

Received the following letter from Elizabeth L. Mecham, Route 1, Box 416, Bayside CA 95524, November 16, 1977. Original in long hand.

I never read anything over- so this Bayside Calif
"goes as she looks" as our old miners Nov 13, 1977
would say when loading a hole.

Dear Mr and Mrs Dawson

If you will read my story of "Millspaugh - The Beginning and The End" which I wrote for the Museum several years ago - also my Darwin story - you will see that it never was a town. I've never understood why folks get that idea. It was a gold mining camp at the head of Shepherd Canyon. Look at the pictures I've sent to the Museum, also those of Darwin as it was before our two terrible fires.

The first Aug 17, 1917 burned 2 blocks on east side of Main Street, original 1876 barns and corrals - Black Metal Saloon - 2 small homes and Jack gunns original saloon 1896.

The second fire burned two full blocks on west side of street of all the original business buildings of 1876. July 7, 1918 - fire of gas light explosion. No one could get into the house - a mass of whirling flames so nothing was saved. Ted was playing in the back-yard with his wagon - his mother thought he was in the house. I'll never forget her screams "Theodory". It was 2 P.M. and she and ~~unning~~ Domingo had just come out on the porch in the shade. She was setting near the door - had kicked her shoes off - Domingo setting next - when the sheet of flames shot out of the door - singeing her hair on left side. Her first thought was of Ted. Domingo ran around to the front door of the living room but could not get inside. I had already gotten there and found Ted was elright - so went into the store next door. Mamie Reynolds was baking bread. I said lets get what we can -

your place is going. By then the few men in town that day were beginning to carry out what they could from the store and she and I got the Post Office books out and a few of her personal things some of the furniture out to the side street where the most of it burned when the fire jumped over to the original hotel - which at that time was leased to two Chinese. They had \$700.00 in a can in their basement but could not get to it and they saved nothing.

When a fire started in Darwin one just stood outside and watched - and we have had some bad ones in Darwin - the last when I was still living there- 1945. Tuckers Gin Mill burned - old Bland Store building. We managed to get his music box out on to the porch where it burned - also his cigar box full of cash.

Christmas eve 1944 Theodore Petersens cafe - service station and garage burned. Nothing saved except Pete's little cabin. That no doubt was a set fire from evidence found. So 40 odd years of Pete's life went. He came to Darwin in 1905 a young man fresh from Denmark - rode a freight train load of sheep across the country and eventually arrived in Darwin.

Whenever I write , memories rush in and I get "side tracked".

Pete rebuilt - he died July 29, 1957 and I lost a life long friend as did the few other old timers - now all gone but me.

You have some dates wrong. Domingo Etcharren is right as to birth and where born. He did not walk all the way across the country - rode some sheep trains as did others in those days and ended up in Darwin. In 1886 he was tending sheep and with two other herders set out for San Francisco with a band of 500 - through Newhall Pass - over Tehachapi and up San Joaquin Valley. The sheep lambed along the way and band doubled in the six months trip and they drove the band down Market St at the end of the trail.

When I was growing up "over home" - Domingo would entertain me with his experiences - a kind, good and honest man. We all cared

deeply for him.

After delivering the sheep he hired out in Sacramento Valley, wintered there and summers in the high country - he and his partner Franki Carthery, also a French man from the "old country", not a Basque tho - decided they would like to have a band of sheep - so instead of returning to the home ranch in the fall, took off - down through Mono County and into Inyo and on to Hunter Ranch country - where things looked safe - but owners finally caught up with them and they left - heading across Lee Flat country and eventually ending up in Darwin in 1888.

Frank got a job as care taker of all Defiance property - mine, smelter - town barns and corrals - huge blacksmith shop - pipe line - old business building where he made his home - all still there in 1900's and into 1910's - when I went to school in Darwin. Saturday he would take us kids out in the buckboard and while he repaired the 4"-3' rivited pipe with canvas and baling wire. Later when Model T's came to town - inner tubes were great and baling wire. We kids would explore and found many old rifles and U.S. buttons off uniforms.

In the 50's when Old Coso was being worked by Mexicans miners and a few whites between fighting off the Coso Indians a platoon or whatever - were sent out and stationed at the Fort just out of Old Coso built of stones on the edge of the wash - fine look out down on the springs and the Darwin spring "Santa Rosa". It was a Negro troop and stationed a year or so until called back for the Civil War.

1850's or 60's Coso was lively. Dr. Darwin French and his party on the way to find The Gunsight of the 49'ers "fable" instead discovered the ledges of Coso in March 1860 and the place boomed for a few years.

I expect you have Chalfant's Story of Inyo. Domingo settled at the Junction - the ranch name tacked on in the 20's by "strays" who knew nothing. It was always "The Junction" when Modoc was booming.

Remi Nadeau built a grade up out of Indian Wells Valley - we always called "The Hamilton Road" - up to a small valley - passed a red cedar cone - Sunset Mountain" and on to Junction Flat - crossing John Shepherd's road from Cole Springs and Old Coso - that's where the junction comes in - dug a 90' well - dry - and continued the road on to Modoc - once called "Lookout" - built a stone corral and cabin - ruins still there last time I was "over Home" 1971 and in a straight line to the foot of the Argus Range north of Maturango Peak and Wood Canyon - up a sandy canyon and built a fine grade on into Modoc. Nadeau's roads were straight as a die. He turned out for nothing, his across Indian Wells Valley was plain for years - straight across - until 1910 when the dry farmers arrived and plowed up the grease wood and tried to farm. Few lasted - well rigs hitting rock and no water.

Oh yes it is not "creosote bush" as late comers persist in calling our lovely desert greasewood - so called by all in the good old days - such stupidity infuriates me, as does the calling our lovely Yucca trees - Joshua trees - never called that by old timers.

Well back to the Junction - are you with me ? First established in 1876-77 by Mr. and Mrs. Green of Lone Pine as a way station. (Ask Mr. Irwin to show you pictures of the old Darwin I recently sent him) he has not acknowledged them. Oh well. Where the roads crossed was dry - so they built about a mile furthur north - piped water down from a spring at the base of Little Maturango Peak in $\frac{1}{2}$ " iron pipe. Later years used as fences etc - some still around - planted Locust trees - fruit and a garden - duck pond and by the time all set up - Modoc was shutting down - and the Darwin boom fizzling out and by the time John Shepherd built the road down Shepherd's Canyon to Panamint Valley Panamint City was dying so the hauling of produce the valley farmers expected did not last and so the Junction was abandoned for 10 years or so.

In 1888 Domingo filed on it by the Homestead Act and it was open

house to all who came. In 1890 he sent for John Carricart to join him from his home town in France their families close knit - Basque.

John was 18 years old and spent the next 14 years in and around there- working - prospecting had a few sheep and butchered and hauled down to Ballarat when it was located in 1897. John was a fine black smith and could do anything with a forge - anvil and hammer - besides shoeing horses and mules.

Domingo had a fine pack train of mules - white bell mare - mules love white horses. They were fine big sorrels - 2 in particular were named Napoleon and Josephine and he packed ore hay and grain - wood to the mines then working out of Ballarat. The Ratcliff Mines and Mill 1903 on to 1904 a cloud burst washed out some of the camp.

Domingo located mining property in Goler Canyon - south of Ballarat - he called the "gibraltar". In 1904-5 he and Jack Keane - called Kane - easier to say - went prospecting in Nevada after Tonopah and Goldfield were discovered - Rhyolite and Bullfrog - found nothing and headed back to Ballarat, camped up at Daylight Pass and it is no fable that mines were found and located while the prospectors were hunting their mules and burros - which Domingo and Jack did. They separated tracking them down into Death Valley when Jack picked up some good looking float and they gave up hunting mules and instead hunted the lode - located it and back to Nevada and mining men - and sold for \$25,000.00. A lot of money to a prospector in those days. So each had \$12,500.00 apiece. Jack took off with his - was a "wild Irishman" got in a fight and killed a man and took off for Old Mexico and the last we heard of him was in the 20's when he settled on a hog ranch near Barstow.

Domingo and my uncle Al Millspaugh went on a prospecting trip in Nevada in 1911 - and in 1912 Charles Summers and Frank Butler of Bishop and Mono County needed more range for their cattle - became interested in the Junction as a winter range - met Domingo in the

Hollenbeck Hotel in Los Angeles and a deal was made- \$40,000.00 including a few head of cows Domingo ran on Junction Flat.

In the 1900's Silas Reynolds and his father had 500 or so of cows - in winter ranged them at Wild Horse Springs 5 miles out of Coso Hot Springs - summers in the high country. In 1904 Silas' father died suddenly at the hot springs. He and Domingo got together on a deal to buy out Charlie Anthony's store , hotel, barns and corrals in Darwin. In 1876 when Darwin boomed and everyone rushed over from Panamint City when it died - Anthony came and built the store, hotel etc. - a fine man - I remember well - also had a mine and mill on east side of Argus Range in box canyon facing Panamint Valley south of Shepherd's Canyon mouth. In those days 1900's there were mines and mills all around but "no gold". a shaft would be sunk then a mill must be built. Some never dropped a stamp. So Etcharren and Reynolds became partners. Silas put in his cows as his part of the deal - Domingo the money. In 1905 Skidoo boomed. Silas was supervisor of our District 5 - and instigated the building of the Skidoo road - grade from main Darwin Wash above the Falls down to Panamint Valley - by then Skidoo was dead. Domingo and Silas dissolved partnership in 1907 - Domingo keeping the hotel and half the barns - Silas the store and half the barns and corrals and the small blacksmith shop down the street from the store.

After Kearie Wonder deal Domingo sold his interest in the saloon in Ballarat to his partner Blair Tyler and spent time off and on at the Junction.

When Skidoo boomed John Carricart went to Johannesburg "Joburg" and opened a blacksmith shop. 12-16 animal freight teams had to be shod and tires on wheels reset. He took a trip to France and brought back a lovely wife - Marie - their first son Clete was "Clay" - was born in Joburg 1907. John cleared \$12,000.00 sold out and moved to

Los Angeles and opened a machine shop on Aliso St and Los Angeles St. Got roped in on a rotary car engine , lost his money and they moved to Santa Barbara. During the terrible earthquake in 1925? he saved lives and property and was so very proud of the award given him - framed - he and Marie had four children - Clete - Beulah - Lucille and Jean (son). W.W.I Marie worried about her brothers and family in France - became ill - John raised the family & his heart - like mine was always "up home". In 1937 he and Marie came back and he worked at Coso Hot Springs. Some Jew had cabins etc and John was maintenance man.

In the meantime Mark Lacey of Olancha made a deal with Summers and Butler 1932 or so for the Junction and brought his cows over for winter range and a line camp over at Cole Springs near Old Coso, and in 1940 John and Marie came back to the Junction to look after for Mark. Then the Navy Ordnance Training Station NOTS - now Naval Weapons Center - made a bombing range of all my beloved home country - which is all right with me - keep strays out and John was guard at the Junction - brought the trees back - flowersgarden and vegetables - lovely place - home again after almost 40 years.

On Mother's Day 1945 I went "over Home" (Millspaugh) nothing left but our boiler - which in 1941 when the Jew junk men invaded our country - not even a horse shoe left. They worked hard to get our boiler out - but our rock masonry too tough for them so it stays and tell brush growing all over our once beautiful camp. I had dinner with John and Marie and on July 17, 1945 he stopped in Darwin to tell me he was going down to Hollywood to get fresh fruit and see Clete and would be back on the 19th. But my life long friend did not come home - tragically killed at Sepulveda and San Fernando Roads when hit by, of all cars, a Navy weapons carrier. Killed instantly - 8:00 A.M. July 19. They could not locate Clete until 3:00 that afternoon and at 3:00 A.M. of the 20th Clete and Beulah woke me with the heart in

breaking news - and on over to the Junction to get their mother. My son and wife attended the funeral for me.

Now I've writers cramp and time I hung up. I once start to write I never quit - so if I've missed anything you want to know ?

I was in Lee Vining when word came of Domingo's death and I came down to bid goodbye to my old friend from childhood. One of the best, kindest and good man, as was John Carricart, one could ever know. And oh yes - not an ounce of truth about his reporting the Indian writings in 1929 - he was still living in Santa Barbara . Besides we all knew of them in Sand Canyon - back in 1900's. Our Indians had told us of them - without a doubt the finest writings of any found anywhere. I saw them when a girl while hunting horses. That's how John first found them back in old days. Our stock ran loose on the range and so when we needed them we rode out hunting them and they could be anywhere for miles around. Some of your dates are wrong. You will have to take a day off to wade through all this - but ask at the Museum to read my "Millspaugh the Beginning and the End" and of Darwin. No one else is left who knows of old days in my beloved home country.

Sincerely

Elizabeth L. Mecham