

Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Fall 2016



Vonola (left) and Stella (right)

VONOLA FAIRBANKS MODINE

Jenny Larkin

Vonola Fairbanks Modine was born in southern Utah in 1900. Her early childhood was spent in a tent city at Fairbanks Springs in Ash Meadows, NV, where her father, RJ "Dad" Fairbanks, provided food and goods to miners and travelers through the area.

Vonola's sister Stella was her caregiver and best friend. They spent their days swimming, riding burros, and catching pupfish to feed to the cat. Her big brothers would play toss, with Vonola as the ball, and she would scream with glee! An excerpt from Stella's diary describing a trip to Los Angeles in 1907 illustrates one of the family's fun trips:

This morning we went down to the Santa Monica beach and ate our dinner to a Japanese restaurant we had fish for dinner then we went down to the ocean and pa bought me and Vonola a ink stand and Vonola and I picked up shells on the beach... we came down on a street car and we saw lots of very pritty buildings and some of the beautifulst flowers and houses you ever saw. we came back and I bought me a new skirt and jacket and Vonola and me a new hat. pa got ma a watch and we had ripe tomatoes ... at eight a'clock we took a car for the train to go home. we traveled all night long.

When the ore ran out and business dried up at Fairbanks Springs in 1908, the family moved first to Greenwater and then loaded all of their belongings onto two wagons and moved to Shoshone in the summer of 1910. Stella turned 18 that year and married her longtime suitor, Charles Brown.

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

OLD WEST DAYS HISTORY TALKS

Mammoth Room - Shoshone Museum
Moderator: *George Ross*

Friday 4 November

Reception 5:30 - 7:30

6:00 pm Welcome & Presentations
Matt Kingsley,
Inyo County Supervisor

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Vonola Fairbanks Modine

Jenny Larkin

12:00 pm Saturday 5 November

History of the Fairbanks Family

(various speakers & topics)

Shoshone Museum Welcomes Carla Perkins

There is a new face joining Ethel Messer, Bridgett May, and Mary King in welcoming visitors to the Shoshone Museum. Carla Perkins lived in Trona during her high school and young adult years from 1957 to 1970 and spent a lot of time exploring the surrounding desert with her parents, Carl and Helen Hickles, who were avid desert rats and rock hounds. The Hickles were active in the Searles Lake Gem and Mineral Society and Inyo County Search and Rescue, so desert trips were frequent, with the opportunity to meet many of the old miners and listen to stories of the early days. One of these local desert characters was Charles Ferge, aka Seldom Seen Slim, who was a frequent guest at their home.

Carla has traveled extensively in California and Nevada so is the "go to" person for planning travels throughout the area.

She is a retired firefighter/EMT and has worked in Mammoth Lakes Recreation Area and at Death Valley, Sequoia, and Grand Canyon national parks.



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



The Modine home at China Ranch c1923

(continued from page 1)

In the fall Vonola was sent to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart convent school in San Bernardino. She returned to Shoshone after two years, but then moved to Fernley, NV, to live with her sister Betty (& Jack) Lisle.

Vonola met her first boyfriend in Fernley--Victor McPartland. They were inseparable for three years until her Uncle Jack thought she should go back to Shoshone.

Vonola was soon swept off her feet by 20-year-old Alex Modine, and in the summer of 1918 they married and moved to Death Valley Junction where he worked as a conductor on the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad. In July 1920, their first child, Ralph Daniel, was born, and on November 27, 1921, they welcomed Wylder Revard Modine.

Alex Modine and his brother Mort originally came to California to find their father, Dan Modine, who had traveled there searching for silver and gold but was now a rancher at "Modine Meadows" along the Amargosa River in Tecopa. In the spring of 1923 he and his sons bought adjacent China Ranch as a business venture for \$5000. Dan raised the cattle, Vonola and Alex farmed and ran the place, and Mort worked on the Santa Fe Railroad to earn the cash to get started.

Their house was made of poured mud and had three big rooms and a screened porch for summer sleeping, with running water and an outhouse in back.

Livestock included mules, a horse, 25 hogs that they raised and sold for meat, and 500 baby chicks. They purchased a milking cow from the Pacific Coast Borax Company ranch in Beatty.

In the first year, they were able to collect about 300 flats of figs from 13 fig trees that had been planted years before. Vonola ordered date seeds from a catalog and planted them in two rows where she planned to build her dream home one day.

In May 1924, Vonola was pregnant and experiencing morning sickness. One day Alex was up early irrigating the garden and plowing a new plot of ground. Vonola left the house with the two little boys—Ralph, now 4, and Wylder, 2—to help him in the field. They opened the gate, stopped by the bridge to look at the frogs, said hello to the calf, and stopped by the chicken house. Vonola went on towards the field, expecting the boys to follow, but instead, they had found some matches, climbed into the back of the old cellar, and built a fire.

When Vonola looked back, she saw the billowing smoke. Alex dropped everything and ran as fast as he could to the house; Vonola tried to run, but was too dizzy. When she arrived at the house and asked Wylder where his brother was, he pointed to the fire and said "In there."

Nola Jo Modine was born six months later, but this tragedy had changed the Modine family forever. In 1925 Vonola set fire to their home (a secret that was kept for years) so that they could move away from the memories at China Ranch. The Modines settled in Santa Paula and had another son, Mark, before eventually divorcing. Vonola finally found love again at age 80 when she married her childhood sweetheart, Victor McPartland. They were married for 10 years before he passed away in 1991. Vonola passed away a few years later at age 95 with her daughter and grandchildren by her side.

About the author: Jenny Larkin is Vonola's granddaughter. She lives in Connecticut near her 4 children and 4 grandchildren. She works in digital social media for TV Land, but her passion is family history. Follow her on twitter @MediaDweeb.



Echoes from the Archives

by Susan Sorrells



The seasons are beginning to change in the Amargosa Basin, and the mornings and evenings now are cool and crisp--a sure sign that our winter visitors will be returning to the Shoshone, Tecopa, and Furnace Creek areas for the season. There already are many traditional activities planned for the next eight months, including Old West Days in Shoshone and the Las Vegas Jam Band Society, Tecopa Takeover IV, the Firehouse Fling, and a series of art shows at the Tecopa Hot Springs Gallery. Another favorite community activity on a Saturday evening is the performance by Pablo Tecopa and The Dusty Butter Band at the Bistro at the Hot Springs. In addition, there are many new events that have been added to create an interesting and activity-packed season. Because our area is so rich in history, breathtaking landscapes, geology, and natural history, several new touring companies and personal guides have emerged to allow our visitors to experience and enjoy our area's treasures in a safe and convenient way.

The Shoshone Museum Board of Directors and staff are happy to announce that we are in the midst of producing a new guide--the Southeast Inyo Art and Culture Trail--as the result of a generous grant from Inyo County. This new guide comes at a perfect time to allow our visitors to enjoy all the activities in the Amargosa Basin and Death Valley. It also will facilitate the enjoyment by our visitors of the new businesses that are springing up. This new guide will include a map and a description of all the interesting and entertaining businesses, plus contact information that will serve as a link to them, allowing our visitors to discover information on lodging, amenities, and events. With this guide, the visitor can move from business to business, ensuring that none of our community gems will be overlooked. The guide also will make it easier for our visitors to plan their trips while in our area, because there are so many activities and interesting businesses that they can't all be seen in a day or even a week. The Shoshone Museum also is growing and improving as it continues to be a community organization that not only protects and interprets the area's cultural and natural history but informs and guides our visitors. The next time you visit Shoshone, please stop in and meet our informed and helpful staff and pick up a Southeast Inyo Art and Culture Trail guide. Your visit to the museum, and this guide, will add to your enjoyment of our fascinating area!

AEMT Carl Dennett Receives "EMS Provider of the Year"



Carl Dennett with his EMS Provider of the Year Award in front of SIFPD's new ambulance

Each year the Inyo County Board of Supervisors recognizes an outstanding Emergency Medical Service (EMS) provider. This year our own Carl Dennett was the recipient. Matt Kingsley, 5th District Supervisor, presented Carl with his award at the May 17 meeting of county supervisors in Independence.

Carl has been an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) for the Southern Inyo Fire Protection District (SIFPD) since 2011. Three years ago both he and Billy Eichenbaum took advanced training and qualified as Advanced EMTs.

In addition to responding to 911 ambulance calls in Tecopa, Shoshone, Death Valley Junction, Charleston View, Chicago Valley, and Southern Death Valley National Park, Carl serves as administrative chief for the department. He also organized a highly successful training program that has doubled the number of EMTs available to respond to emergency calls. In addition, Carl has taken fire fighter training so he can help our area in yet another way. Previous SIFPD EMTs who have received this award include Billy Eichenbaum (2011) and Judy Palmer (2014).

Thanks, Carl, for your invaluable service to our community! We are grateful for all you do.



Upcoming Events

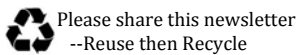
- Sep 17 - David Aaron Smith Exhibit "In Congruous Thought" (reception Sep 17); Tecopa Artists Grp Gallery
- Nov 17
- Oct 15-16 National Historic Preservation Act Celebration Death Valley National Park (DVNP)
- Nov 4-6 Old West Days & History Talks*, Shoshone
- Nov 11-12 Las Vegas Jam Band Society, Tecopa Takeover IV Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
- Nov 19 Firehouse Fling; Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
- Nov 19- Jan 12 Small Works Show; Tecopa Artist Group Gallery Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
- Feb 11-12 Sierra Club Desert Section Meeting, Shoshone
- 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>
Tecopa Hot Springs Campground (music, hikes, and more) <http://www.tecopahotspringscampground.com/>

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

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