

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

SPRING 2015

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

NARROW ESCAPE FOR SHOSHONE MUSEUM

A midday blaze that threatened the town of Shoshone came within just a few feet of the museum building on October 12, 2014. The fire started in the brush behind the Shoshone Education and Research (SHEAR) Center. The flames quickly engulfed two trailers, but firefighters from the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District (SIFPD) prevented the fire from spreading to the other buildings in town. The SIFPD team was joined by crews from Pahrump Valley Fire and Rescue, Bureau of Land Management, San Bernardino Fire, Amargosa Valley Fire, Death Valley National Park, Cal Trans, Southern California Edison, and the Inyo County Sheriff.

Fire is not an uncommon event in the desert. The adobe building in Shoshone replaced the wooden boarding house that burned in 1925. That fire was reportedly started by a teenager smoking behind the building (the true identity of that youth is still debated today!). According to the late Stella Rook, the fire occurred while the men were out working in the mines, so the women formed a bucket brigade and saved the nearby structures. The following year, the residence of Supervisor Charles and Stella Brown burned while they were in Independence. They replaced the building with a "kit" house, a type of house that was popular at the time and arrived with pre-cut lumber and directions for assembly.

Thanks to all the fire teams who controlled this blaze, and a special thanks to our all-volunteer SIFPD crew whose quick actions saved the museum and the town of Shoshone! Donations to help with the SHEAR Center rebuilding efforts can be made in the Shoshone Museum or by contacting Darrell Cowan. <darrel@u.washington.edu>



Flames consumed a SHEAR Center outbuilding (Danny Macbrohn photograph)



Amargosa Canyon

HISTORY OF THE WILDERNESS ACT by Seth Shteir

To many of us in the California deserts, the word "wilderness" conjures up images of remote canyons, windswept sand dunes, rocky peaks, and iconic wildlife such as desert bighorns, mountain lions, and desert tortoises. The word also elicits positive emotional associations with freedom, quietude, spirituality, and independence, but at the same time can have a connotation of a bit of danger and risk. The bottom line is that wilderness means something different to each of us: to the person who lives in a crowded big city, experiencing wilderness might be going for a short day hike in a state park, while for the seasoned, long-distance hiker it may involve a multi-day journey, seeing no one and carrying all necessities in a backpack.

However, Wilderness is also a federal land use designation, protecting the naturalness, wildlife, and primitive recreational experiences of special places on our public lands. The 1964 Wilderness Act, one of our seminal environmental laws, states that Wilderness areas "shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness." The act defines Wilderness as a place "in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." In the legislation, the word "untrammelled" means "uncontrolled," because the authors of the Wilderness Act believed that Wilderness should be a place where nature is allowed to take its course without human manipulation or interference.

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MUSEUM 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



One-month-old Amargosa vole born at the University of California School of Veterinary Medicine research facility at Davis, CA

UC Davis scientists working to save the Amargosa Vole

Loss of habitat, drought, and climate change have brought our Amargosa voles to near extinction, making them one of the most endangered mammals in North America. But the voles' luck may be changing with the birth of the first pups in a new captive breeding program at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. Janet Foley, Austin Roy, and Risa Pesapane from UC Davis and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are working with the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and UC Berkeley to study the voles. Since captive breeding started in July, the 10 breeding pairs have produced dozens of healthy pups. They are currently housed in a secure indoor building, but will soon be moved to an escape-proof outdoor facility to live among vegetation transplanted from their Tecopa home. Eventually some of the voles will be released back into the wild. Good luck little voles, and a big thank you to the team looking after them.

Visit our vole display in the museum (donated by the UC Davis team, see the Winter 2014 newsletter) to learn more about these amazing little creatures.

AMAZON "SMILE" PROGRAM BENEFITS MUSEUM

Eligible for [amazon smile](#) donation

Thanks to a new program, your Amazon purchases can now support the Shoshone Museum! There is no additional cost, and Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to the museum. To sign up, go to smile.amazon.com and write in "Shoshone Museum Association State Hwy 127." After that just make sure all your orders go through the Amazon Smile portal (you will see "AmazonSmile" in the upper left corner of the screen, and in the top center it will say "Supporting Shoshone Museum"). Bookmarking the site ensures that you start from the right place. Eligible items are indicated in the product description below the price and shipping information.

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History of the Desert Protection Act

Wilderness areas are supposed to provide opportunities for solitude and non-motorized and non-mechanized recreation, which includes hunting, hiking, and equestrian use. However, there are exceptions to this rule, and occasionally roads that wind through Wilderness are open to motor vehicles in what is known as a cherry stem. Wilderness areas generally do not have any type of commercial or industrial development, but there are exceptions to this as well, because cattle grazing and commercial guiding are permitted in Wilderness. Some Wilderness areas even permit airstrips and motorboats where these uses were present before the Wilderness designation.

Wilderness designation can occur on lands managed by the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The only way to create federally designated Wilderness is by an act of Congress. The Wilderness Act states that the criteria for Wilderness-quality lands include that they are of 5000 acres or more, or are of a manageable size, and are places where the imprint of humans is "substantially unnoticeable." Of course, both of these attributes are somewhat subjective, and there is often considerable debate about what constitutes Wilderness-quality lands. However, because an area has an abandoned dirt road, a historic cabin, or an abandoned mine, does not mean that area is unsuitable for Wilderness protection.

Federal Wilderness in the California deserts and throughout the nation provides the American public with a very special and unique experience--free from motor vehicles, the sound of engines, and the impacts of humans. Wilderness areas are places people visit to experience nature and solitude as well as to develop self-sufficiency and resourcefulness. It is important to remember that multiple-use land management agencies like the Bureau of Land Management are tasked with providing the American public with a range of recreational experiences, which include open and limited off-road vehicle use, industrial and commercial development, and federally designated Wilderness. A good way to think of this mandate is that the agency needs to provide a balanced portfolio of recreational experiences. While not all land is suitable for Wilderness designation, this classification provides an opportunity to preserve special places and unique recreational opportunities for those seeking adventure in a pristine place.



About the Author

Seth Shteir developed a love of arid lands while visiting Arizona's national parks as a child with his father. He is now a California desert senior field representative for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) in Joshua Tree, California. Prior to working at NPCA, Seth shared his passion for the natural world for 13 years as an outdoor educator and classroom teacher. He also served eight years on the board of the San Fernando Valley Audubon Society, most recently as conservation chair and vice president.



Echoes from the Archives by Susan Sorrells Museum Board



The mission of the Shoshone Museum is to be a center for the interpretation and preservation of the rich national treasures within the Amargosa and Death Valley regions. This year we are partnering with the Amargosa Conservancy, Death Valley National Park, the Joshua Tree Chamber of Commerce, and the National Parks Conservation Association to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the Twentieth Anniversary of the California Desert Protection Act. We are especially happy to celebrate these anniversaries because there are many important national resources surrounding the communities of Shoshone and Tecopa. These valuable resources include eight Wilderness areas as well as the Old Spanish Trail--a National Historic Trail that is a unit of the National Park Service--and the Amargosa, which is designated as a Wild and Scenic River. These Wilderness zones contain areas that are the most botanically diverse in all the California deserts. They also include many rare species such as the Giant Nolina that are found in the Kingston Mountains. These plants send up spectacular shoots crowned with white blossoms, and they are just beginning to bloom along with other desert cacti and flowers in the region.

The Shoshone Museum, in partnership with Death Valley National Park, is displaying photos taken by park employees of these natural wonders. There is also a display on the endangered Amargosa vole that is found in the Amargosa basin as well as a display on the stretch of the Amargosa River that has been declared Wild and Scenic. Please stop by the museum to help us celebrate these anniversaries and to explore the treasures of our area.



Photographs taken by Death Valley National Park employees



Members of the Tecopa Chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association with the trail marker (left to right) George Ross, Sarah and Scott Smith

OLD SPANISH TRAIL MARKER DONATED TO MUSEUM

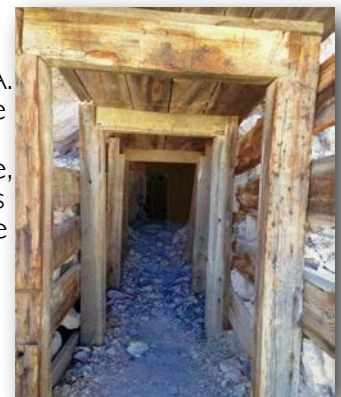
Thirty-five years before Nevada became a state, Mexican merchant Antonio Armijo led a caravan of 60 men and 100 mules to blaze a trail from near what is now Santa Fe, NM, to California's Mission San Gabriel near Los Angeles. According to Liz Warren, in California they traded the blankets and other goods carried by packsaddle from Santa Fe for horses and mules, available in great numbers in California. Between 1829 and 1848, hundreds of traders, soldiers, merchants, horse thieves, and Native Americans traveled Armijo's path. This early trade route is now known as the Old Spanish Trail.

In 1964, Sherwin "Scoop" Garside (son of [Las Vegas Review-Journal](#) publisher Frank Garside) installed 31 concrete obelisk markers in Nevada and California. According to Ashley Hall, president of the Old Spanish Trail Association (OSTA), over the years the markers have deteriorated badly. In 2010 the OSTA began working with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to install new markers.

In May of this year, one of the markers near Blue Diamond was replaced by a team of OSTA volunteers, Boy Scouts, and Back Country Horsemen. Museum board member George Ross arranged with Stan Plum, BLM archeologist, for the old obelisk to be donated to the Shoshone Museum, where it is now displayed.

PHOTO CONTEST RESULTS

This year's first place winner is Elizabeth Dale of Los Gatos, CA. Her image is of a mine on a hill above the ghost town of Rhyolite, NV, that "changed lives forever." Second place prize went to Katie Knight for "Quail Family Breakfast," and third place to Ethel Messer for "Life on Sand."



Forgotten Lives by Elizabeth Dale

Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

(Annual Dues)

| | | |
|------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Individual | \$25 | Name: _____ |
| Family | \$35 | Mailing address: _____ |
| Business | \$50 | _____ |
| Nonprofit | \$35 | _____ |
| Mtn Lion | \$100 | Email: _____ |
| Mammoth | \$500 | Amount enclosed: \$ _____ |
| Senior | \$15 | Donation: \$ _____ |
| Student | \$15 | New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal <input type="checkbox"/> |

Make checks payable to Shoshone Museum Association
Mail to: P.O. Box 38, Shoshone, CA 92384 or
pay by phone using VISA or Master Card 760 852 4524

Upcoming Events

- Jul 17-18 Scotty's Castle Organ Concert (DVNP)
- Jul 31 Blue Moon celebration (Tecopa Hot Sprs Resort)
- Oct 30-Nov 1 Old West Days &
 *Old West Days History Talks
- Nov 6-7 DVNHA History Conference
- Ongoing Get Outdoors Nevada volunteer opportunities
 <http://www.getoutdoorsnevada.org>

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Mary King, Shoshone Museum Curator, is looking for volunteers to help catalog, inventory, and perform various other jobs for the museum.
(contact information below)

Please contact the Shoshone Museum for more information
discover@shoshonemuseum.com 760 852-4524
(* Shoshone Museum events)



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The Shoshone Museum Association
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