

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

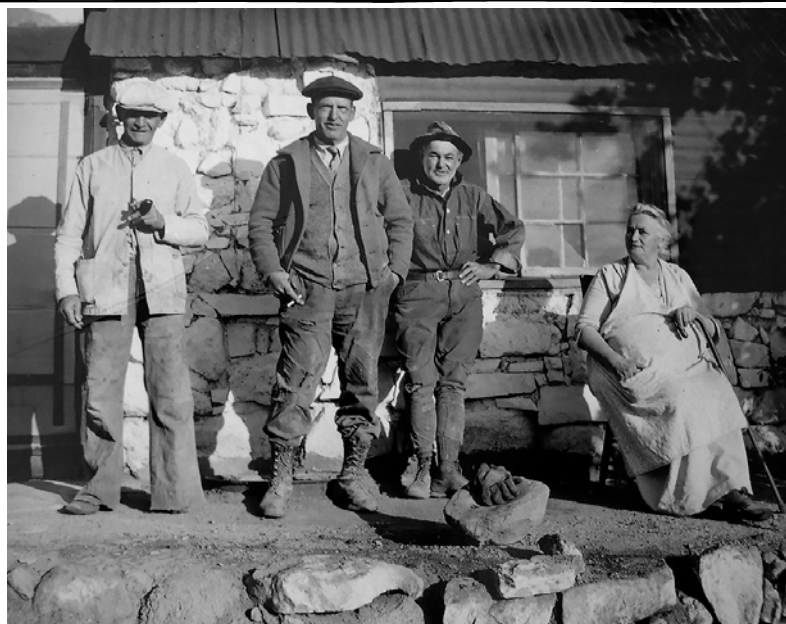
WINTER 2014

Shoshone Museum Association

P.O. Box 38

Shoshone, CA 92384

(760) 852-4524



George Hieger collection - courtesy Kathleen Flindt Walsh

Carl Mengel (left - note missing left foot) with Banta brothers and unknown woman at the Geologist's Cabin in Butte Valley

CARL MENGEL

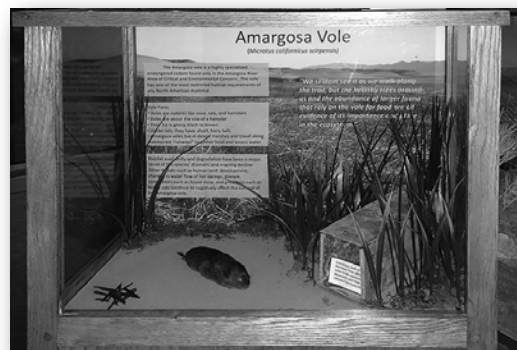
The Mysterious One-Legged Prospector

Carl Mengel of Butte Valley was a frequent visitor to Shoshone and Tecopa. Most of what is known about this elusive figure comes from the stories he told, which probably contain both gross exaggerations and convenient omissions.

Burr Belden (columnist for the San Bernardino (CA) *Sun* and a Death Valley historian) is the source of most of the published material about Carl. However, Wallace Todd, a Stanford scientist studying Butte Valley geology in 1938, was a meticulous notetaker and provides a much more detailed account of Carl's early life. Carl's father, from Alsace-Lorraine, and his Saxon mother moved to this country when Carl was small and apparently did quite well; both died before Carl was eleven. An uncle in Ventura became his guardian, but at 17 Carl ran away to a ranch in the San Joaquin Valley and then went to Angels Camp in Calaveras County, California. When the uncle moved to South America, Carl managed to obtain possession of the uncle's orchard near Visalia. After developing Bright's disease (chronic inflammation of the kidneys), Carl was advised to go north. Selling his land, he went to Seattle, where he bought an old rum boat for \$75 and set out to sea. After his health returned, he sold the boat for \$300 and returned to Visalia, where his old doctor was astounded at his good health.

Carl told Todd that he first entered Butte Valley in 1898. He then went to Esmeralda and Nye counties in Nevada where records show that he located

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New Amargosa vole exhibit

New Exhibit Amargosa Vole

by Caitlin Ott-Conn

Having had the amazing opportunity to research the Amargosa vole during my graduate work at UC Davis, I, with the help of my father, Tracy Conn, built this display case that was later filled by UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife researchers. This is a small token of our appreciation for the way the local community so graciously afforded us all the comforts of home during our work there and will hopefully help educate the visiting public about the amazingly specialized species that inhabit the area.

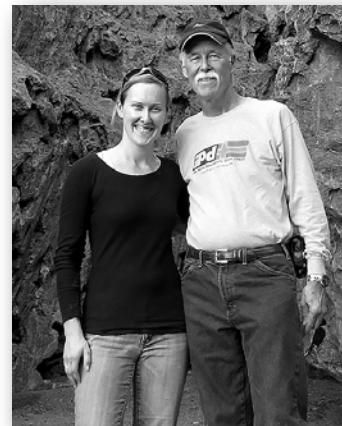


Exhibit case builders, Caitlin Ott-Conn and her father, Tracy Conn

WINTER HOURS

Open daily (except Tues) from 9 am to 3 pm
*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.*



John Moran with Curator Mary King and the new shelves he built for the curatorial office

New Shelves in the Curatorial Office

Curator Mary Burke King has been painstakingly documenting the museum holdings in the museum's Past Perfect database, and the accessions were overwhelming her small office. Luckily, John Moran, a retired paramedic/firefighter from Colorado, was visiting his wife Sue Palmer's family in Shoshone and needed a project to keep busy. John and Mary designed a system that would accommodate the various artifacts, and then John constructed and installed the shelves over several days. Meanwhile, Sue Palmer and museum

volunteer Judy Palmer readied the geology cases for new interpretive materials. Thanks John and Sue, the shelves and cases look great!



Office - before

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CARL MENGEL

numerous claims between 1905 and 1907. His first big strike was in the Black Rock Desert in Humboldt County, Nevada, where he had a thriving operation called "Camp Mengel."

The 1910 US Census in Humboldt County, NV, supports Todd's story (and contradicts later assertions by Carl that he was born in San Bernardino), stating that Carl was born in Germany, immigrated to this country in 1874 at about age 6, and was a naturalized citizen.

Did Carl shoot his first wife? Talc miner Louise Grantham related that she had been told Carl "shot his first wife." Carl was married at least once, to a Jessie Rawles in Tonopah in 1919. It is not known what became of her. However, in the 1930 and 1940 US Census in Shoshone, Carl is listed as a widower. The shooting story may have originated with a local article about a murder-suicide in Los Angeles, but vital records and other newspapers in that city do not have any information about the incident. Carl was very much alive after this, and it is likely that what Louise heard was a rumor originating from this erroneous report.



How did Mengel lose his leg? By the time he settled permanently in Butte Valley in the mid-1920s, Carl had lost part of his left leg. How and when this occurred is one of the greatest mysteries about Carl, and there are at least 3 versions of the story. Belden reported that the accident happened at Silver Peak, Nevada. While Carl was exploring a pinched-out vein, a huge rock fell, badly damaging his leg, which doctors decided required amputation. Belden states that Carl lived another 39 or 40 years, which would date the incident at about 1905. The Goldfield and Tonopah papers from that time do not have any accounts of the accident, which surely would have been front-page news.

In the 1930s, Carl told Robert Ansel Cartter another version. After the rock fall, although help had been summoned, Carl did not know the status of the rescue efforts. Being unable to free himself, he tied a tourniquet around his ankle and amputated that portion of his foot crushed under the boulder. He told a third version of the story to Butte Valley resident Barbara Myers, which she related in a 1994 interview: a rock fall had occurred when an unexploded charge was ignited by his pickaxe when he was 20 years old (about 1888).

Whenever and however it happened, Carl miraculously survived and was fitted with a wooden peg-leg on which he moved about with great agility for many years. In the late 1930s, a friend bought him a mechanical leg, which he used until his death. He remained in Butte Valley at Greater View Spring and prospected in the area. In 1943 his health began to fail. He died at age 76 in San Bernardino County Charity Hospital on April 28, 1944, from complications of tuberculosis. Barbara and Bill Myers took his ashes to what is now known as Mengel Pass in Butte Valley where they created a monument topped with his old wooden leg.

Echoes from the Archives

by Susan Sorrells
Museum Board President



Greetings from the Shoshone Museum! As we begin the new year of 2014 and look back on the past year, there is a feeling that much has been accomplished by the staff, the board, our valued volunteers, and our generous contributors. There are many new exhibits that interpret the mining and natural history of our area, and these are appreciated by visitors and residents alike.

The museum has made even greater strides in its accessioning of the many specimens that have either been donated or loaned to the museum. As a result of our Past Perfect software program, we are able to take a photo of the specimen as it is recorded in our system. Mary Burke King and Ethel Messer have been a dynamic team in recording the many items we have received this year. The proper accessioning and storing of these specimens in many ways could be called "saving" history.

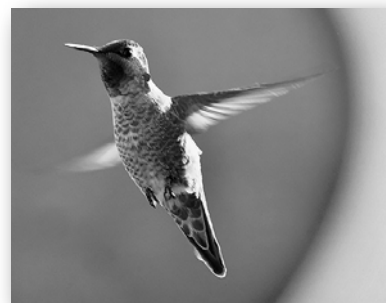
An example of the importance of "saving" history is the story of the little brown suitcase, which was found covered in mud in a deserted building in Shoshone and was brought to the museum. Judy Palmer, a volunteer at the museum, opened the suitcase and discovered that it was chock full of receipts and legal documents, in relatively good condition, that told an interesting story about Jack Madison, a pioneer, prospector, and businessman in our area. Just by luck, Jack Madison's relatives stopped by the museum to see if they could find any information about their kin. Ultimately the suitcase was returned to them, and they then donated it back to the museum. Many questions about Jack Madison's life in the Shoshone/Tecopa area were answered by the discovery of this suitcase, which became the focus of one of the most popular exhibits in the museum.

Fire and Forge Book Signing

(6:00 pm, Monday, March 31 at the Shoshone Museum)

The Shoshone Museum is pleased to announce a book signing event, including a talk, highlighting a fabulous new book about our own Harry Rosenberg and his career as a metallurgist specializing in the production of titanium. The book is expertly written by Kathleen Housley and contains many details about the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad and life in the Shoshone/Tecopa area in a bygone era. Light refreshments will be served starting at 5:30 pm, so come early to visit with Harry and to meet the author.

THE RESULTS ARE IN! Photo Contest WINNERS



Our first-place winner, Sweet Hummingbird, was taken in Ridgecrest by photographer Erin Killian, who says of the image: "I filled up my hummingbird feeder with sugar water, and a shy bird came around, but was afraid of me. It soon learned to relax and eat despite me lying under the feeder with the camera." The Shamans, the second-place photograph, was taken by Gregory Nielson in Little Petroglyph Canyon, Coso Range, CA. Other winners included Third: Sunset at Mahogany Flat - Judy Palmer; Fourth: Sierra Moon - Kate Knight; Fifth: Spirit Herd - Gregory Nielson; Sixth: Lil Friend - Ethel Messer.

FIRE DEPT FUNDRAISER HUGE SUCCESS

Last November's event brought in more than \$6,000 in badly needed funds for our local volunteer fire and rescue department. Museum board member George Ross raised the ante by announcing he would make a \$100 donation if someone would match it! Our Inyo County Fifth District Supervisor, Matt Kingsley, promptly made a personal contribution for the matching donation. Thanks George and Matt, you set a good example for us all. Tax-deductible donations can be made by mail (Southern Inyo Fire Protection District at PO Box 51, Tecopa, CA 92389) or by phone (760 852-4130).



George Ross with AEMT Carl Dennett collecting donations in the fireman's boot

Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

Annual Dues
(Circle one)

Individual \$15
Family \$25
Organization \$50
Cougar \$100
Mammoth \$500
Donation \$____

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____ ☐ New ☐ Renewal

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



Please share this newsletter
--Reuse then Recycle

Upcoming Events

- Jan 19 Above and Below - by Nancy Good & Lara Murray - Tecopa Artists Gallery (through Mar 13)
- Feb 15-16 Sierra Club Desert Committee Meeting
Flower Building, Shoshone
- Feb TBA Copper Canyon Hike - Death Valley Natural History Association
- Mar 4 Mardi Gras - Tecopa Community Center
- Mar 5 *History talk: Carl Mengel, One-Legged Prospector, by Judy Palmer, Shoshone Museum
- Mar 8 Cleanup at Ash Meadows (registration required)
- Mar 15 Tecopa Arts Group Show: Prints from Goldwell Open Air Museum (through May 31)
- Tecopa Artists Gallery
- Mar 31 *Book Signing - Fire and Forge (the Harry Rosenberg story) by Kathleen Housley
- Apr 11-13 Shoshone Desert Art and Craft Show
- TBA Devils Hole Workshop, Death Valley Natl Park
- May 3 The Legendary Moody Scott New CD Release Party & Concert! - Tecopa Hot Sprs Resort
- Jun TBA Scotty's Castle Concert - Death Valley Natural History Association

Please call the Shoshone Museum for more information
760 852-4524
(* Shoshone Museum events)

The Shoshone Museum Association
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