

#12 Inyo Creamery Sept 27, 1979

Pioneer days

'Cream of crop' celebrated in historical recollection

by Adele Reed

In the early 1890's most ranchers kept milk cows and hauled their products by horse and wagon to the merchants and the three hotels in Bishop. These were the Istalia Hotel on south Main St. and the Clark and Valley View on north Main. By 1892, according to Chalfant, the Inyo Creamery was established but was not a success due to poor management. Private parties continued to handle cream. In 1915, due to the great growth of dairy farming the Inyo Co-operative Creamery was incorporated. Some 250 shares of stock was issued at \$100 each, the capital stock was \$25,000.

The plant was located at the corner of north Main and east Elm Streets where there is now a Richfield service station. Two books of notes of the monthly meetings of the board of directors show some interesting facts. These are courtesy of W.A. "Gus" Cashbaugh, secretary, and date from April, 1915 to January 1928.

At the first meeting the directors were selected for the first year as follows: A. Matlick, W.W. Watterson, I.F. Smith, A.A. Shirley, A.L. Kinsley and M.Q. Watterson was named treasurer.

In the 1921 minutes we note the cream-haulers were maintained by yearly bid. There were protests for a raise in salary due to the rough weather and miles of bad road leading into some of the ranches. This, at times, made it necessary to go back to the use of horses and wagon.

Some of the names of the haulers include M.R. Calhoun, who serviced the Bishop area. The Round Valley cream haul included Pleasant Valley; the Big Pine route and the Laws route were bid on by C.A. Briscoe, Prince Smith, Fred H. Walker, Joseph Blazek, R.A. Francis, E.W. Edwards, S.H. Garner, George W. Turner and E. S. Matlick. For the year 1921 the low bid for the combined routes was let to J.N. McNally.

"August, 1924: As they received three to four cents per pound more, net, for butter consumed at home against what it could be shipped out for, the directors voted to subscribe \$350 to the bonus being raised for erection of the Kittie Lee Inn. This was done to stimulate tourist business and thus benefit the creamery locally. The addition of the Kittie Lee gave Bishop four hostleries for travelers."

A note of interest—Terrill and Mamie Davis came from Arizona and in 1927 began building the first auto court in Bishop at the corner of north Main and Sierra Street where a parking lot is seen next to the Sizzler Steak House. They built 20 to 25 units and operated the Mt. Tom Auto Court for 17 years—as recalled by Mamie.

"April, 1925: It was noted at the board meeting that there was a general decrease in production caused by the sale of farm lands to the DWP, and same reverting back

to a desert state, no longer productive. This situation is of great importance and faces the creamery industry in Bishop today. To what extent it will go no one can tell. We trust it will not mean closing of the creamery although it is quite possible. The directors have properly protected investments, stock can be cashed in for par value."

1927 notes: "By summer many farmers have sold out to the Dept. of Water and Power, City of Los Angeles and the end is in sight." The Inyo Cooperative Creamery was sold to the DWP in 1932. The papers were signed by W.A. Cashbaugh, Secretary.

This transaction signalled the end of ranching in northern Inyo except for the few who continued on a lease basis. One has to drive the back roads, especially east of Bishop and explore a bit through sage and sand to realize the vast acreage that was once in production. The mortal blow to ranching in Inyo-Mono began as early as 1905 when the City of Los Angeles, Department of Water and Power, DWP, began buying the ranches for the water and continued into the 1940's. The Mono water was brought by tunnel into the Owens River and continued south by aqueduct.

We arrived in Bishop, with our family, in 1927 and it was amazing to see what was happening to a splendid ranch land. Many of the homes were still standing, minus doors and windows and represented a life-long work in some cases that was handed down to the next generation, the "be all" and the "end all."

A year or so later we attended the Sierra Festival in Big Pine; it was a splendid program. A colorful Maypole dance by school children, a display of pioneer and Indian



HISTORICAL AREA—The Mt. Tom Campgrounds and Cabins was today. The cost for one night was \$1.50 for a room with a bed, the first auto court in Bishop and was located where the Sizzler is tiny kitchen and wood stove.

Mamie Davis Collection



Inyo Co-operative Creamery stock certificate, 1 1/2 shares

scenes in pageant, addresses by officials and the Inyo's Pioneer Song were featured. The gathering and presentation was the final reunion of the dignified, proud pioneers, hoping to find another "promised land." Tears were flowing as the song ended and goodbyes were said on all sides.

Grandfather labored and grandmother too; long, long ago, long ago
Building a heritage, noble and true; long, long ago, long ago
All thru the years while the valley towns grew; long, long ago, long ago