

Aleen Ledford
April 21, 1982

INTERVIEW WITH LLOYD LESHER, Leshar Ranch, Star Rt. Box 7,
19623 Road 11, Friant, California.

Lloyd's parents purchased land homesteaded by George Wagner (See 1891 plat map) from the Wagner descendents in the early 1920's. This included land in sections 19, 29 and 30 in Township 10S, Range 21E. His ranch holdings at present extend on both sides of Rd. 211 and includes the land upon which Indian Springs on Cottonwood Creek below the N. McDougald Ranch is located and which was homesteaded by C.J.M. and C.H.B. Klette (See 1891 plat map) and also the land upon which part of the old site of Bellview is located, ie, the SE corner of the junction of Rds 211, 208 and 210. This land contains foundation ruins running diagonal to the intersection, eucalyptus trees behind the ruins and the remains of a Minarets and Western Railway trestle to the west of the ruins.

A graveyard is located on the Leshar land, about 1/4 miles North of the main house. It is about 1/4 acre in size and fenced. We were given permission to visit it and record the names and dates. It is the graveyard of the Wagner family and the Ritter and Oyler families, both of whom homesteaded South of Bellview near the Wagners and also includes four Cochran stones and one Williams stone. The graves of the original settlers, George Wagner 1844-1894 and his wife Johanna Wagner 1850-1945

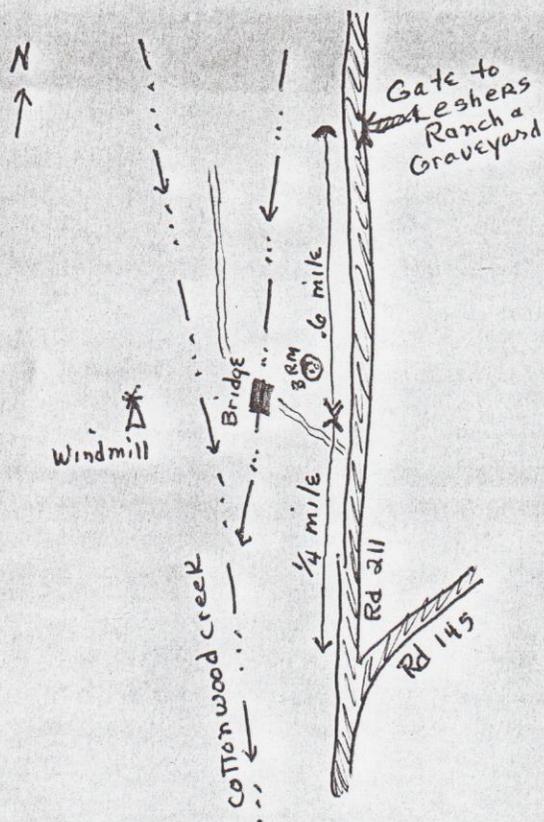
are in this graveyard. Mr. Lesher said that his father had deeded 2 acres of land where the old graveyard was located back to the Wagner family when the Leshers purchased the ranch. The graveyard is still in use today by the Wagner descendants.

The Lesher ranch house lies to the north-northwest of Tic-tac-toe Hill. (See 1965 USGS Millerton West map). He explained how the hill received its name. As you look at the hill from his ranch you can see a natural rock formation on the slope which resembles the pattern used for a tic-tac-toe game. →



Lloyd stated that his family operated the "baths" at Indian Springs until about 20 years ago. He said that the water of the Springs was cold, not hot, but it contained many minerals which were felt to be of medicinal value, especially for arthritic cases and that many people with arthritis visited the springs and appeared to obtain relief from pain by bathing in the springs. The land upon which they are located is not open to the public. He has it posted against trespassing and he was very polite but firm about not allowing people in the area. He said that the Springs had once been the site of a large Indian camp and that there were examples of Indian art--or artifacts there. We discussed the early Indians of the area. He said that he remembers the salmon swimming up Cottonwood Creek and that the site was probably a Mono site for salmon fishing as well as acorn harvesting-processing. He indicated there were BRM's in the area.

The bridge that crosses Cottonwood Creek about 1/2 mile south of the entrance to his ranch was the original bridge the Minarets and Western Railway (which ran from Pinedale to Sugar Pine via Friant and Bellview) used in order to cross Cottonwood Creek. (This bridge also served the road which led from Rd. 211 to Indian Springs in the days when the Springs were open to the public) It is a flat wooden plank bridge with no railings, square in shape and reinforced with concrete.



The two drainages of Cottonwood Creek meet about 200 yards below the bridge.

The bridge is about 1/4 of a mile N. of the junction of Rd. 211 and Rd. 145 on the left side (West) and about 100 yards from the road.

There is a BRM visible from the road, located on the posted land, on the E. side of the drainage and about .2 miles above the bridge.

You can see the railway cut on the East side of Rd. 211 (just across the road from the bridge) and then again on the west side of Rs. 211 and North of the bridge. It is visible almost all of the way to Bellview, especially on the East side of Berry Hill where you can see extensive rock-wall areas of the roadbed.

The Wagners, according to Lloyd settled here over 100 years ago. The woman who lives in the house at the fork of Rd. 211 and Rd. 145 is a Wagner descendant and could give us historical information. (Mrs. Jamison told us that her name was Dorothy Vanderdusen and that the railway tracks had run right behind her house). Lloyd also suggested that a book by

Hank Johnson about local mountain railways as a source of information regarding the Minarets and Western Railway. A painting of the bridge was exhibited in the Fresno Art Center several months ago with a picture of the painting in the Sunday Fresno Bee at that time. (Exact date and artist not known by Leshner).

Lloyd recommended that we try to contact LeRoy Brown, a neighbor to the west of his ranch and north of Jamisons. (Mrs. Jamison had also mentioned him as a possible contact). He said that LeRoy has much knowledge about mines and mining in the area and also other "old-time" information and artifacts.

GRAVEYARD INFORMATION:

George Wagner	1844-1894	
Johanna Wagner	1850-1945	(wife of George)
Jacob Wagner	1875-1958	
George Wagner	1880-1885	
William H. Wagner	1880-1972	
Edward Wagner	1886-1954	
Ruth Wagner	1893-1961	(wife of Edward)
Joseph Wagner	1924-1971	

Frances Ritter	1839-1912	
America B. Ritter	1852-1896	(wife of Frances)
Henry J. Ritter	1881-1958	
Rachael M. Ritter	1892-1970	
Mamie M. Ritter	1896-1920	

(T.M. Ritter owned land directly S. of Bellview and to the NE of Wagner, 1891 Atlas map).

Mather Cochram (no dates)
Sarah Cochram (no dates)
Dave Cochram 1950
Knuff Cochram 1950

(There is no record at present of the Cochrams owning land in the area. The four stones are very plain, look like they are hand-made rather than purchased.)

Amanda Oyler 1872-1954 (wife of Henry J.)
Henry J. Oyler 1877-1953
Jack W. Oyler 1909-1979

(1891 map in Atlas shows Oyler land SE of Bellview and in Section 17. Oyler land is located between Wagner and Ritter land).

Homer O. Williams Oct. 4 1903-1977.

(Map of 1891 shows a Charles Williams owning land in Section 20, south of Ritters and N. of Wagners. This is the only Williams grave in the cemetery.)