

Aug 20 1978 + 23rd

Dear Irwin - I know how busy you are and it shows how
our Museum is enjoyed by all who visit and linger. It is
just too bad the old Darwin School House could not be
added to the "village". I don't think much of the "strays" there
today, and I have to laugh at the "restrictions" being put on
the old town - how we old timers ever survived with "camoos"
in every back yard, now septic tanks are "required" - only
dynamite will blast through the layers of hard pan. I wish
"they" would let the old town die in peace - never again will
it be the dear old place it once was. Late years I just
stopped at Frances Black's & then on "across the wash" to visit
a few moments with beloved old timers & way back stop and
visit with Lalla Bever ^{Jensen} ~~Jenkins~~ - now she is gone and all those
at the Indian Camp.... That picture of Indian George at
Nadeau's old stone corral - around there grows a certain
"rage" brush with a red berry like a current and when ripe
in the spring very tasty. The Indians gathered them - dried
& used in various ways - from Darwin on to the main Darwin
wash is one soil formation & grease wood - even an out-
cropping of the Alabama Hills to the west and a huge granite
boulder split in half - just above the road - crossing the wash
& up the other side for a short way grease wood and aril
then suddenly into entirely different - rocky and "rage" brush -
end of grease wood, on up to the stone corral and to the Junction.

I don't recall our Indians ever going to the Coso Hot Springs -
out of their district - which in old days each branch of Indians
respected & did not cross boundaries - Coso Indians did - but
mostly Owens Valley Indians used the Hot Springs - Old Coso
Indians & the few left who lived in Darwin did not - that I
knew of - late years some young ones went over to "Hobo" Hot

Spring on Kern River - but early days would be out of their territory and the only time George - Mike or his brother would go that far would be when hunting their horses. The only thing I know of Owens Valley Indians is what I have read in recent years, tho by 1900 Mike did go to Lone Pine - was considered quite wild - but soon returned home & settled down - after automobiles they all traveled more & farther? - further? away, never can get those 2 words straightened out. Other native foods were the Pinon nut, gathered each fall, would camp above our camp - Millsbaugh, knock the cones off the trees with long sticks and avoid the resin, a fire was built in a hole 4 ft. deep - and when a good bed of coals the cones were put in and covered with small pinon limbs, the cones opened up and the seed dropped out - gathered in large deep storage baskets & stored - were ground into a mealy powder & baked as bread, mixed with water. I used to ride up and visit when I was a girl, always welcomed - George, his wife jai-hi-alai-hi-ali (she died in 1925 - we were away at the time - died at Warm Springs (Indian Ranch) in Panamint Valley, probably burned as that was the custom then. So "my wife-he" was gone - a pleasant woman - some of the treatment of the old was cruel (in our eyes) some kept in pens in the dirt to crawl around or taken away from camp and left to die - we used to say "when they decided to die, they died." I've never believed in interfering in their ways of life and have little respect for missionaries of any kind. I've always thought all people of all races are entitled to their own religion - some of which is far superior to ours. They showed me how they prepared the yucca fruit - the yucca trees do not blossom every year - the bloom is ivory white at the end of a limb - when the fruit forms and when just right they gathered it and baked in coals, like a baked

3) potatoes - tho I did not care for them - and they caught the
chuckawallas - nice fat ones and tasty - like chicken. they would
say - quite a job as they would hide in cracks in the rocks -
swell up and hard to pull out by the tail - I doubt if they ate
rattlesnakes, if so they did not say - prospectors claimed that
they some times ate snakes & that they tasted like chicken -
but we took them as "tall tales" - any rattlesnake I killed in
my time, I would not want to eat unless they were around
camp - generally in pairs, or to meet one on a trail and they
could strike my horse. The desert turtle we did not have -
but on the roads to Johannesburg in Indian Wells Valley -
where the Base & Ridgecrest are now - we often encountered
them ambling along in the wheel track - pull around so as
not to run over them and did not bother them - mice and
the Trade Rat - little lizards - "swifts" were plentiful - the
rats built big nests with twigs - pieces of sage brush and
any thing loose they could find - and any food they found, they
left some thing in place - generally dried horse manure chunks -
we were not bothered with them much at Camp - always
had cats around. Our Indians could predict the weather
& taught me many signs, thick coal on stones - cold
winter, red sky in morning - rain - in the evening clear -
certain clouds predicted rain or snow - wind - small animals
& chickens sought shelter and when they came out it was
a clear up, south winds brought the storms - north cold.
the moon a sure sign - circle around & number of stars in
the circle - number of days before rain - and they made a
sort of sun dial with sticks, mostly at their home camps
our spent the winters in Panamint Valley and came up
home in early spring when the feed was starting and left
after pinon gathering. they split willows & dried for the
baskets - also the roots of the Yucca trees, which are red - and

and short clusters - how they hold the tree up is just one of
those things - ours did not irrigate - tho at Warm Springs
in Panamint Valley a sparkling little creek ran through
their camp and they had a little garden - beans - watermelon
a special delight for them, corn which they dried and shelled
when they needed it; they had a special fondness for canned
tomatoes & peaches & of course coffee - our Indians seemed to
take to the white man's ways more than other tribes - soon
after coming in contact with us - clothes, bedding quilts &
blankets and they soon gave up making the rabbit skin
blankets - and ours in Darwin when they built their houses
down at the edge of town were very clean "could eat off the floor"
they took pride in their homes. In the 1920's the girls went
to school at Sherman at Riverside and so came in con-
tact with other Indians from Arizona. I know little of
Owens Valley Indians except what I have read - as in 1900's
we had little contact with them. Late years Rosie Ness used
feathers in some of her baskets - considered one of the finest
basket makers. Silas & Frances Ness have a valuable collection
of baskets - mostly Rosie's. Silas can tell you just the right
kind of material she used, if he remembers. When I was a girl
George & Mike had a small bow & arrow the used to hunt
small game - quail & doves when they came in to the spring
one day I was riding up to Tennessee Springs to see them &
met Mike & he put his hand up to be quiet, so I waited and
he was stalking some quail with the little bow & arrow - Too
bad I didn't collect things in those days - but we just did not
think of it or of future value and so many things in the Indian
lives then, now gone. probably the lemon color strands the
visitor asked about is the willow - long strips dried & kept coiled
as they used. Now you can see this is a rambling letter and I hope
marks sense and any thing I can answer I'll do my best. It is
getting ready to rain - with breeze & we can use it. 50° at 6 A.M. up to 66° by
afternoon. "Keep your powder dry" as old timers & Irish say. "Elm"

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