

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Summer 2016

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

News from the Curator

Mary King

This last year, several volunteers donated their time and energy to helping improve our museum: Mary Ann Anderson and Haley Duncan, who are now off to college; Kate Knight, who now works as a bus driver for the Death Valley Academy; Jim Ouimette, who brought his own glass cleaner and paper towels to clean windows and cases; and Tiffany Alexis and Aaron Kelly, who are on a work study program through the Death Valley Academy.

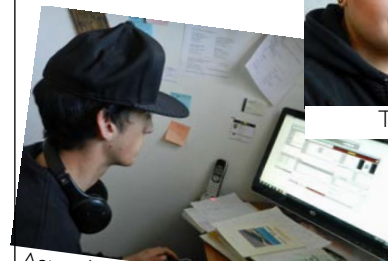
Along with these volunteers, the museum has the support of George Ross, Ila Ross, Amy Noel, Judy Palmer, Linda Greene Smith, Jim Ito, Jim Gilliam, Robbie Haines, and Vance Gilliam, who have worked tirelessly for our museum.

Susan Sorrells has come in many times, working with Ethel on QuickBooks and helping with monies, taxes, and grants, and in many other ways too numerous to mention. She comes in with a smile on her face no matter what the problem and works to clear it up. She has been our savior so many times.

We want to thank you for all your efforts as volunteers because without you our museum would not be a place to tell our unique story through geological, prehistoric, and historic times.



Tiffany Alexis



Aaron Kelly cataloging our collection



Robbie Haines (right) volunteers his time to install the Gerstley headframe



Lisle family photograph

Jack and Betty (nee Fairbanks) Lisle in Baker in the 1930s

JOHN Q. "JACK" LISLE II

(1880 – 1946)

by Lisle Lowe and Richard Lisle

John Q. Lisle, Sr., was raised in Kentucky, where he attended college, studying theology and engineering. Ordained as a Methodist minister in 1852, he immediately joined a wagon train headed for California. Although he had heard stories of the Gold Rush, John was only interested in bringing Christianity to the frontier, spreading the gospel, and serving the people.

On the wagon train, John, Sr., met a Scottish family with two teenage daughters; by the time the wagon train reached Sacramento, John had fallen in love with Josephine Isaphena McGrew. They married and settled in Sutter City, CA, where John served as the Methodist minister. He also became a lawyer and eventually a Justice of the Peace. He and Josephine had seven children--six daughters and one son, John Q "Jack" Lisle II, born in 1880. John, Sr., wanted his only son to study for the ministry, but Jack had developed a passion for striking gold and became a lifelong miner, prospector, and land promoter.

When Jack was 21 years old, he heard about the gold strike in Tonopah, NV, in 1901. John Q Lisle, Sr., passed away in 1903, and, with a small inheritance and freedom at last, Jack joined the thousands of miners and prospectors headed for the Nevada gold country. He became a well-known mining figure during the boom days of Goldfield and Rhyolite and formed a lifelong friendship with Walter Scott, better known as "Death Valley Scotty." After a copper strike in Greenwater, CA, in 1905, Jack relocated there to try his luck.

(continued on page 2)

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

(continued from page 1)

He became a wealthy man in 1906 when agents of the multimillionaire industrialist Charles M. Schwab offered to buy his copper claim for a reportedly huge sum of money, approximately \$10,000 to \$20,000. Putting his money in the Goldfield State Bank, he began to make investments in California real estate and other mining ventures.

Meanwhile, Jack had met the beautiful Celestia "Betty" Fairbanks, 19-year-old daughter of the desert entrepreneur Ralph Jacobus "Dad" Fairbanks, and married her in March 1907. That fall the New York Stock Exchange crashed, and depositors made a run on banks and trust companies nationwide.

With the failure of the Goldfield State Bank, the Lisles were wiped out financially, so they moved to Hayward, CA, and Jack went to work in the Nevada mining industry. He was working as a railroader at the open pit copper mine in Ely, NV, when his foot got caught in the coupling between two rail cars just before the engineer applied the power, resulting in Jack losing part of his foot. The company offered him either a lump sum settlement or a lifetime permanent job. He opted for the latter, but disliked his new job as flagman and subsequently opted for the lump sum.

A few years later Jack was working in a mine in California. While he was positioning mining timbers in a vertical shaft, some support beams gave way, causing a small cave-in. Jack was hit in the head by falling rocks that destroyed the vision in his right eye. Later he had a glass eye put in. Jack's luck changed in 1914 with his discovery of a rich claim in Happy Canyon, CO, located 15 miles west of Denver. He developed a gold and silver claim called the Happy Creek Mine, which he sold for \$10,000.

Jack's union activism and disabilities made it difficult to remain gainfully employed for any period of time. As a result, he took to mining and real estate ventures. In 1923 Jack discovered a clay deposit that was highly valued for oil well drilling mud. He sold this claim, located about 10 miles northeast of Death Valley Junction (near the original Fairbanks Springs), to the Pan American Oil Co. It became known as Clay Camp.

In March 1928 Betty's father, "Dad" Fairbanks, asked her to come to Baker, CA, to help manage the family business. This event had far-reaching consequences, with Betty going off to live and work in Baker, while Jack worked as a miner and lived in St. Thomas, NV, with their two youngest children. Glen, their oldest child, had recently married Harry Adams, and Johnny was working in Oregon. Ralph Lisle had gone to live with his

Aunt Vonola and attend high school in Santa Paula. Jack remained in St. Thomas with the two youngest children, Celesta and Phillip, who attended school in nearby Overton. Celesta, who later lived in Shoshone for many years, won the Clark County Swimming Championship in her age group. In 1931 the US Government purchased the entire town of St. Thomas because the new Boulder Canyon Dam would eventually flood it. Jack sold out immediately and moved to El Monte, CA.

In 1940 the Government Land Office opened up a section of Las Vegas desert land for 5-acre homesteading plots. Jack and other family members received 20 acres and proceeded to make improvements on the parcels. Jack traded property in Arizona for 10 Hoover Dam government surplus houses, moving a two-bedroom house and a couple of one-room plywood buildings on to the property. He then began clearing the land and planted alfalfa, creating a small pond to provide water for the hay fields.

The "Las Vegas Ranch," as it was fondly called, eventually became a centralized gathering place for the Lowe, Lisle, and Fairbanks families. Eventually three permanent concrete block buildings replaced the plywood shacks, and the sale of alfalfa produced a steady income.

Jack's last months were spent in the county hospital in Las Vegas. Bedridden from the effects of a paralytic stroke, he still had his faculties to the extent that he was able to write out his ideas for the reorganization of the US Government. Due to his Methodist minister father, he could quote the Holy Bible and many other passages, chapter and verse. A lifetime voracious reader, he loved to argue and debate. He also had a powerful and sweet singing voice, and older members of the Fairbanks clan were known to reminisce on how beautifully he and Stella Brown harmonized at family get-togethers in Shoshone. He was something of a dreamer and intellectual, which made him "different" to the Fairbanks and Brown patriarchs.

Jack did have an unusual amount of "bad luck" in his life, but, despite his difficulties, Jack Lisle never gave up and was an incurable optimist. Betty and Jack were married to the end of their lives and were buried in the same cemetery in Las Vegas.

Contributors: Janet Lowe, Jimmy Lisle, Lois Adams, David Lowe, Lisle Lowe, Carol Lee Lisle, John Q. "Jack" Lisle IV, Richard Lisle, and Dale Lowe

About the authors: Lisle and Richard are cousins and both are grandchildren of Jack.

Lisle presented Jack's story at the Old West Days History Talks in Shoshone in November 2015. A more detailed version of Jack's story appeared in the March 2016 issue of the *Panamint Breeze*.

Echoes from the Archives

by Susan Sorrells



The 2016 winter season has been an active one for Death Valley Junction, Shoshone, Tecopa, and the entire Amargosa Basin area. At Death Valley Junction, Jenna McClintock has graced the stage of the Opera House, performing to a full house event after event. In Tecopa Hot Springs, two new restaurants--the DV Internet and the Bistro--were a big hit with locals and visitors alike, as was the Death Valley Brewery in Tecopa. In addition, several new bed and breakfasts have opened their doors with great success and have brought many new visitors of all ages to our area. In Shoshone, the restoration of Shoshone Spring, including the expansion of the pupfish ponds, walking trails, and bird viewing trails in the Shoshone Wetlands, has attracted many more visitors.

The Shoshone Museum also has had a busy season. In addition to having experienced an increase in visitation, the Shoshone Museum Association received a grant from Inyo County that funded an Art Literature Workshop that was held in February at the Flower Building. It was a great success. The grant also funded the creation of a brochure depicting an Art and Culture Trail through the Amargosa Basin, including the communities of Charleston View, China Ranch, Tecopa, Tecopa Hot Springs, Shoshone Village, Death Valley Junction, Beatty, and Furnace Creek in Death Valley. Our community has many hidden treasures, and we at the Shoshone Museum are eager to introduce visitors to them through a brochure that includes a map of these sites. Our board and staff appreciate the funding we have received from Inyo County, which will facilitate holding events that highlight the beauty and culture of our area and make it easier for our community and all of our visitors to discover and enjoy the special features found here.

LOCAL AUTHOR HONORED AT OLD WEST DAYS



George Ross (R) presents Robin Flinchum (L) the annual Shoshone Museum award for important contributions to the people and history of the Death Valley and Amargosa regions at the Old West Days History Talks

Tecopa author and journalist Robin Flinchum was our keynote speaker at the Old West Days History Talks this year. Her new book, Death Valley Red Light Women, was released earlier this year by The History Press.

A well-known local writer, Robin has contributed regular stories to The Inyo Register and Pahrump Valley Times, as well as feature articles for the Las Vegas Review-Journal. Robin has had a long-standing interest in the women of Death Valley. In 2002 she and Judy Palmer organized the Death Valley Women's History exhibit at the Shoshone Museum.

Death Valley Red Light Women, is a series of stories chronicling the lives of women who worked as prostitutes and madams in the early Death Valley area mining camps. Each chapter contains compelling original stories illustrated with rare photographs, maps, newspaper articles, and other contemporary items. The women include Cerro Gordo's Lola Travis, Panamint City's Martha Camp, Greenwater's Diamond Tooth Lil, and Rhyolite's Mona Bell.

In a reflective moment, Robin explains why her work is so valuable: "I think it's really important to tell these women's stories. 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."

Robin's book and many other interesting historical works are available at the museum's bookstore.



Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

(Annual Dues)

Individual	\$25	Name: _____
Family	\$35	Mailing address: _____
Business	\$50	_____
Nonprofit	\$35	_____
Mtn Lion	\$100	Email: _____
Mammoth	\$500	Donation: \$ _____
Senior	\$15	Amount enclosed: \$ _____
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



Please share this newsletter
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Upcoming Events

- Mar 19- May 31 Paintings by Len Warren (Birdman of Shoshone),
Tecopa Artists Group Gallery
- Jul 1 Tecopa Artists Group Summer Exhibit
Tecopa Artists Group Gallery
- May 21-22 Sierra Club Desert Section Meeting in Mojave
National Preserve
- Ongoing Death Valley Natl Park events: <www.nps.gov/deva>
Get Outdoors Nevada volunteer opportunities
<www.getoutdoorsnevada.org>
Road Scholar Program, Death Valley Natl Park
<www.dvnha.org/programs-events/road-scholar>
Ash Meadows Natl Wildlife Refuge events information
<adrienne_mcgill@fws.gov>

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

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