

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Fall 2012

Shoshone Museum Association
P.O. Box 38
Shoshone, CA 92384
(760) 852-4524



Underground in the Grantham Warm Spring talc mine
(Grantham and Peele collection)

THE HISTORIC MINES OF SHOSHONE AND TECOPA

This is the third in a series on the the historic mines of the the Shoshone-Tecopa area. If you have stories or photographs to share, please contact the Shoshone Museum (760 852-4524). We get our best ideas from you, the reader!

THE GRANTHAM WARM SPRING MINE

Although located about 50 miles to the west of Shoshone in Death Valley, the Grantham Warm Spring talc mine was very important to the Tecopa-Shoshone area. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was the largest talc mine in the Western United States and many of the miners that worked there lived in this area.

Louise Grantham and Ernest Huhn filed claims on this remote talc deposit in 1932 just before the area became part of the new Death Valley National Monument. At that time, the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad carried the talc output from the mines near Shoshone and Tecopa. Development of the Warm Spring deposit was delayed

(continued on page 2)

HOLIDAY GIFTS FROM THE MUSEUM BOOKSTORE

The Museum Gift Shop has many new items to help you with your holiday shopping. New books include Tom Sutak's definitive work on Jefferson Hunt, leader of the wagon train that included the Death Valley 49ers. Just released is Ted Faye's new book about the 20-mule teams of Death Valley. It is a real treasure with many rare historic photographs. Also new is a reprint of the 1939 book by Betsy Ritter, "Life in the Ghost Town of Rhyolite, Nevada."



Just in time for the holidays, is a nice collection of jewelry, much of it locally produced by Shoshone artist, Ethel Messer.



Come in and browse around. You are sure to find something for everyone on your holiday

FIRST ANNUAL SMA PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



Best of Show

Miner's Friend (George Ross) by Judy Palmer

The Shoshone Museum held its First Annual Photography Contest this summer. The winners were as follows: Best of Show, Miner's Friend by Judy Palmer; tied for second place, Desert Beauty by Cyndi Souza, and Nissen Mill by Barbara Jobin; and third place, Desert Bloom by Cyndi Souza. The list of all the winners in all the categories is available at the museum.



Gene MacConaghy, new science and math teacher at Death Valley Academy

Community Welcomes New Math & Science Teacher at Death Valley Academy

Gene MacConaghy was born and raised in San Diego, California. He attended San Diego State University and earned a Bachelor of Science degree. He joined the San Diego Police Department working as an evidence technician, investigator, and as a helicopter and airplane pilot. He changed careers and became a high school teacher in San Diego County and in Northern Idaho, where he also taught community college before joining Death Valley Academy. He teaches math and science.

(continued from page 1)
GRANTHAM MINE

because shipping from the Warm Spring to the local railheads would have added another \$2 per ton to the price of the talc. However, in 1938 the T&TRR ceased operation and all the mines had to truck talc to railheads near Barstow, the Grantham mine was only a few miles farther and it became a profitable operation.

During World War II, the Warm Spring operation got a big boost as it was found to be ideal for use in the manufacture of marine camouflage paint. The mine grew rapidly after that.

Louise Grantham was an interesting character as well as a successful miner. She was born in 1900 in Wilmington, Ohio. Her father was a pharmacist who also dabbled in exotic enterprises like a pineapple farm in the Caribbean and movie theaters in California. In 1925, he had grubstaked a tourmaline prospector in Death Valley. When it was discovered he ran off with money, Louise came out to rectify the situation. She pulled a gun on the scoundrel (she actually didn't know how to use it!). He was so surprised, she just drove off with the truck full of the mining supplies.

In her first 10 or so years as a miner, her main interest was gold, but that was never very profitable. She did learn a lot about crooked promoters, thieving miners, unreliable cooks, flash floods, scorching heat and mining accidents. When she finally did start to mine talc seriously in the mid 1940s, she proved to be a very capable operator. Her miners had the best pay in the area, the best food (it cost her \$4 a day per miner and she charged them only \$2), and the finest accommodations (the dormitories were air conditioned).

By the 1950s she was a wealthy woman and built a fabulous home on the ocean in Laguna Beach. She was well known to the people in Shoshone and highly respected for her good business sense and her generosity to others. After her death in 1969, the mine was operated by her brother until 1972 when it was sold to Johns Manville (JM). It was JM that dug the enormous open pit in the canyon. The mine passed through several owners after that and was finally donated to the National Park Service in 1997.

(Photographs courtesy of the Grantham & Peele families of Wilmington, OH)



Louise Grantham, the miner

Echoes from the Archives

by Susan Sorrells
Museum Board President



Once again there is a crisp feel of fall in the air in the early mornings in the Amargosa. With the change of seasons from summer to fall there also is a change in the pace of the social life of the residents. Although the summer months are usually very quiet, the months of October and November are filled with many community events, and this year was no exception. This fall, however, the calendar has been even more full since the Old Spanish Trail Association, which has a chapter in our area, has started a new tradition by planning an event called Old Spanish Trails Days. This new celebration took place on October 19th and 20th and was great success.

The Old Spanish Trails Days was followed by the Fireman's Bazaar on October 27th and 28th at the historic Tecopa Hot Springs Springs Resort. This event is very important to our community since it raises funds for our dedicated volunteer firefighters and emergency technicians. Robin Flinchum spearheaded the event many years ago and with each passing year the event has become more successful. This year it was very well attended and everyone involved had a great time.

The month of October ended with the traditional Old West Days in Shoshone. This event has been in existence since 1949 and, over the years, has been held in Death Valley Junction, Tecopa and Shoshone. This year Old West Days was even more exciting since Friday, as well as Saturday, was filled with activity. The festivities began with the Twenty Mule Team parading through town. The traditional deep pit barbecue was served on Friday, as well as Saturday, and the Peavine Pickers, a musical group, began their entertainment at 1pm at the Crowbar patio. In the evening there was a reception for the alumni of the Death Valley High School and also the History Talks began. The celebration continued Saturday with more history talks, music, food, crafts, art and entertainment. The Shoshone Museum also had on display many new exhibits, thanks to our dedicated volunteers. By Sunday, after a busy weekend of entertainment, friendship, new and old, history and great food there was time for final goodbyes as another Amargosa festivity came to a close.



Curator Mary Burke King and Museum Associate Ethel Messer with the new ornithology exhibit

NEW AT THE MUSEUM

Our hard-working crew has been at again! On work days in September and October, staff (Ethel Messer and Mary Burke King), board members (George Ross, Amy Noel, and Susan Sorrells), and volunteers (Linda Greene Smith, Cindy Emmett, Ila Ross, Kenny Sandefur, and Judy Palmer), did much needed cleaning, painting and repairing. With Curator Mary King's guidance, a new ornithology exhibit was created. Another new exhibit was made by combining artifacts from the 1930s and 1940s medical practice of Dr. Riley Shrum and Nurse May Dorville at Death Valley Junction. The Dorville material was donated to the museum by Dr. Ben Jones of Lone Pine.

If you would like to participate in future workdays at the museum, please call 760 852-4524 for more information.

FREE FRIDAY NIGHT MOVIES

This spring the museum will be showing some old time movies that are about Death Valley and/or were filmed in and around the Death Valley area. The following movies are tentatively scheduled at 6 pm in the Shoshone Museum. Please call the museum to confirm date and time (760 852-4524).

Jan 11: Yellow Sky (1948)

Feb 15: The Bride Came COD (1941)

Mar 8: Greed (1924)

Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

Annual Membership Dues (Please circle one)
 Individual \$15. Name: _____ Date _____
 Family \$25. Mailing address: _____
 Business/Nonprofit \$50. _____
 Cougar \$100. Email _____@_____
 Mammoth \$500. Returning Member ___ New Member ___
 Building Fund _____ Amount enclosed _____

We are grateful for your contributions.
 This is your museum and we hope to
 make you proud to be a member.

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! 760-852-4524

WINTER HOURS

Open daily (except Tues) from 9 am to 3
 The Mission of the Shoshone Museum Association
 is to tell the unique story of the Amargosa region
 and to preserve its cultural and natural history.

Upcoming Events

- Nov 17 Nancy Good Art Show - Tecopa Hot Sprs Resort
 (through Jan 17, 2013)
 Dec 14 Christmas Bird Count - Ash Meadows
 (call 775-372-5435 to register & get information)
 Dec 14-15 Star Party - Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
 Jan 11: *Movie: Yellow Sky (1948) (6 pm)
 Jan 19-21 Free admission to Death Valley Nat'l Park for
 Martin Luther King weekend
 Feb 15 *Movie: The Bride Came C.O.D. (1941) (6 pm)
 Feb 16-17 Sierra Club Desert Committee - Shoshone
 Mar 8 *Movie: Greed (1924) (6 pm)
 Apr 22-26 Free admission to Death Valley Nat'l Park for
 National Park Week

Please call the Shoshone Museum for more information
 760 852-4524

(* Shoshone Museum events,)

The Shoshone Museum Association
 P.O. Box 38, Shoshone, CA 92384
 (760) 852-4524 shoshonemus@veawb.coop