

Bayside Calif.

Jan 9th 1986

Dear Mr. Irwin. Happy New Year!

Raining here - wet. Thank you for the maps, I'm marking them for the benefit of my son. As for names, I prefer Elizabeth R. Mecham. have always used it in business and various government work, etc and as Post Master. "old" old friends call me "Bess" - which I do not like, but am stuck with as far as they go. Took half a Sunday morning to get the tape off the map cylinder & open - being Sunday could not use the "appropriate" words, but with success made it. Back to name - when any one thinks they are being cute and knowing it rouses my ire by adding "ie" to my name, that is a direct insult - ones name is their own and should be respected by others, so I prefer my right name and signature used on any publication. Thank You! Now to answer your questions of Dec 19th 1979. Mamie Gregory was an old Coso part of the country - born there as was George Gregory and they moved into Darwin in the 1900's the Indian Camp then was in the small wash that runs just east of Darwin main street and on in to the main wash, the original old Coso. Modoc - Junction road. the Coso road went up out of the wash and on, as it does today. Junction road branches off south a short way down and the Modoc road leaves the wash below there & continues on to the base of the colored mts. from Matarango Peak, north - which are a distinct contrast to the Argus range on south from Matarango Peak - to the break in them by Shepherd's Canyon - then come Malapai and eventually ends at Argus Peak - above where

Irona is. The Slate range is a spur range out from them, south of Water Canyon, to cut across the south end of Panamint Valley. on to Wind Gate pass south of Ballarat. and eventually opens up in wash country on to Victorville and ends against the north side of the Sierra Madre Mts. miles & miles of "nothing" but more settled now than in old days. ... I remember Maggie Stoval when we were kids - she and Joe would get on a glorious drunk and end up in the street throwing all their pots and pans at each other - while we kids & the town stood on the outskirts and watched. If Maggie came from Mojave we didn't know it as she was supposed to be from Saline Valley & Death Valley. Joe was a hard rock miner and generally celebrated on pay day - which in those days was cash once a month. They lived in a little house in back of the Black Metal Saloon - just before getting to the wash and after they slept off their drunk would go out in the street and gather up the pots & pans and everything else they had brought out - this was in the 1900's and Elias would not remember it as he did not arrive until Oct. 1910. - Yes, as long as I remember there has always been "wild" Celery growing above the falls - down from Jerry Fitzgerald's place at head of falls where the lower end of Darwin wash goes over the falls - the highest at top about 1000 ft. lower ones not so high and if you have been down to the falls you know how high they are. Jerry Fitzgerald was from Lone Pine and came out when Darwin boomed in 1876-77 to grow produce for the miners and the restaurants in town & hotel - he did well & built a little shack on the west side of the wash. Then a cloud burst came along in 1898 and he

3) was in the garden and tried to get to his cabin, but the high rolling water caught him and carried him over the falls and out on to Panamint Valley. miners looked for him but he was never found. Then in 1940 Bill Reid was out on the flat from their new resort Panamint Springs and came across scattered bones & a skull - gathered them up and buried them there - so we old timers decided they must be Jerry Fitzgeralds and after 40 odd years at last was buried - probably the first Darwin tragedy of which we have had many down through the years since. Bill gathered rocks and put up a head board - safely away from the road not to be found by vandals unless accidentally - about 2-3 miles out from Panamint Springs so few if any "strays" have come across it. When the wash spout hit Jerry's place it cut a bank on west side 20 or 25 feet high and directly under his cabin so if Jerry had made it to his home he would have been saved. It is a mile or so on down the wash from where the "Skidoo" road turns right up on a short way and to the beginning of the Skidoo grade - now mis called "Gins" Hill. which if you want a thrill ride high on a wagon seat while the team makes the turns on the dead run - wheels not touching the bottom of the pitches in the grade as we did in 1912 on our way to The Menzies Mine & old Modoc and the team broke their trot and started to run - finally got them stopped at the mouth of the wash where the road turned up to a short rise and then continued? Continued! soberly on to Remie's original road to the Mine - he built it from the foot of the Slate range - straight as an arrow along the east base of the Argus range - he turned out for

nothing - now it is kept up and used by some mining
out fit north of the mouth of Shepherd's Canyon. A lime-
stone quarry. All Indians have legends - my Panamint
ones seldom spoke of theirs except about the first white
man they ever saw - struggling out of Death Valley and
were afraid of them as "runners" had come to Wild Rose
and Death Valley with tales of these queer people who
were robbing camps as they came to them. Starving
& so ate what ever they could find. "The noble white man"!
I'm skipping around as I read your letter and "memories"
come. The only place wild celery & water cress grew in
old days was along the little stream of water below the
falls at Jerry's place to the last fall into Darwin Wash.
we used to have our school picnics there and would
walk along the "creek" and gather cress & chew on celery
stalks. Yes, our Indians used "sweat houses" generally
barley racks around some up right poles over a hot
spring, as at Old Coso Hot Springs and around the
"mud baths". Hall Creek ran down sparkling from Hall
Canyon to Panamint Georges camp at what we all called
Warm Spring. and soon disappeared, but made their
winter camp a pleasant spot with mesquite trees around
when a girl I rode the 20 miles from our place -
Millsbaugh at head of Shepherd's Canyon on down and
over to Warm Spring - now called Indian Reservation -
but still belongs to the Hamon heirs - to ask George if we
could use some of his mules when we were a team
or so short to haul our freight from "Goburgh" or Mojave
the Indian stock & ours ran together on Juncos flat
and surrounding country - (I'm getting tired!) Of course
we would not round them up and use with out asking

5) and always paid them. and they could always use the money. no one could ask for better friends or more faithful than "my Indians". - What ever Silas Ness tells you - you can depend on. while growing up he didn't get far from town - Darwin - but later knew the country around well. "They don't make them any better than Silas" and I've known him & his family since he was born. All Indians understand the stars and the moon & predict weather signs. Indian George & Mike & his brothers taught me a lot & how to read them when I was little and still "stuck". The Panamint Indians knew of Post Office Springs, so called in early days when Panamint City was working and later in late 1890's Ballarat was located not far from them and then no longer called that. no Indian Camp at them - Warm Springs the only one in Panamint Valley and first located by Panamint Tom, when he was "running wild" and holed up there. then when George married Tom's daughter he had a right to it after Tom died & a brother got and so a new branch of the family was established, as I've said George's Indian name was Bah - Vanda - Rava - Kee. "boy who ran away" when he & his father saw the first white men. the '49ers. his wife's name jar - he - alai - hi - li. "I gave up here!"

Thurs 10th - Cold here and snow down low behind us. and a rough windy night - I check off your questions as I write. No - our Indians had no other name for our camp, except its name Millspaugh and several years ago I wrote for the Museum "The beginning and the end of Millspaugh" and which is probably stuck away some where in the Museum - a "cubby hole" - Yes, I remember "Dr. Jacques Sam" when he was

in Darwin - not a "doctor" but a "Medicine Man"; of which there were several - in and around Darwin - we accepted our Indians as they were - asked few questions of their way of life, all fine people and stayed to themselves when I was growing up. The women walked into town, washed - ironed, cleaned house - 2 or 3 rooms - ate breakfast & lunch - received \$1.00 and walked home, 5-6 miles to the Indian Gardens or near old Cozo - where ever they happened to be camping - Mamie Gregory - a fine woman - would wash & iron & clean house for me and always said she liked to "work" for me better than any one else - everything was so clean, she was my friend for many years - made beautiful baskets - as for George Hanson's irrigation system at "Warm Springs" - The creek came down from Hall Canyon and a few ditches were dug around for the water to reach the few trees there & their garden, at least that's how it was the times I had occasion to ride over to see them - 20 miles each way - when we wanted to use some of George's mules - as I've said - their stock ran with ours & we wouldn't think of catching any of theirs to use without asking and paying them any time we rounded up & used them. And "Hunter Ranch" country we used to spend time at - generally in the fall when we "came down out" of the Sierra Summer camps. Silas Reynolds & Jens Ness had a good cabin there and wintered their cows in that part of the country & on Death Valley side of the Mts. Names of those who lived in Hunter Ranch Mts. & Saline Valley and came to Darwin to live in 1900's - Charlie Hummel & wife Mary were originally from around there - Saline Valley, but worked for the old Soda Works when

7) it was worked back in last of the 1800's & early 1900's
Charlie took the name of Wrinkle from the plant manager
owner - they took the names of people they worked for or
lived - as did the Owens Valley Indians in early days.
When Charlie & Mary came to Darwin to settle, others of
their family followed and the few left of the Coso Indians
moved into town - all lived together "down at camp" and
in "peace and harmony" - My Indians had no particular
rabbit hunts or any other kind - they used 22 rifles
and sneaked up on a rabbit hiding under a bush and
the quail around springs. I was riding to Tennessee
Spring one day to see the family camped there and
came on to Moxie, hiding - he motioned me to wait &
be quiet while he crept up on the rabbit or quail he
was tracking, when he got them we rode on up to the
springs and they had food for supper - or as George used
to say - "we eat when we catchem" - no special meal
times - when ever they camp & camp we always asked
them to eat - and George would take off his big black hat
& put it on the floor under his chair - I look back with
affection to their friendship. They had their dances, but
did not talk of them, private affairs - at deaths they had
their "Cries" and we did not intrude - even when they
asked me to come - I would say "no" - it is your ways
and we should not attend, as after a funeral in the
"white man's way" at our cemetery, we would leave and
they would have theirs - Our Indians had no villages -
each family had their own camps - there were never
many of the Death Valley Indians and the few Panamint
Indians and few children - they know how to keep their

birth rate down and a child was loved and cared for - seldomed cried - put in their "cradle board" - stood up in the shade - kept very clean - when they moved camp every thing was loaded on a couple burros or wagon if they had one and shortly a new camp was set up "in nothing flat" - In the fall - George and his family would come & go on up to the extreme end of Shepherd's Canyon & camp in the pinons - dig a hole - build a fire and while it burned down to coals - they spread a blanket or canvas under a tree & with a long stick knocked the cones off - pile on the coals - the cones opened and roasted just right - & knocked out on the blanket and stored - or shelled and ground on a metate into a flour and a "pan cake" resulting was so good - they wove deep baskets to store food in - tewas - their camps were clean - every thing in place & handy - I never saw a dirty Indian camp - not ours - The Saline Valley names you ask if I knew - only some of the Hunter boys & women - Darwin - you know was out of their "district" and in old day lines were strictly drawn, east side of Owen's Lake. This of course was in early days - later they came & went where & when they wanted to - even a few "Ro. Fork" Indians came to Darwin - from Onyx - Kernville - Bodfish - Chico was a "Rough fork" - Esther Sam met him there when she went over for the "Hot Baths" - but he spent little time in Darwin - was in the army & she rec'd "remittance" checks from "Uncle Sam" - she had 2 children by him Hazel & Melvin - later another little girl Frances - all grown now & living away from Darwin. Esther was a good friend - worked out at The Sale as porter when kids

9) had it - before they built Panamint Springs out at
the end of Darwin Wash - "lower" at the edge of the
valley - Our Indians did not congregate at their camps.
mostly families kept to themselves - "cousins" would visit
but very few of them - Yes - Indian Ranch is "Warm Springs"
in Panamint Valley - and ancestor home since before
Death Valley - of Panamint Tom days - late 1800's and into
1900's when he lived there - also his brother - a mild little
snow white haired man and their family - as I've said Tom
was wild rampaging around his part of that country and
boasted of having killed eleven white men - some of the 49'ers
and after spending time in jail returned home and when
we knew him a very "tame" Indian - they used to stop
at our place, Millsbaugh, when they came up to visit
George & his family - George's wife was Tom's daughter, as
I've written.... Now I'm at the end of your letter and
good to know "things are brisk" around the Museum and
keeping you busy and "caring for wagon wheels" etc, accept
what ever is offered and don't loose out as you did
with my old Darwin school house - Hope your holidays
were delightful for you and yours - Were nice here and
weather good... Last page in tablet and this should
"hold" you for awhile - So "let her go as she looks" as
our miners would say when waiting for a round of shots
to open the "face" and maybe widen the vein being followed
or break into "rich" ore! mining a gamble - but hopes
never given up... A very Good, happy Leap year for you
& yours and "our" Museum... Adios - fare well - Good-bye
good luck - So long - Elizabeth L. Mechem.

ELIZABETH L. MECHAN

RT. 1 BOX 416
BAYSIDE, CAL.
95524



Charles N. Irwin. Director
Independence
Inyo County
California

93526

Museum P.O. Box 206.



ECM 1955.912.71