P.O. Box 38  
Shoshone, CA 92384  
OR  
Pay by phone using your Visa or Master Card!  
(760) 852-4414

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail for events: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Returning Member: \_\_\_ New Member: \_\_\_

## Notes To Our Museum Membership

Many, many thanks to all of you who renewed your membership to the Shoshone Museum Association since our February newsletter. We would like to warmly welcome all our new members, and especially our new Lifetime Member, Wilma Muth.

10% Members Discount-Don't forget to mention your membership in the Museum Gift Shop, and save 10%.

Donate through your Albertson & Savon Preferred Card. If you shop at these stores, you will be donating to our Education Fund, which provides materials for students who are interested in learning about the geology and natural history of the Death Valley region. Call us for a form or go to [http://www.albertsons.com/abs\\_inthecommunity/](http://www.albertsons.com/abs_inthecommunity/) and click on the Community Partners icon. The SMA number is 49001010978. Its very easy, and these donations really add up to help us.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you have not renewed your membership for 2 years, this will be your last issue. Due to rising postage costs, we will be culling our list by date. We don't want to lose you- please renew now.

The Shoshone Museum Association  
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[shoshonemuseum@earthlink.net](mailto:shoshonemuseum@earthlink.net)

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Closed Wed. Open 10 am-4 pm Thurs-Tuesday  
Beginning Memorial Day