

March 26 1976

Dear Mr Irwin - Lillian Hilderman
I'm a stickler for things as they were in
our old days & so I differ with Mr Brierly
It could not possibly have been a Panamint
City stage held up at Coyote Holes in 1874.
at that time there was no road up out
of Panamint Valley into Indian Wells
Valley - unless the stage took wraps &
flew over the Argus range - that's my
home country where I grew up - John
Shepherd did not finish the road down
Shepherd's Canyon until 1875 - by then
Panamint City was on its last legs -
nor was there any road down Mt.
Spring Canyon then - it was built later
when Remi Nadeau in 1877 made his
straight road across Indian Wells
Valley from Coyote Holes & up Mt. Spring
Canyon and around & down on Junction
Flat & on to Modoc (Lookout) and to
Darwin just located in Nov 1874 - by
Mexican prospectors & "jumped" by a
couple white men spying on them and
so the original prospect was named The

Defiance" and the rush was on from
Panamint City - up the just finished
Shepherd's Canyon road - Nadeau used
Mt. Spring Canyon until his engineer
built the fine grade up out of the far
end of Indian Wells Valley - a big dry lake
close by - so the grade was named for
his engineer, "The Hamilton Road" at
the top entered a small flat & on east
by "Sunset Mt." a fine red cinder cone -
& so on to Junction Flat crossing
Shepherd's Road from Old Coso 20 mi.
west and on by the way station The
Junction - built in 1875 by Green of
Pine Pine as a way station for freight
teams when Shepherd's Canyon was
finished and when Modoc boomed &
Nadeau built the Stone Corral 2 miles
north & a small rock house - just beyond
his road forked to the right (east) from
the newly completed road into Darwin
& his road continued straight to the
base of Argus range - "the pine mts." north
of Matarango Pass - a decided change in
formation - Hamilton also built the fine

3) rock walled grade at the head of the canyon going into Modoc - When Dorothy Cragen was Administrator & put her heart & soul into building up our Museum I wrote the Darwin Story also the "Millsprings Beginning and the End" for her - my home and the last I saw of them was in a drawer - maybe you have come across them & will find them interesting and true - Shepherds Canyon and vicinity was surveyed in 1875 by Ch. Wheeler on his Government Topographic explorations - but to get back to Coyote Holes - as a child I spent many happy hours there from July 1900 on & to 1901 when Mrs Raymond sold & left after Raymond died Aug 24th 1909 - in 1907 he was in his kitchen when the cloud burst struck - a wall of water down the wash - taking the barn & corrals & part of the house and carried him down several miles - breaking his hip & many bruises - found hours later - a tough old timer - Mrs. Raymond was out side & made it up out of the wash to the top - for the next 2 yrs. he got around

with a crutch - was 80 yrs. old when he died 1909 & had lived at Coyote Holes for 36 yrs. as a child they would tell me of the old days - of Vasquez & his gang holding up the place three times - Mrs. Raymond had brought her family silver with her and the first hold up she managed to gather it in her apron unnoticed in the confusion & slipped out the back door & hid it in the wash & so saved it - Vasquez was hiding out from Newhall & San Joaquin Valley parts & used the beautiful Vasquez Rocks 5 miles up from Coyote Holes as a hide out & from the top could see to the top of Red Rock Canyon south & north & the gate way narrow canyon out of Little Lake & see the dust of the stage down from Cerro Gordo & the freight teams & the up stage out of Red Rock south. -- Memories rush in when I write of old days & my pen can't keep up! none of this is for publication - I've a "thing" about my name being printed & what I write is for the Museum - the first road out of Surprise Canyon was down Panamint

2 Valley through Wingate - until the State Range road was built - to the end of Leasles Lake & over the low hills - up Salt Creek & into Indian Wells Valley, south end & across to Coyote Holes & on up to & over the Greenhorn & on to Visalia - before the road down Kern River was built - so old timers at Kernville etc said years ago. and what would a stage or team from Panamint City be doing at Little Lake in 1870's? Before 1910 and the "Dry Farmer" arrived in Indian Wells Valley - Nadeau's road was still plain from Coyote Holes "straight as string" across the valley to the foot of the grade - he never "turned out for anything" when laying out his roads. Growing up I covered many miles of my home range hunting horses and "knew every foot" in all directions - and I am the only one left of those days who did - all my Indian friends are gone - who knew the country as I did - Southern Inyo County... Lillian Hilderman would have been delighted with all the tributes paid to her - a woman of character

who bore up during the tragedies that
struck her family... Oct 21st 1957

As for Paul Thompson - he knows nothing
of Darwin history or we old timers -
or of the McKellips graves above the Keeler -
Darwin road and he's saying Feb 19th '76 "The
Wallace Campbell family of Darwin" - Wallace
had no family in 1937 - His mother died
Oct 31st 1937 during our big celebration - she
was at the County Hospital in Big Pine -
his father Simon, while returning home
from work on May 17th 1924 in Darwin -
disappeared & no trace of him has ever
been found - several days men combed
the entire country around - rumor he
was seen here & there - but it is one of our
Darwin mysteries never found - he was
74 yrs. old... (and I'm tired of the strap in
Darwin calling Reddy Street - "Ready" it
was named for the "famous" one armed
lawyer of those early days when the town
was laid out. The first wooden building
erected in Darwin Feb 20th 1875 was E. C.
Reddy "Ned" Saloon on Main St... The
first locations by Mexicans was Nov 1874. and

2) Spied on by a couple white men who jumped
the claims - a fight developed - the Mexicans
lost & thus the first claims were named
the defiance - up & around to the east side
of Mt. Ophi - shaft sunk was an incline
90 ft. back to the graver - we knew of
them when children - the old road ran
up the wash from the Rolling Hills and
then onto Centennial Flats - Maden &
other freighters built stone corrals of lava
rock & a small stone cabin and it was
a stop over or a noon watering place -
water hauled in barrels & kept from
the fine spring on the edge of the Lake on
the Cerro Gordo - Mojave road - east side
of Lake - long before Olancho & Keeler - fine
water - warm early morning & the vapor
would rise... so when the McKillips were
camped at the stone corrals the babies
died & buried side by side up on the low
hill above and in 1940 fall - the road
was built up out of the wash & where it
is now - heavy wind brush in '46 took out
the old road & most of the stone corrals -
the road crew & Wallace & Bill James cleaned

up the graves. On June 9th 1939 Wallace
& Edna Baker were married - Wallace died
Oct 10th 1958 - as I said we kids in 1900's
knew of the graves & their history. When the
road to Darwin was built 1875 at the
mouth of the canyon a stone Toll House
was built - charge \$1.00 and in 1940 when
the road was re-aligned & the cut made
the crew covered the cabin - so when
you go over it now the cabin is under
the road - the old road wound around
sharp curves through the Rolling Hills -
traces can still be seen in spite of wash
outs. It was a beautiful sight to see a
12-16 mule team negotiate that narrow
winding road - jerk-line - the sweet sound
of the bells on the leaders - the teamster
on the "high" wheeler!... In the fall of
1913 my husband & a helper & I camped
at the old Toll House - Nils & Mr. Snyder
worked on the road - we cooked & ate in
the cabin - so did the trade rats - I'd leave
some bread or dried fruit for them at night
& next morning in its place would be a
stick or stone in trade - we had a tent

? for sleeping and one for Mr. Snyder - who boarded with us - Customary rates those days was \$1.00 a day - breakfast - a packed lunch & supper - the highlight of the day was when the stage - team & buckboard - came by at noon with mail & papers & a bit of gossip - "what's new" - 6 days a week - from Darwin Mon. Wed. Fri. up from Keeler Tues. Thurs. Sat. Sundays we drove down to the Spring to fill the barrels with water - for the team & us. Sat. night baths - Monday wash day! at Christmas we moved camp up to the Stone Corral in the wash - big tent for cooking & eating & road work done from there on east & in May we finished - when the boys were gone during the day I often walked up to the graves & to sit & think back to when they also were camped at the Corral - McKillip's descendants are many in the Valley - the road is not in the Coto hills - but close to the east end of the Ingos - the Santa Rosa Mine high up above on the Malapi - Joe La Cyr - and Skinner leased - Joe worked it for years off

and on. A tragedy occurred in 1914 when Lloyd Skinner & young brother 12 - also Lloyd car ran off the road coming down from Santa Rosa Mine - rolled down the Mt. killing young Lloyd and paralyzed Lloyd the rest of his life - a sad day for all of us who knew them - well enough of old days - life was simple and now those fine old timers whose lives we will never know again are gone & only a few of us left to remember - and we had some characters in those days whose lives will not be known again. The foregoing is not for publication! - I thought you might enjoy the "facts" - Brierley's memory is good - but like all of us, slips up now & then. I've rambled on long enough!

Best wishes

(mm) Elizabeth L. Mecham

The enclosed picture is how we Darwin kids looked in 1907 - cute? We loved Kate and she taught us well. On Sat. she and I rode horse back over the hills - out to Old Coro & Darwin Springs etc.

Elm