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PIONEER DAYS  
Cattlemen of Inyo-Mono

Feb 7  
1980

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done



Captions--Pioneer Days

*This used in Old Mammoth*

1. Rincon Barn, Long Valley and a string of 'Buttons', cowboys, Jim Cline at extreme right. A roundup in early twenties.

Mendenhall Photo

Les Cline collection

2. Les Cline, out of chute #1 on Moses! At ten years Lester was riding the rough ones at Rincon Corral, Long Valley. Now we know why he won the cowboy's CAA in 1945.

Les Cline collection

3. Cowboys at work in the rock corral at the Bob and Joe Love ranch near Five Bridges.

Ernest Kinney collection

4. The old grandstand at the Fairgrounds in 1933. Vada Sproule taking the men's race.

Les Cline collection

5. The Alex Reeve and Charlie Mumy cattle roundup at McGee Creek in the thirties. Present were; left to right; Nate Fairbairn, Joe McNally, Nick Rupp, Dr. Anderson, Les Cline, Don Stone, Jack Shambard, Charlie Mumy, Bill Weeks, Frank Shambard, Jim Cline, Pete Garner, Bert Johnson, Howdy Smith, Dope Hession, Wilfred Dixon, Tom Little, Alex Reeve, Walter Sproule, Quince Sullivan, Fred Reynolds, and Russ Spainhower.

Les Cline collection

6. Gathering cattle at McGee Creek. Left to right, Alec Reeve, Howdy Smith, Jim Cline and Wilfred Dixon.

Les Cline collection

7. Lester and Vada (Sproule) Cline, a winning pair.

Les Cline collection

8. Lunch time, waiting in line!

Photographer unknown

Adele Reed collection



Caption--Pioneer days

9. The Sierra Cowgirls, 1947. A popular riding group. Left to right; Marion Kinney, Alice Boothe, Gebby McMurry, Vada Cline, Gladys Boothe, Jane Faucett, Colleen Kinney, Barbara Tibbals, Pate Moody, Jean Rupp, Carolyn Talbot, Jackie Houghton, Thelma McNally, Evelyn Schultz, Dorothy Dixon, Lilas Griffith, Helen Dixon, Helen Talbot. In cowboy language several of these girls were considered as "A good hand" in cattle drives and rodeos.

Adele Reed collection

*add Julia Kinney name*



18. Cattle men of Inyo-Mono

6 pictures and 2 large inside

Feb. 7 - 1980

Add Julia Kinney name Sierra Cowgirls



## Pioneer Days

## Cattlemen of Inyo-Mono



CATTLE ROUNDUP—The Alex Reeve and Charlie Mumy cattle roundup at McGee Creek in the 1930s. Present were (left to right) Nate Fairbairn, Joe McNally, Nick Rupp, Dr. Anderson, Les Cline, Don Stone, Jack Shambard, Charlie Mumy, Bill Weeks, Frank Shambard, Jim Cline, Pete Garner,

Bert Johnson, Howdy Smith, Dope Hession, Wilfred Dixon, Tom Little, Alex Reeve, Walter Sproule, Quince Sullivan, Fred Reynolds and Russ Spainhower. Les Cline collection

by Adele Reed

In this section we honor the hard riding cattle people, some named, many unnamed, all who have contributed to that shining never-to-come-again era.

The traditional western cowboy was usually pictured as a romantic, taciturn figure, a "man of few words." They were known by several titles, nicknames, as cowpokes, punchers, hands, buckaroo and button. The word "cowboy" brings to mind the spirit of the old west with its adventure and daring, its men of strength who had to cope with all areas of rugged western life.

The hard-riding men had much to do with transportation. Cowboy drovers were needed to trail the numerous herds of longhorns into Inyo-Mono. As the many farms and stock ranches came into being, cowboys worked training cattle to the higher areas in summer and looking after both cattle and saddle stock. They did the same in winter.

The owners usually accompanied the drives in spring and fall, and in fact, served as one of the hands. "Gus" Cashbaugh is one example who portrays so well in words his love of the cattle trails and outdoor life. It has been a lifelong work with him and others in the land east of the Sierra. The branding and marking of calves in spring (and sometimes in early fall) preceded the big drives. This work with the branding iron and well-trained cowboy mounts was most interesting to watch. The method is still in use as well as the later method of driving the calves in to a chute instead of roping and tying. The fall round-up, the gathering of cattle scattered over miles of forest or sage country, sometimes ended as a race with the snow storms.

## LESTER CLINE

Local rodeos through the years have provided great interest for the cowpunchers, buckaroos, as well as thrills and excitement for onlookers. There is one "button" who was born at Benton Hot Springs in Mono County and now living near Bishop who has either competed or worked in the local Homecoming Rodeo over Labor Day for many years. Lester Cline, known by most everyone in the area, was one of those saddlebronc riders who stayed with it until he won the Cowboy's Association of America Championship (CAA) in the event in 1945.

"A back operation cancelled my bronc riding," Lester says, "but I soon went into pickup man work with my cousin, Eddie Cline. We did that and also rode the colors together for a number of years. I guess I just naturally took to riding. While at high school in Whittier I spent each summer at the Eaton Ranch in Long Valley. My father, Jim Cline, was foreman for the Eaton Land and Cattle Company and I was riding with him or helping packers."

The Cline family as a whole seemed to be born riders. Several of Jim's brothers settled in the area and most of the sons became well known for their riding ability. Wilfred Cline, a cousin of Lester, used to furnish the rodeo bucking stock, the wildest ever. Those were the days! Yes, there were cowgirls too! Vada Sproule was one, born at Laws, where her parents, James and Mabel (Farrington) Sproule, ranched near the little railroad town. Vada became a capable rider and when the Homecoming Rodeo began in 1933 she competed in

with headquarters at Bishop.

Jackie Hill of Big Pine became Mrs. "Hoot" in the thirties and their children are son, Lee and daughter, Diann. The Houghtons were enthusiastic members of Bishop's Old Time Dance Club, a popular recreation of earlier times. They live on one of the older ranches just south of Bishop. Now retired, Orville, as all good cowboys, keeps busy in cattle work and helps at the local fair and rodeos and is a committeeman wherever needed. He was honored as Grand Marshal of the 1977 Bishop Homecoming and Labor Day Celebration.

## SLIM TATUM

Speaking of working cowboys, who may in the future become legendary figures in Inyo-Mono, a local resident adds interest. L.L. "Slim" Tatum was born in Texas near the Rio Grande. "I left home as a young fellow and 'cowboyed' across country to Arizona," recalls Slim. "Eventually I came to Bishop, where I had heard a lot about the country. I went to work for William Symons, Sr., in the early twenties. Symons then owned what was called the Lake Field, a large acreage south of Laws. We trailed cattle north by Benton Hot Springs to Adobe, then to a cowcamp on the banks of June Lake. The herd grazed the June Loop area and wintered on the home ranch."

Then Slim bought the Frontier Pack Outfit at Silver Lake, Mono County from Wilfred Dixon, Sr. The trails he guided tourists over were many as packing into the back country was then a fast-growing business. The main trail was over the mountains westerly to the headwaters of the San Joaquin River. Another popular area was the whole complex of Reds Meadows, Devils Post Pile and Rainbow Falls, all of which were beautiful and primitive. For more extensive trips they took guests across the Sierra to Northfork and sometimes to the splendid Jackass Meadows, a stop-over on the old Fresno Flats Trail.

Tatum was owner of the outfit until 1945 and the business had built up to the total of 98 head of horses and mules. Slim grins as he tells of becoming acquainted with the Rudolf Schober family, one daughter in particular. Father Schober did not approve of a daughter of his marrying a cowboy-wrangler, so young Tatum worked out a plan. Whenever he had time off he'd hire on with a farmer and ask him to hold a cow for him until he worked it out.

In that way Tatum gradually gathered the beginning of

Mason Valley, Wabuska, Fernley, Sparks, Verdi and to Sierraville for summer graze. Their 84 days on the trail moving 700 head of cattle, 17 horses and a few dairy cows, (nurses for lost calves) was a cattle drive to go down in history!

Bill Alpers eventually returned to Inyo-Mono and took over the River Ranch in 1945. He and wife Alice and family spent summers in Mono and winters at their home in Bishop. Their modern fishermen's resort, "Alpers Owens River Ranch," has replaced the old log cabin camp. Still trailing a small herd back and forth each year, Alpers was honored as Grand Marshal of the 1975 Labor Day Celebration.

A huge roundup at McGee Creek, was quite an event for cattlemen. In years gone by the wide-spread meadows of Long Valley in Mono County were the summer feed for many different herds of cattle. Stock from Lone Pine, Independence, Big Pine and Bishop were trailed north and over the Rickey Trail into the meadows once called McGee.

It was the custom to have a fall gathering, which meant owners and cowboys brought the herds from the meadows into corrals at McGee Creek. Then came the work of separating each owner's stock and trailing them south to winter pasture.

This fall gathering was of much interest as it brought together cattlemen, friends and the hard working cowboys from the whole Owens Valley area. It was a great merging of old and young.

## A. A. BRIERLY

The well known A.A. Briery or "Arlie" has been a cattleman in Inyo for many years. He has been a man of all trades and a writer and historian as well. His parents were married in 1881 and he was born and raised on the ranch that is seen across Hwy 395 from the radio station KIBS south of Bishop.

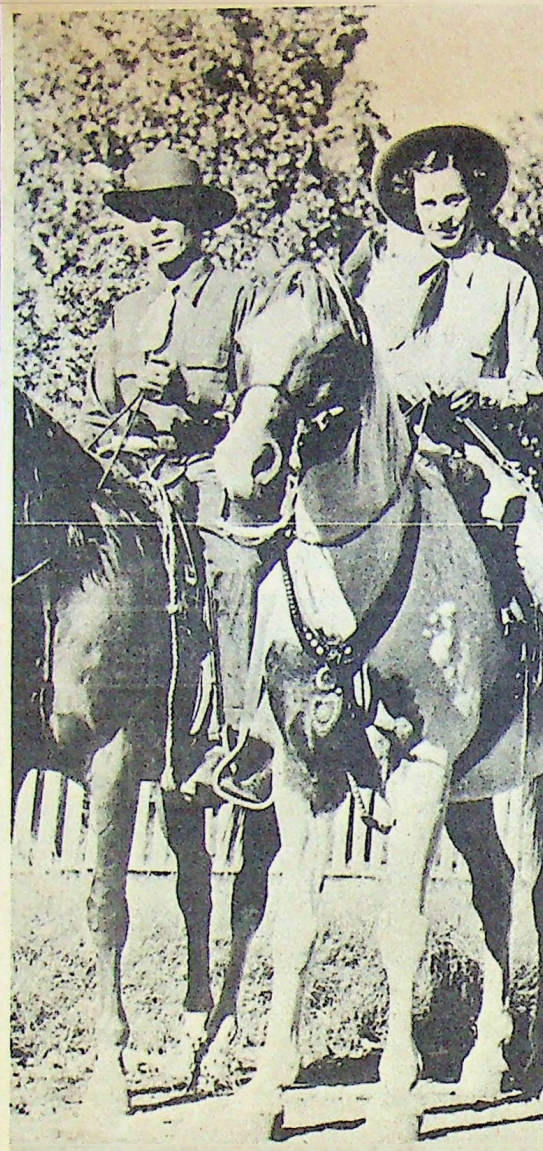
Now retired, he and wife Edith are living at Independence. However, he still runs cattle on a lease from the DWP south of Bishop on the Warm Springs Road. His foreman is Ray Cline, son of Vasia Cline, and the headquarters is the old McKay Ranch.

Arlie and friend Gus Cashbaugh, both in their 90's and both prominent native citizens, were honored by the Bishop Museum and Historical Society in 1974. Gifts to both men and a special program by home folks was a fine tribute to two of Inyo's cowboy cattlemen.





same in winter.



WINNING PAIR—Lester and Vada (Sproule) Cline. pose for a photo on their trusty steeds. Les Cline collection

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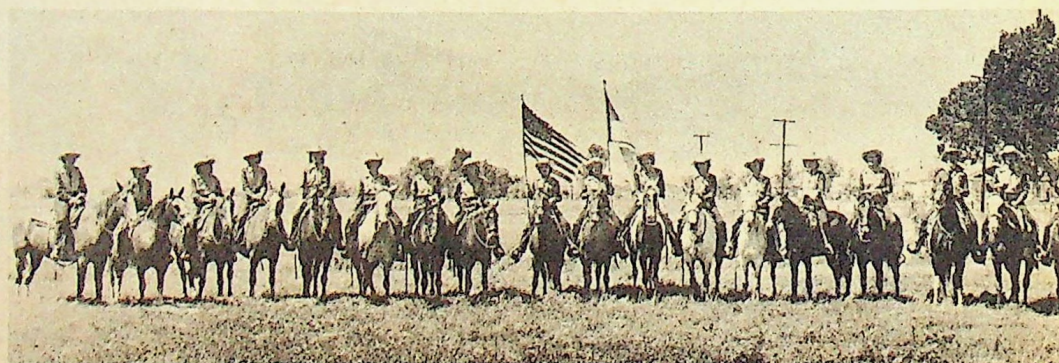
In 1935 Lester and Vada were married and began their life of outdoor work and rodeoing. Vada later belonged to the Sierra Cowgirls mounted drill team. Her favorite of their outdoor activities was the cattle drives. She worked as cook several times and found it very satisfying to feed the dusty, tired and hungry cowpokes. "Even though it was the hardest work, I loved it all and knew just how it felt to come in to a hot meal after a long day," Vada recalls, "and my one wish today would be just one more big drive!"

The two riding Clines are now semi-retired, and Lester keeps busy with his own horses or helping with cattle sometimes. One event in later years that stands out in memory was Lester Cline and Orville Houghton leading the grand entry into the arena. Those two then rode the colors at a fast clip, sitting the saddle with ease and grace, ending in precise positions, with flags a'flying. It was a great prelude to the popular Homecoming Rodeo. Lester was chosen as Grand Marshal of the 1976 Labor Day event, one of a long line of deserving cowpunchers and buckaroos.

#### ORVILLE "HOOT" HOUGHTON

Lester and Orville "Hoot" Houghton worked together for years as a team in roping, pickup work, posting the colors at local events and as drovers during the big cattle drives.

Orville was born at Porterville and moved with parents "Cad" and Lucy, sister Alice and a brother, the late Hank Houghton, to a homestead east of Eureka Valley. Winters were spent in Big Pine. Father "Cad" became prominent in livestock buying in Nevada and Eastern California



SIERRA COWGIRLS—This popular riding group, shown here in 1947, included (left to right) Marion Kinney, Alice Boothe, Peggy McMurry, Vada Cline, Gladys Boothe, Jane Faucett, Colleen Kinney, Barbara Tibbals, Pate Moody, Jean

Rupp, Carolyn Talbot, Jackie Houghton, Helen Dixon, Helen Talbot. Several of these girls were considered valued hands in cattle drives and rodeos.

Adele Reed collection

to a cowcamp on the banks of June Lake. The herd grazed the June Loop area and wintered on the home ranch."

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In that way Tatum gradually gathered the beginning of his spread and was accepted into the Schober family. He and Hazel Schober were married and have a home in Bishop. Still active in livestock work with son Jack and with his background of Homecoming Rodeo work, Slim just naturally portrays a western cowboy-rancher.

#### BILL ALPERS

The late Bill Alpers was born on the family ranch north of Laws. He and his brothers and sisters grew up in the cattle business. Their parents, Fred and Christina, owned a large acreage and their summer range was the Thomson property at the upper end of Long Valley in Mono near the headwaters of the Owens River. Andrew Thomson had homesteaded the 240 acres in early years and built up a fishing camp. The acreage was acquired by Fred Alpers in 1907.

Bill and his brothers used to trail the herd to summer meadows and they were the cowboys in charge at the River Ranch. Bill and one of his brothers would ride their horses, starting early on a Saturday morning, from the River Ranch to the Keough Hot Springs south of Bishop, and make it in time for the Saturday night dance! The fine outdoor dance floor was a special attraction for long years.

In 1931 the Alpers sold their Inyo property and trailed their herd north to a location near Marysville. Bill and brother Martin and another cowboy, Roy Baggage, with a cook and chuck wagon, made their last cattle drive out of the Owens River Valley. Interesting to note they headed up the old Dry Trail, then angled north to Bridgeport and East Walker to Smith Valley in Nevada. Then through

meadows into corrals at McGee Creek. Then came the work of separating each owner's stock and trailing them south to winter pasture.

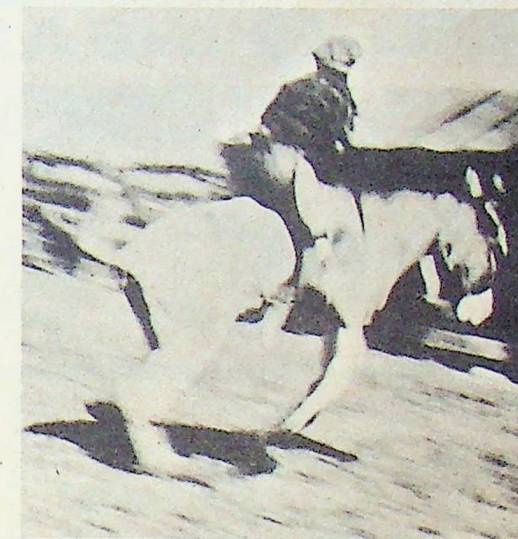
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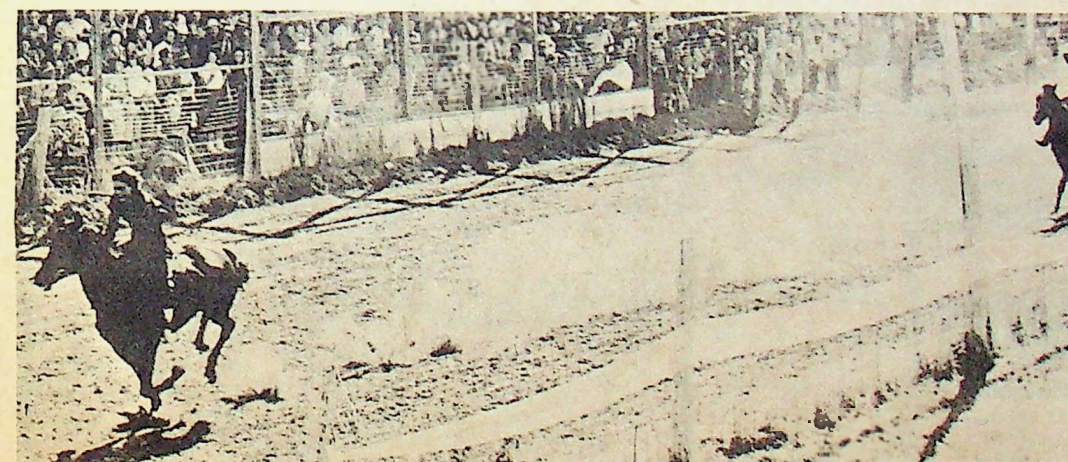
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OUT OF THE CHUTE—Les Cline takes off aboard Moses. Les began riding the rough ones at Rincon Corral in Long Valley at the age of ten and eventually became the cowboy's CAA champion in 1945. Les Cline collection



OFF AND RUNNING—Vada Sproule is way out front during this race in front of the old grandstand at the Tri-County

Fairgrounds in 1933.

Les Cline collection