

#19

Trails of S. Inyo
June 12, 1980

2010.25.19

Captions--Trails, Southern Inyo. A. Reed

1. New road built to Whitney Portal in early thirties.
U. S. Forest Service photo
Adele Reed collection
2. Lone Pine Lake on Whitney Trail. U. S. Forest Service photo
Adele Reed collection
3. An all expence trip to Mt. Whitney by U. S. F. S. personnel,
1937.
guests included. Ted Cook Pack Train. / Collection of Roy Beebe
Adele Reed collection
4. Dedication of Whitney Portal in 1936, formerly known as Hunters
Flat.
Collection of Roy Beebe
Adele Reed collection
5. CCC Camp, Company 1340, above Lone Pine. Frasher photo
Adele Reed collection
6. Tent camp at Trail Lake for workers on the re-alignment of
Whitney Trail.
Lizzie Carrasco collection
Adele Reed collection
7. The 6000 pound compressor was put to work.
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Tidevater R. R. track near China Ranch. Adele Reed photo

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TRAILS OF SOUTHERN INYO, LAND OF CONTRAST

Section ~~XXXX~~ By Adele Reed CBF

[There was a great diversity of interest in Inyo's lower country, unlike any to be found. The rugged Sierra Nevada Range with its forests, lakes and streams made a natural western border. Mount Whitney the tallest in America, overlooked a vast desert area to the south and east. Out there, the barren hills and canyons concealed things of interest ^{like} ~~and~~ Death Valley, ^{the} lowest elevation ^{IN the U.S.} The huge sandy valley with ^Apanorama of delicate pastel coloring lay waiting for discovery. The hardy ^{'49ers'} ~~forty~~ miners tracks were soon covered with blowing sand.

History tells that Lt. Ives explored Death Valley in 1861 for the California Boundary Commission, using camels as pack animals. Other early trails were those of two expeditions, the Wheeler-Lyle in 1871 and Lt. Birnie's party in 1875. They also encountered the hardships of travel due to heat, sand and the lack of water. Other trails were made by the Shoshone Indians who lived in the Valley and sometimes crossed the mountains to Paiute land in the Owens River Valley.

] The Early Hockett Trail CBF

[By 1861 mining was beginning in Inyo-Mono and settlers west of the Sierra in Tulare Valley were hearing of a great, virgin country. Wagon travel through Walker Pass meant a slow, grueling trip. By horseback it took four days by rough trail over the mountains. In 1862 a passage-way across the Sierra into Inyo was planned as a road. It was to run from the east side of Tulare Valley ~~from~~ between Deer Creek and the Kings River ~~and~~ cross the Sierra to a point between the north end of Owens Lake and the north end of Owens Little Lake.

[The purpose was to bring people and animals to the mining camps of Coso in Inyo and Mono ⁱⁿ Mono county. Great herds of cattle were to graze the prime grasslands of a new area. Applications for the franchise were filed but it seems nothing came of it. At the same time plans for a trail project were going ahead by

John and William Jordan. The Tulare supervisors authorized to "have made and declared open a pass-way across the mountains to the south end of Big Owens Lake, beginning at Yokel, (Yokohl), ¹ with a time limit of two years." John Jordan was drowned in the Kern River and Henry Cowden, Lyman Martin and John Hockett completed the trail. They reported they ended the trail, "to the point in the Owens River Valley at the foot of Big Meadow and the Lone Pine Tree." The toll rates were set by the supervisors as follows: "25¢ for each loose horse, mule or jack; 20¢ for each head of cattle; 50¢ for each hog, sheep or goat; 50¢ for a man and horse; 50¢ for a packed animal and 25¢ for a man on foot.

(The toll-trail was named Hockett for one man who helped complete it and it became an important cross-country passage. It still sees some use by cattlemen and backpackers ^{who} enjoy the beauty of the mountains.

1 An interesting note by Dorothy Cragan, historian: "The Hockett trail seems to have ended in two locations. The Big Meadow was just north of what we call Haiwee today, while the Lone Pine Tree was at the confluence of Lone Pine Creek and Tuttle Creek, just west of Lone Pine."

~~Bibliography Chalfant and the Delta Newspaper.~~

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Pioneer Days

Trails of southern Inyo, land of many contrasts

by Adele Reed

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THE EARLY HOCKETT TRAIL

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THE OLD SPANISH (WOLFSKILL) TRAIL OF 1829

One of Inyo's earliest trails touched in and out of the southeast corner and has been attributed to the Spanish Padres who once trod the long miles in the dim past. The route has a shrouded history that lends great interest in the towns of Tecopa Hot Springs and Shoshone.

In "California, a History," by Andrew F. Rolle, the trail is noted as an early transport route. It was a long, treacherous way for the mule packtrains that left Santa Fe, N.M. and came through the Rocky Mountains thence across the Great Basin and dipped in and out of a corner of Inyo, heading south to the little pueblo later named Los Angeles.

We quote from the Owens Valley Progress Citizen, Lone Pine, Oct. 29, 1937: "The China Ranch, located six miles from Tecopa in Inyo County is credited with placing the first figs on the California markets each year. The figs are of the Black Mission variety and are borne on trees that were planted during the time of the early settlements in this region. The fruit is exceptional for its size and market demands for the five pound pack begin early in May."

Several miles below the ranch is the Armagosa Canyon and the Armagosa River runs through vast meadowland where cattle graze. The soft, pastel patterns seen on surrounding hills adds enchantment to a historical area.

On parts of the roadway one drives along the built up right-of-way of the spur track of the Tonopah and Tidewater system which once hauled gypsum from mines in the canyon walls. The railroad line ran near a one-room cabin built of cut-rock and above the door was a date, 1903. The roof was of thatched poles and most all covering was long gone. Folklore and beauty abide in the little vale of romantic interest that once knew the clatter of many hooves in and out.

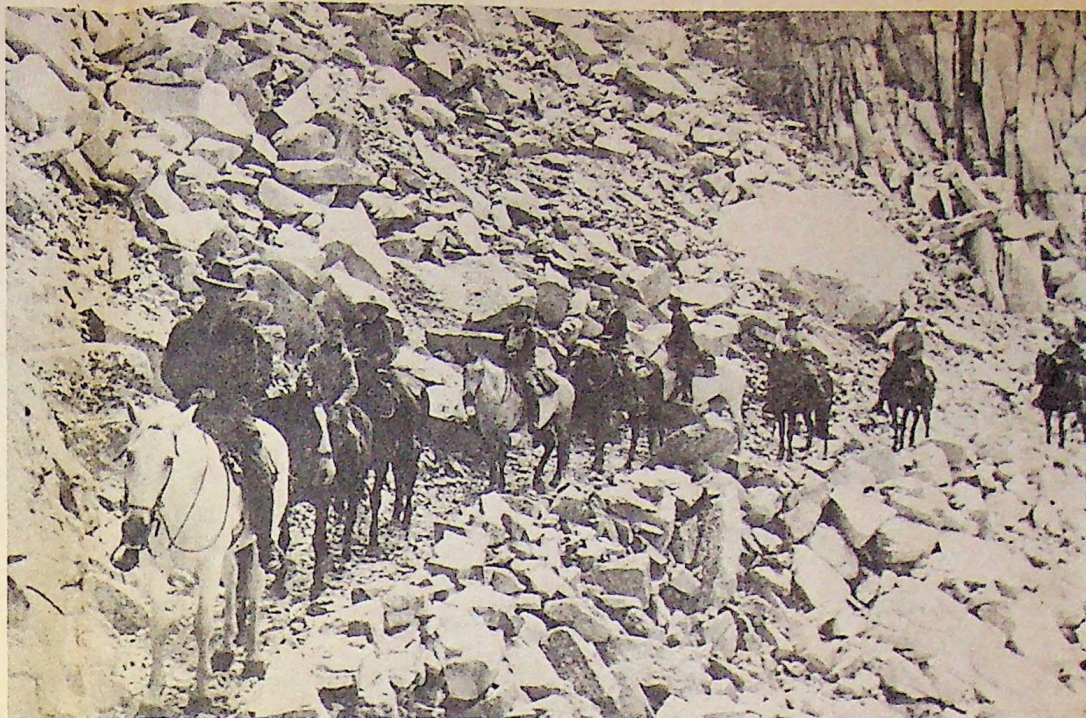
MOUNT WHITNEY TRAIL

From the 1860's on, groups of people had attempted to scale the lofty mount, elevation 14,496 feet. One party succeeded in 1864 and named the peak in honor of a California State Geologist, Josiah Dwight Whitney. Visits to Mount Whitney continued off and on for years. Some time after the turn of the century several attempts by the Lone Pine residents made possible a mule trail to the summit. There was a narrow, winding, trail-road entrance to the then-named Hunters Flat, from where pack animals were available.

In 1933 a number of barracks buildings were erected halfway between Lone Pine and Hunters Flat. The Civilian Conservation Corp., 3-C Camp, Company #1340 were brought in for work on trail, road, forest fires, whatever. Those lads were under the supervision of the U.S. of Forest Service. The forestry personnel were: Al Glendenning, camp superintendent; Guy Martin, Walter Clark, L.C. Christenson, L.M. Stubblefield, Harry Wilson and Art Provience were all named truck trail foremen; Ed Humphrey misc. foreman; William Reed, mechanic foreman; Bert Pitts and Bud Corporon were bulldozer operator foremen.

One of the first work-projects was the re-building of the Hunters Flat road. A wider, more gradual ascent with switchbacks was built up the north or right side of the canyon, making an easy entrance to what became known as Whitney Portal. A pack trail at the Portal, owned by Chrysler and Cook began taking more and more people to the various high lakes and streams and up the mountain. The CCC lads were available for work in many sections of Inyo-Mono and a smaller base camp near the Hess Sawmill at Mammoth Lakes was used for summer work for several years. It was a very helpful organization that ended in the early 1940's. The Forest Service began work in 1946 to change the Whitney trail, as snow blocked it most of the time, due to the terrain and high elevation. Fred Meckal, ranger at Mammoth Lakes, was the man who laid out the new trail. First of all, Whitney Portal had to be cleaned up, due to a bad flood. Then it took two summers to make the re-alignment away from the bad snow section up to Whitney Pass and complete the trail.

We are indebted to Henry Thorne, Forest Service trail superintendent, for the following interesting account: "A pack camp at the Portal, then run by Bruce Morgan who bought from Ike Livermore, took over the job of packing the workers and supplies to a tent camp on the edge of Trail Lake. It was sometimes called Frog Pond and was at an elevation of between, 11,000 and 12,000 feet. Several strings of mules were used at a time to get the camp organized, then a ten mule string serviced the high camp. From there the workers had to walk to work,



AN ALL EXPENSE PAID trip to Mt. Whitney by U.S. F. S. personnel, guests included. Ted Cook Pack Train. 1937
Collection of Roy Boothe. Adele Reed collection



NEW ROAD built to Whitney Portal in early thirties.

U.S. Forest Service photo
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A map, named "Early Trails of the West," courtesy of the Natural History Museum Los Angeles County, gives the outline of the route from Santa Fe to Los Angeles. Fremont's expedition of 1843-44 followed much the same line through Inyo, as shown and it is said the Mormons came through in early years.

The Mexicans once used the route as a barter trail bringing hand-woven goods to trade for many horses, mules and burros. It was also given the name Slave Trail, according to legend. Being only a pack trail there were no rutted wagon tracks, however it has been traced to two places of green oasis.

"Resting Springs Ranch" can be seen from a paved road leading easterly of Tecopa named "Old Spanish Trail." It was at this oasis that the big herds of animals and the pack strings found plentiful green feed, water and shade. Another oasis, said to have been used by the Mexican transport, was a few miles southeast of Tecopa and had the needed shade and water, so important in desert areas.

It has long been named "China Ranch," hidden away from the desert in a small vale by hills of wondrous color to the south. To the north it is enclosed by high formations of eroded, rocky hills. The entrance leads downhill through a narrow, twisty road in Pinnacle Canyon where weird formations are created by the wearing away of softer material.

One emerges from the high walls to a welcome scene of greenery! Big date palms, tiny patches of alfalfa, old fruit trees, mesquite and shrubs where a little stream of water runs, from a spring. One wonders about the tall, aged palms, how and when and from where did they arrive long a haven for birds. Very mysterious are the cool, shaded oasis found here and there in arid country. The China Ranch was first developed by Chinese who made good use of the water, even a fine fig orchard, of which one or two trees remain today.



THE 6000 POUND compressor was put to work.

Lizzie Carrasco collection
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"After we had the compressor running, the workers had to come down over a high rock bluff on ropes in order to drill holes for staging, which meant drive irons in the rock slightly slanted toward the rock to hold boards and platforms to stand on while working. They had to chip back in the rock walls to make a trail the width of a mule with a pack and with a lot of switchbacks. All in all, when completed, there were 76 switchbacks in less than a mile of trail."

"I would like to say that Rayos and Lizzie Carroasco of Lone Pine earned the credit for that trail if anyone ever did. They were the ones who kept things going no matter how rough it was. Rayos was blacksmith, then I appointed him foreman as he knew the men and the country. Lizzie had her work cut out as she was camp cook and a fine one. Most of the crew were brought in from Darwin, a welcome change from the underground mine work and this job needed good rock miners."

A rock building was erected atop Whitney by the Smithsonian Institute in early years. Many people have made the trip by mule and in later time it has seen much foot traffic, backpackers.

The famed mountain overlooks an enormous amount of country; south to the Mojave, east into Nevada's vast areas and along the rough peaks to Yosemite's highest as well as a great western area.

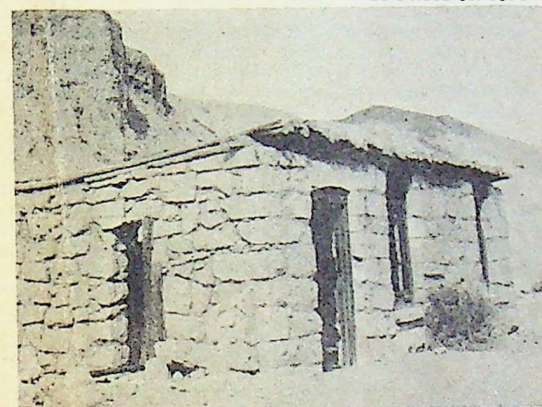
When we asked Henry Thorne whatever became of the compressor, he said with a grin, "we sold it to Bruce Morgan for \$1 and he packed it out!"

NEW ROAD built to Whitney Portal in early thirties.



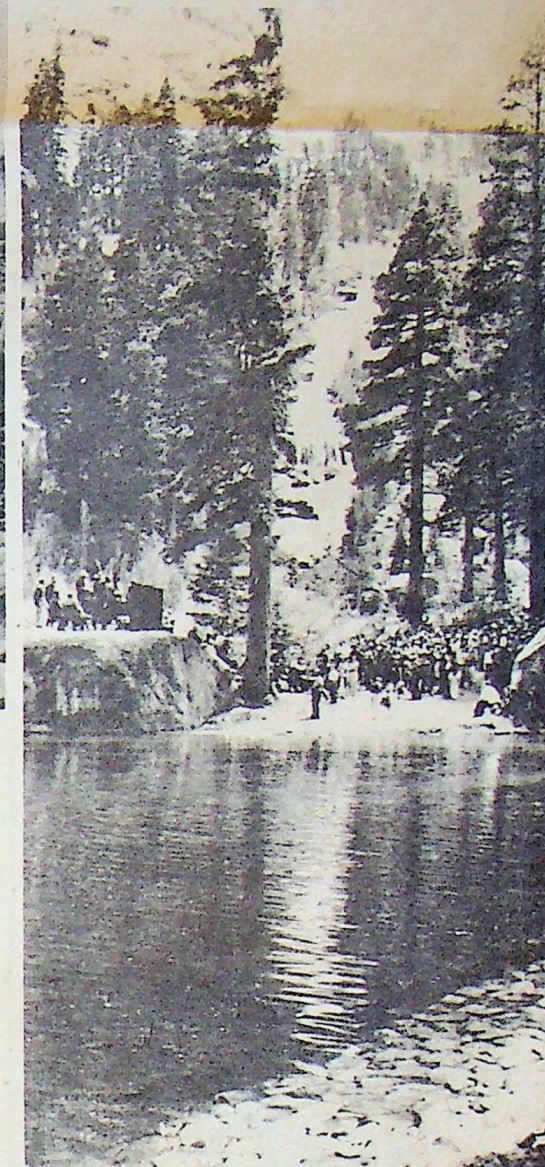
TENT CAMP at Trail Lake for workers on the re-alignment of Whitney Trail.

Lizzie Carrasco collection
Adele Reed collection



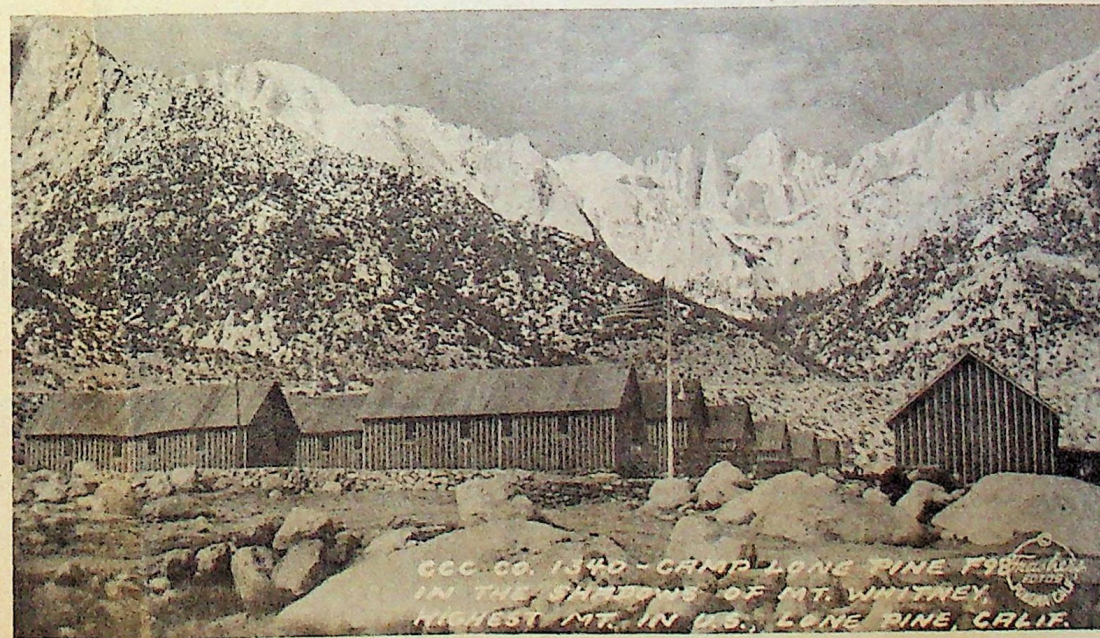
A CUT BLOCK building dated 1903 near the line of the Tonopah and Tidewater R.R. track near China Ranch.
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DEDICATION of Whitney Portal in 1936, formerly known as Hunters Flat.

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CCC CAMP, Company 1340, above Lone Pine. Frasher photo.

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