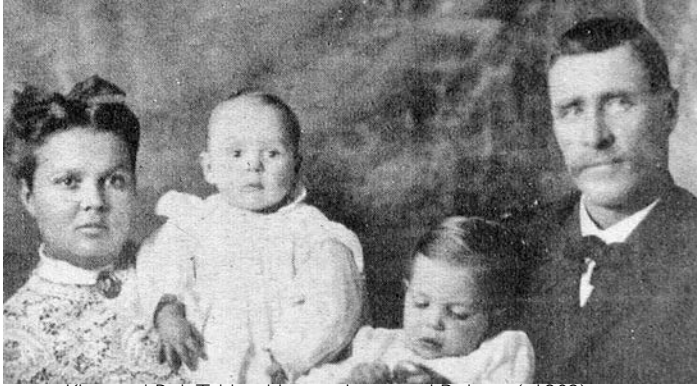


Shoshone Museum Reader

Produced for our Members by the Shoshone Museum Assn.

Summer 2024

THE WOMEN OF DEATH VALLEY JUNCTION



Kitty and Bob Tubb with sons Leon and Robert (c1902)

Death Valley Junction (DVJ) has a colorful history, to which many interesting women have contributed. It was initially known simply as Death Valley, a stop on the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad. The name first appeared on a plat map in 1905 (two years before the railroad reached the area) and on a United States Geological Survey map in 1910.

The town's first white woman, "Shotgun" Kitty Marbaker Tubb (1886-1957), arrived about 1905 with her husband Robert (Bob) and their two children. Bob was a freight hauler and worked in that capacity while the railroad was being built. They settled in the area after the railroad reached what became DVJ. Bob "settled up" on 320 acres of land and attempted to grow grain and fruit trees, but problems with the 10-mile ditch built to bring in water caused crop failure. As a result, they established a combination saloon/brothel that Kitty operated. Two more children were born to them. They divorced in 1914, and Kitty moved to ranch land patented in her name in Ash Meadows where she lived until her death.

By 1909 another saloon, run by Hattie Cook (aka Agnes Patrie) and Nel Hoff, was established in the area. Complaints were made about this operation because women patrons were allowed, and Hattie herself tended bar. Nothing more is known about her, although she was reported to have previously operated a brothel in the area. In October 1909 the Inyo County Board of Supervisors revoked Cook and Hoff's liquor license.

(continued on next column)

Shoshone Museum Association

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About 1914 a widow, Abigail (Abbie) Legora Condron Pierce (1879-1946), and 6 of her 7 children arrived in DVJ. Abbie and her late husband, James Thomas Pierce (1875-1914), had operated a cattle ranch in Arizona. In 1916 she purchased a quarter section of land from the Tubbs. According to a grandson-in-law, she operated a store, hotel, and restaurant. She reconnected with an old acquaintance, the widower cattle rancher Henry Andrew Polk (1859-1930). They married in 1920, and she and the children moved to Madera with him.



Mary (Winnie) Connelly Corkill (1887-1957) was born in San Francisco where her father was a blacksmith and her mother ran a boarding house and taught music. In 1910 she married Frederick Corkill, a Pacific Coast Borax Company executive, and they moved to the borax mining camp at Old Ryan near DVJ, to which they later moved in 1915. Winnie brought her piano, which she played at all social events, becoming the life of every gathering. After the rough life of the mining camp, the Corkills moved into a new building in DVJ with hardwood floors, a modern bathroom, and hot water. By this time DVJ had many amenities,



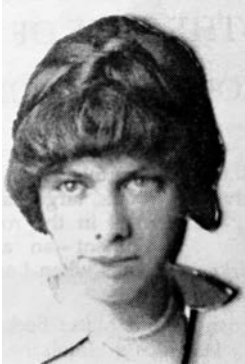
including a well-stocked company store and a nurse. Winnie lived there until 1928 when they moved to Boron, CA, and then to Los Angeles.

MUSEUM HOURS

*Open Daily from 9 am to 3 pm
(Summer hours may vary; closed Mondays)*

*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)



At the request of Bob Tubb, in 1915 Bess May Davis (1892-1981), a recent graduate of the State Normal School at Los Angeles, arrived in DVJ to take a position teaching school. The arrival of a young attractive woman created quite a stir. She was taken in hand by two women married to borax executives, Fannie Ferguson and Winnie

Corkill. In 1917 she returned to Los Angeles to accept a teaching position. However, she had fallen in love with a borax company clerk, Frank de V Grace, and they married in 1924.

When borax mining moved from Death Valley to Boron in 1927, the miners' living quarters at DVJ were converted into a hotel managed by Pauline Frederick Gower (1891-1973), who was married to a borax company employee. An accomplished musician, she composed the Ode to Death Valley and arranged the annual Death Valley Easter Sunrise services at the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes.



May Penney Dorville (1889-1978) was a nurse who worked at the clinic and hospital that was operated by the borax company at DVJ from 1907 until the late 1950s. May started there in the early 1930s. After the retirement of Riley Shrum, MD, in 1941, Drs. Jones, Christenson, and Zimmer made regular



visits, but May was the primary medical provider other times. She delivered babies and treated victims of airplane, traffic, and mining accidents, gunshot wounds, and illness. She attended local rodeos and sporting events to be available in case injuries occurred.

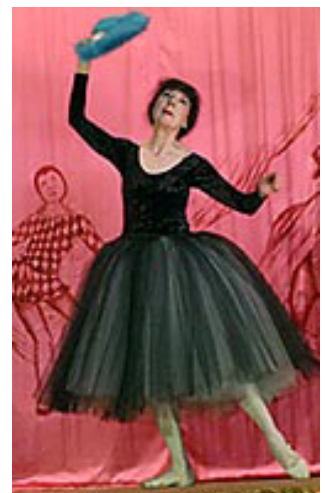
Ettie Lee (1884-1974) purchased DVJ in 1961 to develop a retirement home for the indigent aged. Later, she found the property was in terrible condition. After 3 ½ years of legal wrangling, she was able to reduce the amount she owed from \$170,000 to \$7,000. As a teacher, she was paid \$200 a month—she lived on half of that and invested the rest in Los Angeles real estate. In 1965 her holdings were valued at three million dollars. She taught junior high English in Los Angeles for 44 years and dealt with many delinquent boys. With her earnings, she purchased and staffed 18 homes where troubled boys could be raised with warmth and security. An estimated 3,000 boys lived in these homes between 1950 and 1974. Her foundation is still serving families in need today.



Ettie Lee Homes Fireside, May 1974

In 1969 Marta Becket (1924-2017), a ballerina and artist from New York, was on a nationwide dance tour with her husband, Tom Williams. They stopped in DVJ to get a tire repaired. By this time, the property had been virtually deserted for decades. While Tom tended to the repair, Marta happened on Corkill Hall and decided to restore it as her own private theatre. After living and performing at DVJ for many years, Marta finally purchased the property in 1980 and created the Amargosa Opera House Association. She painted murals on the walls and ceiling, constructed lights with large tin cans, wrote and choreographed original dances, created her own sets, and sewed her own costumes.

The DVJ hotel and theatre are now managed by a nonprofit association to preserve Marta's legacy and the historic property. Donations may be made at



—> <https://www.amargosaoperahouse.org/operahouse/>

Echoes from the Archives

by Susan Sorrells



The year 2023 went out with great fanfare. In August Hurricane Hilary blew through the Amargosa and Death Valley region, washing the desert with torrents of rain. The next week an even stronger storm destroyed the majority of the critical transportation routes throughout the area, including Hwy 190 through Death Valley National Park and Hwy 127, which connects Shoshone and Tecopa with Baker and I-15. Because of these road closures, few tourists or other visitors travelled to the Amargosa, and, in addition, the residents had difficulty leaving. As a result of these circumstances, the businesses and the museum were scrambling to stay financially afloat (no pun intended!). The road through Death Valley National Park opened in November, and the road to Baker opened in January 2024. Finally, by the end of January, the area was beginning to return to normal. But despite these setbacks, there are many exciting developments in the Amargosa, one of these being the Amargosa Basin National Monument campaign. Those of us who love this area--its breathtaking viewscapes, clean air, unique oases teeming with life along the Amargosa River, and its communities that enjoy a special rural way of life--hope that these qualities and others will be protected for generations to come. Monument status, as a part of the Bureau of Land Management's National Conservation Lands system, provides a legal path to achieve these goals. The permanent creation of the National Conservation Lands system in 2009 offers a new way to manage public lands. Its mission is to "conserve, protect, and restore these nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations." Unlike previous government approaches to land management, this new strategy of monument designation considers cultural landscapes as well as natural ones. This is important in the Amargosa because the Salt Song Trail, sacred to the Southern Paiute and Chemehuevi tribes, passes through the heart of this cultural landscape, and the Timbisha Shoshone and the Western Shoshone also consider areas in this landscape sacred. The Old Spanish Trail, another cultural landscape designated as a National Historic Trail by the US National Park Service, weaves across the proposed national monument. There are other cultural landscapes in the Amargosa, such as mining sites, that are also worthy of protection. Please contact Friends of the Amargosa Basin at info@friendsoftheamargosabasin.org if you are interested in learning more about this campaign to protect the land and the communities we all love!

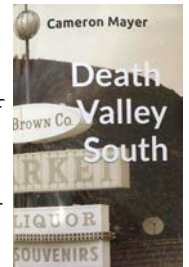
RAW DESERT HONEY



SouthWest Honey is now on sale at the Charles Brown Store across the street from the Shoshone Museum. As reported last spring, a huge nest of desert honeybees was found under the museum. Beekeeper Alex Garcia transplanted the nest to the Shoshone wetlands, where the bees have thrived, and he has now been able to harvest honey from the hives. In April the first batch of honey arrived in Shoshone. Various size jars of delicious local honey are now available for purchase.

NEW BOOKS BY LOCAL AUTHORS

We are fortunate that our area is home to many talented authors who write about topics of local interest. Cameron Mayer's book of poems, *Death Valley South*, is inspired, in part, by his work as the executive director of the Friends of the Amargosa Basin. Ruth Nolan, professor of English and creative writing at College of the Desert in Palm Springs, also wrote a book of poetry, *After the Dome Fire*, that is drawn from her work as a desert firefighter. Award-winning novelist and professor in the University of California, Irvine, creative writing program, Claire Vaye Watkins grew up in Tecopa, CA, and Pahrump, NV. Her childhood experiences are reflected in the novel *Battleborn*. The museum carries two more of her books, *Gold Fame Citrus* and *I Love You But I've Chosen Darkness*. In 1974 Jim Anderson and three others hiked from Mt. Whitney to Badwater in Death Valley—Jim relates the story of their adventure in *Sometimes a Great Notion Isn't So Much*. In 2017 his daughter, Withanee Anderson, undertook the same journey and tells the story of her experiences in *Walk of Ages*. Other books for summer reading can also be found at the museum, including *Red Light Women of Death Valley* by Robin Flinchum of Tecopa and *Desert Voices*, the stories of those buried in the Shoshone Cemetery.



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: \$ _____

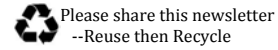
New Renewal

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

- Ongoing** Tecopa Hot Springs Resort: Fri & Sat night music with Pablo and friends weather permitting, Sunset - 10pm
 Death Valley Natl Park events: <www.nps.gov/deva>
 Get Outdoors Nevada volunteer opportunities
 <<http://getoutdoorsnevada.org/>>
 Road Scholar Program, Death Valley Natl Park
 <www.dvnh.org/programs-events/road-scholar>
 Ash Meadows Natl Wildlife Refuge events information
 <http://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



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