

February 21, 1979

Mrs. Elizabeth L. Mecham
Rt. 1, Box 416
Bayside, California 95524

Dear Mrs. Mecham:

Since your last letter it has snowed here; eight inches in Independence. On the night of the storm, January 30, we drove from Palmdale to Independence; it was a harrowing experience. Snow fell the whole way. It was by the grace of God that we got back without an accident. It snowed last night in the Sierras and Inyos; the snow disappears quickly in the Inyos. Last Monday we took a hike on a rugged ridge of the Inyos; it was a beautiful day. February and March are good months for hikes in the Inyos and other desert ranges. We hope to do some exploring in the Cosos and Argus mountains as well, this spring.

The Museum is progressing, although there are many problems. We are now putting as many objects behind glass as possible for security reasons; some people do not respect the Museum. We may be expanding next year with a 40' x 80' expansion. We need more exhibit and storage space and a laboratory for archaeological research.

Thank you for your informative letter. Do you recall what the old stage stops were like such as the ones at Little Lake and Coyote Wells? Also, we are interested in the locations of early stage stops as part of our historic site inventory. Did you ever ride a stage and if so what was it like and what was it like to stay overnight at a stage stop?

Do you recall how houses were furnished in Darwin, kitchenware, wall-paper, rugs, furniture, numbers of rooms and the like? Do you remember the kinds of medicines and remedies people had?

In January I visited southern Panamint Valley and observed a meandering line of desert varnish rocks on a desert pavement. The two rows of rocks were several feet long. I am certain the Indians made these since geologic

Page 2
February 21, 1979
Mrs. Elizabeth L. Mecham

forces could not do this and Whites would have no reason to. The pattern resembles a ground "map." I found two of these large patterns or alignments of rocks.

On the day we drove down to find these rock alignments there was snow on the road all the way from Lone Pine to the Darwin turnoff. It was a cold, windy day in Panamint Valley but I managed to cover a five and a half mile route.

Do you recall any of the history of Water and Shepherd Canyon? I know a wagon road used to go up Shepherd Canyon; however I do not know if Water Canyon was passable.

Do you remember Ballarat and some of the miners such as Shorty Harris and others?

Do you remember the names of plants used by Shoshone Indians to make baskets and where they got the plants?

I enjoy corresponding with you and hope to meet you someday. Forgive the rambling tone of my letters.

Sincerely,

Charles N. Irwin, Director
Eastern California Museum

CNI/vac