

# Shoshone Museum Reader

*Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.*

Fall 2021

Shoshone Museum Association

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## **LEON NOYCE and the ROCK SHOP OF SHOSHONE**



Leon Noyce in the Gold Mine Rock Shop and Desert Museum

The Shoshone Museum building has a long and colorful history. During its more than 125-year history it was many different things in many different places, including serving as an infirmary for miners in Greenwater and as a union hall and store in Zabriskie, before finally coming to rest as a general store in Shoshone about 1920 (see Shoshone Museum Reader, Fall 2009). After the construction of a new general store across the street in 1949, the building was vacant until about 1960 when a miner, Steve Demick, and later John Kane opened it as a rock shop and desert museum. Leon Noyce retired from the Nevada Test Site in 1969 and worked as Kane's assistant until he took over the operation about 1973, when it became known as Leon's Gold Mine Rock Shop.

In the 1986 Amargosa Days brochure, Tecopa resident Suzi Q. Reynolds provided an extensive story about Leon and his activities based on her acquaintance with him and on a 1984 biography written by Leon's brother Harold Girton.

Leon was born in Chicago, IL, in 1904 to Nancy Anna "Dottie" Weed and Peter F. Noyce. His parents divorced when he was about 5 years old. His mother remarried and had more children. The family moved first to Oklahoma and eventually settled in Washington State by 1920. At the age of 16, Leon worked in a sawmill in Pierce County, WA. In 1927 he married Lorenea Brown, and they a son and two daughters.

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## **The Amargosa Basin National Monument Campaign; the Time is Now**

By Susan Sorrells

In the last five years there has been a burgeoning campaign to shift the land status of the Amargosa Basin from National Conservation Lands to a national monument (BLM). This land status change would not affect private property. The proposed National Monument is on the edge of the Nevada border nestled between the Mojave Preserve and Death Valley National Park and includes the communities of Tecopa, Shoshone, and Death Valley Junction. In the last ten years the area has been recognized as a desert treasure trove of natural and human resources. It also is an important connecting corridor and transitional zone for the flora and fauna situated between the Mojave Preserve and Death Valley National Park. Even the unique communities located in the area have a better opportunity for achieving sustainability as prosperous and healthy communities with the creation of the Amargosa Basin National Monument because there will be an increase in visitation without the destruction of the land and its creatures.

## **ONLINE SALES**

### **Benefit Shoshone Museum**

Online retail has been a major shopping venue for many of us during the pandemic and before (and likely beyond). In 2013 Amazon initiated its SMILE program through which it donates a small proportion of eligible sales to a charity of the customer's choice. To date the Shoshone Museum has received \$334.06 from the program. We urge you, if you do shop online, to take advantage of this or any opportunity to support our museum.

<https://smile.amazon.com>

### MUSEUM HOURS

Open Monday-Friday 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

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By about 1930 he was living in Redlands, CA, and shortly after that he began mining with his brothers in the Redlands area. He and his brother David Girton registered to vote in Shoshone in 1936, where they operated the Desert Hound Mine until it played out about 1938. He worked briefly as a miner in Mexico, but returned to Redlands where he found employment as a blacksmith. He continued to visit Shoshone frequently and operated several local mines. During the war years he resided in Mentone, CA, while working as a welder for the Navy at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. After the war, he worked at the Nevada Test Site until his retirement.



The Rock Shop and Desert Museum

Under his ownership, the rock shop became a local landmark. As noted by Suzi Reynolds, the Gold Mine was an eclectic collection of odds and ends that included old bottles, antiques, desert memorabilia, tools, books, yellowed newspaper clippings, jokes, cut rocks, and jewelry. He modified an old oil barrel for use as a forge and would cut and polish rocks to educate and entertain visitors.

He was known as an honest, soft spoken, kind, and generous person who would gladly loan tools and help others any way he could. Leon's grandson, Edward Garcia, has fond memories of visiting the rock shop with his mother. Leon lived in the old schoolhouse near the present-day maintenance yard until his death in 1986 in Clark County, NV. He is buried in the Tecopa Cemetery.

## John Moran Rescues the Shoshone Museum Mammoth



John Moran and the sagging Mammoth exhibit

It was an exciting day in 1998 when the Shoshone mammoth bones finally came home! In 1982 the remains of these prehistoric animals were discovered south of town by a group of geology students, reportedly when their dog came back to camp carrying a bone that looked older than "just sort of old"! The specimens were taken to California State University, Sonoma, for study before being returned for permanent display at the museum.

Since then, thousands of visitors have enjoyed the exhibit of these 600,000-year-old bones. Recently, however, the base of the display had begun to collapse under their weight. Fortunately, John Moran, a retired paramedic/ firefighter from Colorado, was visiting in Shoshone and needed another project to keep busy—in 2014 John had built sturdy shelves in the curatorial office.

Because the fragile bones could not be easily moved without damaging them, the work had to be done carefully (and safely) from below. Using an extensive system of jacks, timber shoring, and shims, John first stabilized the visibly sagging area and then the rest of the base. He was then able to gradually elevate the depressed segment, repair the collapsed area, and reinforce the entire display. Thanks John, for once again coming to the rescue and saving our mammoth!



Timber shoring in place underneath the display

## Echoes from the Archives

By Susan Sorrells



As the Shoshone Museum prepares for the coming winter season, the board of directors and the staff, at our last board meeting, reflected on the previous year and planned for the coming one. Although it has been a difficult year for the Shoshone/Tecopa communities and for the museum, there were many inspiring developments. Although the museum was closed much of the year, our members and supporters donated more than \$15,000 to keep the museum functioning and financially viable. In addition, our supporters continued to donate or loan to the museum important specimens that will be invaluable to scientists and historians who are researching the history of the area and its natural sciences. Other donors provided dedicated funds to build a proper facility to house our many valuable specimens. We hope to have the storage functioning by next year. Another friend and supporter, John Moran, rebuilt the case that houses our prized exhibit, the remnants of mammoths and mastodons found in the Amargosa Basin. (Story in this issue)



Ken Lengner giving a presentation to the Park Service staff

The strength of the museum always has rested with its friends and supporters, and we lost a deeply valued friend, Ken Lengner, on May 31, 2021. Ken's career was in aerospace and over his career he worked on important programs like the Apollo Moon Landing, Skylab, and the Shuttle program.

But Ken and his wife Nancy have always loved our desert region and, when he retired, they moved to the area twenty years ago. He immediately began writing and publishing books on the region, seven altogether, and offered lectures and field trips to our community and our visitors. These presentations mostly were sponsored by the Death Valley Natural History Association and the Shoshone Museum. At these events he made many friends and was greatly admired.

He is terribly missed, and his passing has left a big hole in the heart of our community.



Sue Palmer with the pine needle basket making group at the pupfish pond in Shoshone

### Local Artists Raise Money for Shoshone Museum

In April two of our favorite artists provided local residents with outdoor workshops to benefit the Shoshone Museum.

Sue Palmer's pine needle basket making class was held on a bright sunny day under the trees at the Shoshone pupfish pond. Sue provided all materials, including unique basket centers that she had made from colorful fused glass. Each participant received a supply of carefully selected Ponderosa pine needles and other materials and supplies required.

Later in the month, Judy Dillman's oil painting workshop featured Italian earth pigments that she had ground by hand to create the paint. She provided the brushes and all the other items needed. A display of the works created will be on display at the Shoshone Museum.

Thank you, Sue and Judy, for donating your expertise, time, and materials to support our museum.



Judy Dillman (standing left) with the Italian earth tones oil painting group

### Shoshone Museum Association Membership Form

(Annual Dues)

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

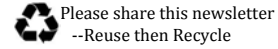
New  Renewal

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

- November \* Gift Basket Raffle Benefit, for the Shoshone Museum
- Nov 6 Firehouse Fling, fund raiser, Tecopa Hot Springs Resort
- Ongoing** Tecopa Hot Springs Resort: Saturday night music with Pablo and friends weather permitting, Sunset - 10pm
- Death Valley Natl Park events: <[www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva)>
- Get Outdoors Nevada volunteer opportunities <<https://getoutdoorsnevada.org/>>
- Road Scholar Program, Death Valley Natl Park <[www.dvnpa.org/programs-events/road-scholar](http://www.dvnpa.org/programs-events/road-scholar)>
- Ash Meadows Natl Wildlife Refuge events information <[https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Ash\\_Meadows/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Ash_Meadows/)>
- Tecopa Hot Springs Campground (music, hikes, and more) <<http://www.tecopahotspringscampground.com/>>

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



Remember, your Amazon purchases can benefit the Shoshone Museum. Sign up for the Smile Program at <https://smile.amazon.com>

Eligible for **amazon**smile donation

Shoshone Museum **\$334.06** has received as of June 2021

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