

Trails & roads, mines So. Fugo June 11-'81

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No. 9 Mine Trails June 11, '81

5 pix inside

one is very small

Captions--Mine trails

1. The Stagecoach coming into Skidoo from Johannesburg in 1907. It took two days to make the trip.

Ray McMurry collection

2. Two famous desert men. "Shorty Harris" and "Seldom Seen Slim" or Charles LaFerge.

Eastern Calif. Museum Photo

3. Two jerkline teams coming into Keeler from the desert. Keeler was the end of rails for the C.&C. Railroad.

Ernest Kinney collection

4. One of twelve Wildrose Kilns showing immense size and the skill of early masons.

Adele Reed photo

5. Ballarat ruins could be seen from afar.

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PIONEER DAYS

By ADELE REED

Cover Picture

The Wheels that came to the Benton Country

Photo Adele Reed

I was going to use the High Road over Sherwin Hill
but it is in Old Mammoth.

Mine trails and roads into desert country

The early prospectors used many trails in the desert country. As the mines came into production rough roads were built where possible. Mining covered a large area, the Inyo Mountains, the Cosos, Argus Range, the Panamints and others.

The mining districts of southern Inyo were many, as named on J.M. Keeler's Inyo County Mining Map of 1883:

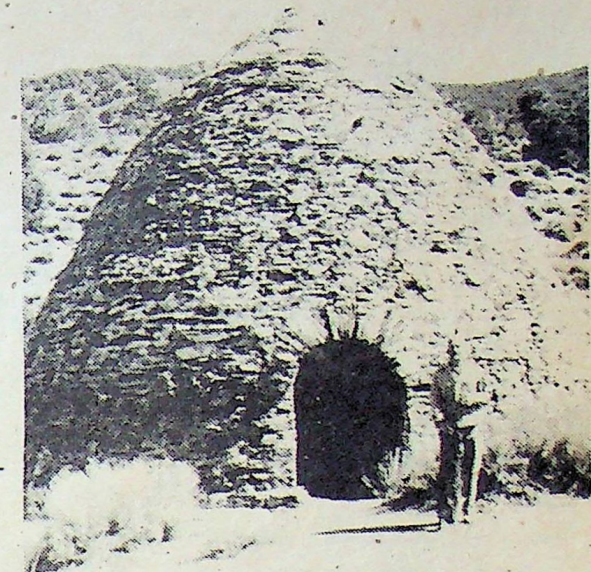
"Trawat, Saratoga, Resting Springs, Grapevine,

many points. Lone Pine was the main shopping and social center. The camp of Darwin was the base for mine supplies and bullion was brought to Darwin for Skidoo, Panamint City and other mines in the Panamints, the Argus Range, Cosos and others. At that time wagon roads were numerous. Bullion was then carried from Darwin in big freight wagons to the railroad at Mojave via 100 miles of desert. Local stage lines were popular. One line went from Darwin south through the Argus hills to Millspaugh,

Cerro Gordo, the charcoal from two kilns on Cottonwood Creek. These are still standing.

Much of the wagon, carriage and stage travel was shortened by the arrival of the slim lines of the Carson and Colorado Railroad in 1883. A spur track sometimes enlarged a business as was the case of the marble quarry in the Inyo's northwesterly of Swansea. A visit with Sophie (Staudinger) Black in Bishop brought memories of a little known industry that once existed not many miles east of Lone Pine. Sophie was eager to tell of her family: "My folks were born in Germany where my dad, Albert, had learned the cutting, designing and polishing of marble, an art of olden days. After coming to America, mining work was found for a time at Bodie and other camps.

In the late 1880's they moved to southern Inyo and my father established a marble quarry that later became the Inyo Marble Works. My four sisters and I were born in our home in the little community that housed workers and some services at the end of the railroad spur track. We children learned very early



One of twelve Wildrose Kilns showing immense size and the skill of early masons.

Adele Reed photo

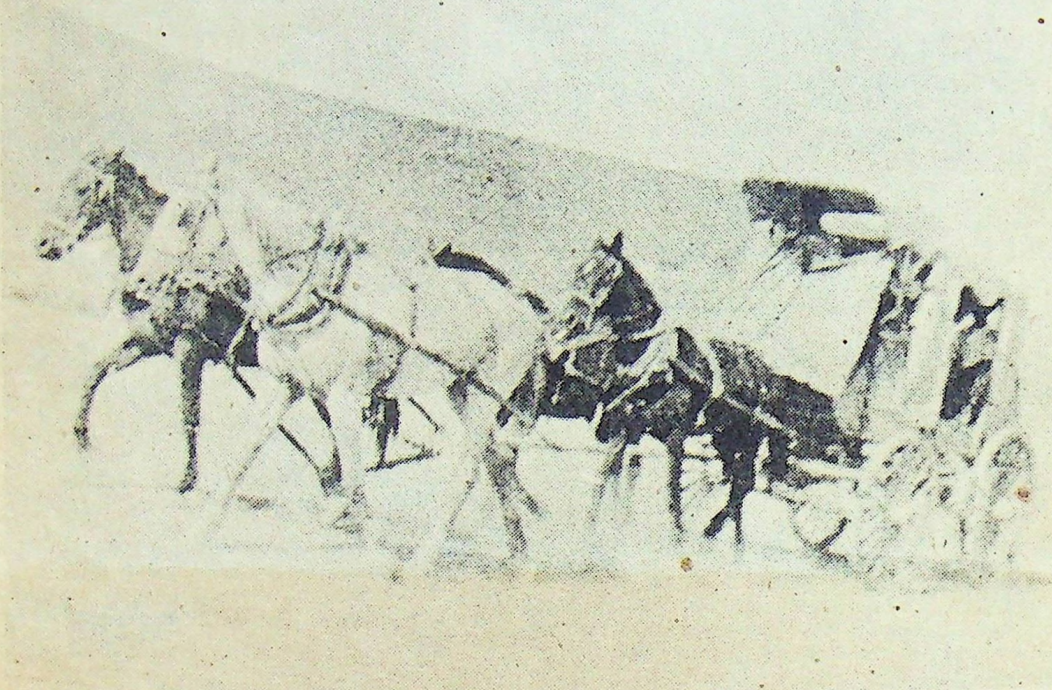
That fine background surrounding each design was painstakingly done with a tiny chisel.

how to help by hand polishing the marble items with buffers.

There were door stops, book weights, and book ends of all sizes. Also many grave markers were sold locally. I can yet pick out the ones my father made anywhere in the Owens River Valley. His handwork shows his own designs, that fine background surrounding each design was painstakingly done with a tiny chisel. His favorite was the maple leaf, others he did were a spray of leaves or tiny flowers."

Sophie's collection, in many shapes and sizes,

Stage, Skidoo - Johannesburg



The Stagecoach coming into Skidoo from Johannesburg in 1907. It took two days to make the trip.

Ray McMurry collection

Slate Range, Sherman, Owens Little Lake, Columbus, Old Coso, Coso, Modoc, Wildrose, Ubehebe, Lee, Swansea, Cerro Gordo, Lone Pine, Russ, Beveridge, Waucoba, Union, Alabama and Kearsarge. The ores were, gold, silver, copper, antimony, borax, zinc, lead and iron."

For the names of trails and transport we again were indebted to Henry Olivas. He recalls once helping his father, "We used a pack string to haul equipment up the trail to Cerro Gordo and by Beveridge Pass over the Inyo's and down the east slope to a remote gold camp named Beveridge. One of us walked in front of a mule and another man walked in back, each of us holding a tight tension on a rope fastened to a very heavy motor. We had to maintain its position up and down the steep trails and we did not lose it! The camp was all but hidden in a deep brushy canyon. There were cabins here and there and rock arrastras and diggin's all over.

"We used a pack string to haul equipment to Cerro Gordo and by Beveridge Pass over the Inyos..."



Two jerkline teams coming into Keeler from the desert. Keeler was the end of rails for the C. & C. Railroad.

Ernest Kinney collection

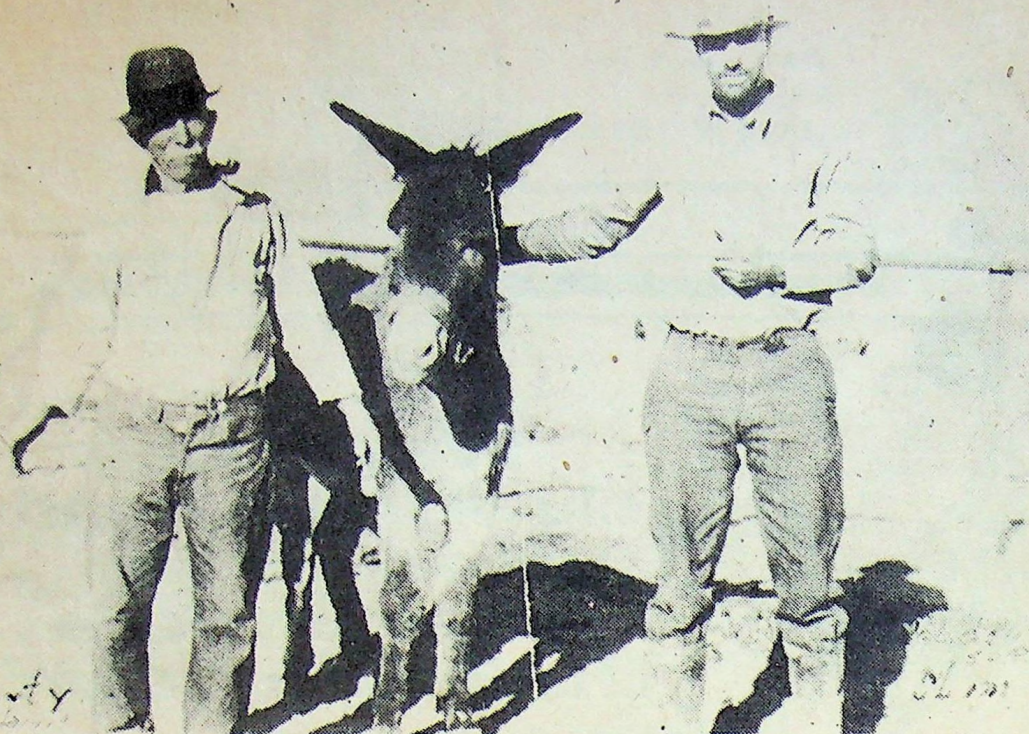
Donated by Tom & Jessie Taylor Ridgeway



show a rich and colorful dendrite pattern in white, tan and gold background, so lovely as door stops and book ends. Looking at these and then thinking of the barren hillside of the Inyo mountains whence they came, it seems incredible. Staudinger lived for the work he loved, according to his daughter, and beside local sales he shipped to many outside

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Two famous desert men. "Shorty Harris" and "Seldom Seen Slim" or Charles LaFerge.
Eastern Calif. Museum Photo

The Keynote mine was a big one. All the ore found was packed out on mules." We often think how dependent the early population was on the sturdy, sure-footed mule, who could balance unwieldy and awkward, heavy loads over any kind of terrain.

Henry went on to tell of pack trains that once ran easterly from Lone Pine to Swansea, then rounded the point of the nearby hill and followed a steep trail to Cerro Gordo where silver was mined. Another trail went from Owenyo up McAvoy Canyon, over the top and down into Saline Valley and its salt flats. There was a trail from Lone Pine up Long John Canyon by Burgess and down through Hunter Canyon and out to the Borax Mill in Saline Valley. A rough trail led easterly from Lone Pine up a canyon where Henry helped haul large, heavy timbers to the Reward Mine. The trail continued to a spring near the summit. That famous character, Death Valley Scotty, often rode his mule over the mountains before a road was built westerly out of Death Valley. Leading a pack mule, his route was over Race Track by Dodge Spring, Lee Flat, Santa Rosa Flat and angled toward Keeler and to Lone Pine for a load of supplies. Or, when he sometimes had business at Independence, Inyo county seat, he turned up Willow Creek after crossing the mountains, then to Winnedumah Rock, and to Kearsarge and Independence.

A great area southeasterly of Lone Pine was opened up to mining when rough roads replaced trails. Wagon and team and stage travel reached

down Shepard Canyon to Postoffice Springs, the Indian Ranch, Wildrose and Skidoo. Panamint City in Surprise Canyon ran a line to Postoffice Springs connecting with the Darwin line, also south to Searles Valley and Johannesburg.

By 1872 the transport of bullion from the furnaces at Cerro Gordo was by the Cerro Gordo Freighting Company with Remi Nadeau in charge. Huge

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wagons and teams were in regular service with stations, watering places and camps provided along the route to Los Angeles. The company also acquired a little steamer, the "Bessie Brady," that helped move the silver bars from the Swansea smelter across Owens Lake to Cartago, saving a few days travel. Another steamer, the "Mollie Stevens," hauled lumber, wood and charcoal for

show a rich and colorful dendrite pattern in white, tan and gold background, so lovely as door stops and book ends. Looking at these and then thinking of the barren hillside of the Inyo mountains whence they came, it seems incredible. Staudinger lived for the work he loved, according to his daughter, and beside local sales he shipped to many outside areas by railroad. His marble was used in the big

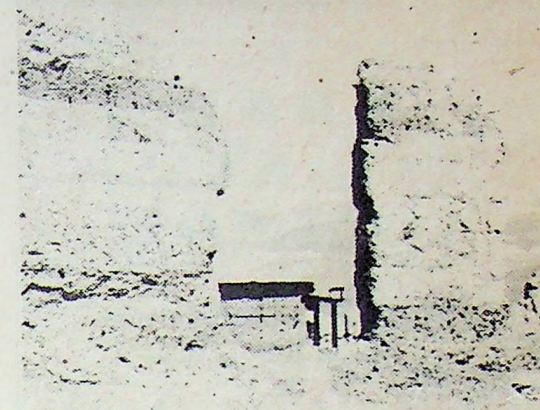
"Bathing in the chemical water of Owens Lake is most delightful, cleansing, searching, but agreeable..."

Flood building in San Francisco. People enjoyed traveling long distance by rail in 1883 and also the bathing in Owens Lake, as noted on the before mentioned map. "Bathing in the chemical water of Owens Lake is most delightful, cleansing, searching, but agreeable. It has a wonderful effect in removing cutaneous eruptions. It is a pleasant 40 minute drive from Lone Pine. At 'Cottonwood Shades' on the west side and at Keeler, the present terminus of the railroad on the east border of the lake, there are accommodations for bathing. From San Francisco to Lone Pine by rail will measure 570 miles, will consume 40 hours and \$40, including fare, sleeper and rations."

On one of our trailer trips into desert areas in years past, we pulled across white salt flats to the adobe ruins of Ballarat, Inyo county. There was a tiny trailer court managed by the owner of a modern store, and as we set up camp for a couple days we wondered if we were on the site of a rip-roaring saloon or whatever? A visit to the old graveyard, wind blown and sand covered, produced no names. Then we met an interesting character, one of the last of the old timers, miner, prospector, burro man and historian. Seldom Seen Slim (Charles LaFerge) helped to relive the exciting stage days, freighting, miners in and out, Ballarat came alive! Seldom Seen pointed to a thicket of willows as he recalled, "Over there was the old camp and station of Post Office Springs. It was given that name because outlaws who used to hole up in the deep canyons above would slip down in the night and leave a letter with a supply list on a tree for the stage driver to pick up. On his return he'd leave the order."

We drove the old stage road by the Indian Ranch and to Wildrose Canyon. There was a little, shaded oasis there, once a way station, and we visited store owners, then drove to the row of huge rock charcoal kilns, mute reminders of the 1870's. Wood to burn down into charcoal in these was gathered on the mountains by coolies and burro trains. Freight wagons hauled the coal to furnaces at Modoc and others.

Two jerkline teams coming into Keeler from the desert. Keeler was the end of rails for the C. & C. Railroad.
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Ballarat ruins could be seen from afar.

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Panamint Valley is a small edition of Death Valley. Toward evening exquisite, pastel shadow patterns are seen along the eroded ridges at the base of the tall Panamints. Desert country offers beauty, solitude and space unlimited. Long gone are

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the sound of burro-train bringing ore down from the mines, and, later, the rumble of ore wagons, the clatter of mules. Now, one hears mechanical noise and people. There's an aura of change, a loss of something both charming and colorful in southern Inyo.

by Adele Reed