

22

PIONEER DAYS July 21st 1880
Continuation of Zugo's
Historical Notes
Leete, Thomson, McGee, Roberts

2010.25.22

O. K.

Captions--Inyo's Silos, continued

1. This was once the Ben Leete farm Adele Reed photo
2. The Thomson home built in 1880 Adele Reed photo
3. A 14 ring silo on the Thomson land. Adele Reed photo
4. Thomas and Margaret Thomson
"Uncle" Andrew Thomson Collection Carrie Thomson Wonacott
5. This 13 ring silo and two bases of wooden silos marks the
McGee acreage in Pleasant Valley. Adele Reed photo
6. Father pulled, son pushed and mother was aboard the famous
push cart way of early travel. Seen in Cathedryl Square,
Salt Lake City, Utah. Adele Reed photo
7. Wm. D. Robert of Round Valley was said to build the first
silo in the west in 1898. Collection of Theodosia Roberts Nordyke

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No. 22 Inyo's Silos continued no. 2
July 31 - 1980

7 \$ pip inside

Silo - Cellar

1927 we came

3 cans

255

104 half
3 or 4 juice

3.16

2.54 455 - June
Pat Stewart

June St, Beauty Parlor
8792-7761
1000 - Thurs.

2565
510
3060

Oct 34824 out her toes

9.55-

37478
Beach

Jucille Wilcox

Laura 33813

Gloria 35405

Chamber 3-8405- Dick
5.95

37478

Evelin

904

Ben Seete Ranch - that was

Driving out the W. Spr. road in recent years, we turned off on an old road, We always look for the remains of old ranches. We found a cement base of a wooden silo and the cement outline of the milking barn. Again Gus Cashbaugh came to the rescue with name and so on.

The 160 acres belonged to Ben Seete, Gus was a neighbor to the N.E. and remembers going over to the Seete Ranch to help in haying time. Ben Seete returned the help at the Cashbaugh place ^{where needed} as neighbors ~~did~~ used to do.

As the time came to switch to ^{the farm} a dairy in early 1900 Seete sold his land to Albie Pitts ^{House 2nd?} who built the silo & milking barn. After the devastation of the Inyo Ranches began, Pitts sold to the D.A.P. Another fine ranch gone. The view of the Whites with dark & light shadows due to clouds, was a beautiful background out in the midst of desert. A few days after we were there the cement markers were hauled away.

Smashed &

The Ben Leete Ranch

Markers or remains of early ranches in Northern Inyo are often interesting. On one of our searching trips we turned off of Warm Springs road onto an old road to the north. Soon the remains of a dairy came into view. A round white cement base of a wooden silo and the outline of the nearby milking barn brought recognition from Gus Cashbaugh. We had found the 160 acre homestead of one Ben Leete. Gus and Ben had often exchanged help in haying time as Gus was a neighbor to the north.

"Ben Leete married Nettie Ford, daughter of Robert Ford, early settler" as related by Gus. "They raised two children. A small home, shade trees, garden and fields of alfalfa or other crops made up the usual early farm."

In 1907 the Leete farm was sold to Ollie Pitts, who built the wooden silo and milking barn. He operated as a dairy ranch until the devastation of the Inyo ranches began and soon sold to the DWP.

The Leete family bought the Charlie Geiger house on Academy Ave. in Bishop in 1907. Ben soon bought an interest in the ice plant where they sold ice and soft drinks. The plant became known as the Bishop Ice and Bottling Plant.

The view of the White mountains with dark and light cloud shadows made a unique background for the long deserted land and its few skeletons of trees. Note--the markers are now gone.

Pioneer Days

Continuation of Inyo's Historical Silos

THE BEN LEETE RANCH

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by Adele Reed

wagon and hie away to his guest ranch—now owned by Bill and Alice Alpers.

The Thos. Thomson family became five in number. The children either rode horseback or walked across the fields to the West Bishop School, now the Valley Presbyterian Church. Clay Hampton was teacher of all the grades. As noted earlier, Carrie Thomson married "Bob" Wonacott and their son Thomas recalls; "my grandmother used to tell of the time in 1872 when they were having a party in the old home. The party was broken up by the heavy earthquake, as everyone scurried out to the rock cellar by the big spring for protection!"

An elegant two story home replaced the first one in the 1880's and stands sturdy and strong today. It can be likened to finding a cherished treasure to come upon the Victorian house at the end of a lane. To walk through the high ceilinged rooms gives a sacred feeling. Old homes as this become a shrine of remembrance of the living, the work, and the sacrifice of the early ones. Not many such now stand in Inyo.

The usual corrals, buildings and an unusually tall white silo stands as a marker or it could be named a "memorial" for the Scottish family named Thomson. The silo has an iron ladder to the top of fourteen rings and the supporting irons extend several feet higher as if one more ring was planned. After several people had leased or operated the ranch, Ade Shipley bought and moved his family there after sale of his Round Valley holdings. Ade established a dairy and had the huge silo built.

"Uncle Andrew" as the family called him, was referred to in his death notice; "His part was ever that of unobtrusive, upright, good citizenship."

The splendid acres he homesteaded and the pretty home were sold to the DWP in the thirties and are now on lease, one of the few. This ranch was famous as a stage station on the Bodie and Aurora roads in early days as noted by historian Arlie Brierly. Family history courtesy the late Carrie (Thomson) Wonacott.

THE MCGEE RANCH

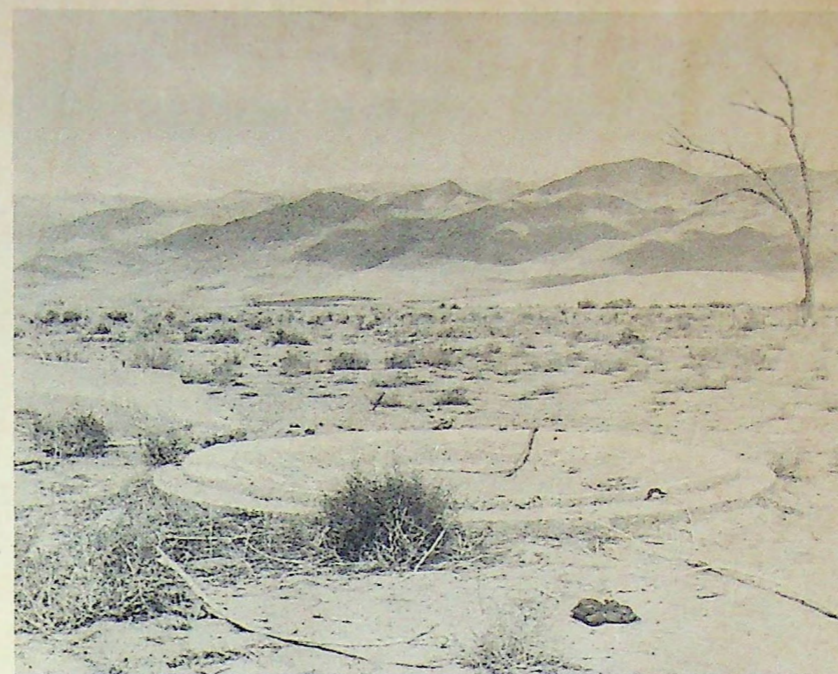
"Pleasant Valley was named for a man by the name James Pleasant who was killed there in a

THIS 13 RING silo and two bases of wooden silos marks the McGee acreage in Pleasant Valley. Adele Reed photo

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The Leete family bought the Charlie Geiger



THIS WAS once the Ben Leete farm. Adele Reed photo

had been one of greater prosperity than any before. Ready markets, buyers who emptied the granaries culled herds closely and brought all the apiary

machinery also all at a low cost.

This man was primarily interested in dairying and read in Hoards Dairy men of a so-called silo being built in the east to store feed for cattle. He, with the help of two white men and some Indians began digging and chiseling Tufa blocks. Mr. Roberts supervised the laying of them and in 1898, the resulting silo was twenty two feet high.

The floor, or base, was one foot solid rock. The sides were two feet in thickness at the bottom, tapering to one foot at the top. The side opening from which the silage was taken out . . . was twenty six inches wide. When the silo was being filled, special boards were used to close it, being bolted from the inside to make it airtight."

Every year 235 to 250 tons of silage were stored in the vault. The hand made, unique silo was declared to be the first one built in the west and the owner was known as "Silo Bill." Forty milking Jersey cows made the dairy on the well-named



THE THOMSON home built in 1880. Adele Reed photo

products. The creamery had more demand than supply, surplus hay had been sold, in fact no producer of salable goods had been unable to dispose of his wares. Real estate had advanced. Tonopah was given as one reason but another was the increasing number of investors in Inyo property and recognition of the Valley's fertility and its abundant water."

The year 1903 was seemingly the right time for Mr. Longley to build and operate his fine farm. He built a two story, columned, colonial type home that was the wonder of all who traveled the road. And a negro butler was seen pouring mint juleps or driving Mrs. Longley to town. Will Rogers visited Inyo in the thirties and was guest of Longley's while filming "Jubilee."

Mr. Longley made many improvements on his ranch including a very large silo. He also imported other breeds of cattle. We noted the silo has thirteen rings and is approximately seventy feet in circumference. Next to it are two bases of wooden

silos that approximate sixty three feet, all storage facilities were immense. Old ties are imbedded in the sand—a way of transporting silage by rail to the milking barn.





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THE THOMSON RANCH

Andrew Thomson arrived in the Owens River Valley from Scotland the winter of 1864-65. He homesteaded 160 acres west of Bishop Creek town and built a home and big rock cellar and ranch buildings. His brother, Thos. Thomson, soon joined him, bringing his wife Margaret and three children from Scotland. In the meantime Andrew had homesteaded land in upper Long Valley in Mono. It became a popular place for fisherman near the head of the Owens River. Thomson was also active at Mono Lake operating a toll station at a location that became known as Hammonds.

In later years he wintered with the family near Bishop—come spring he'd hitch up his horses and



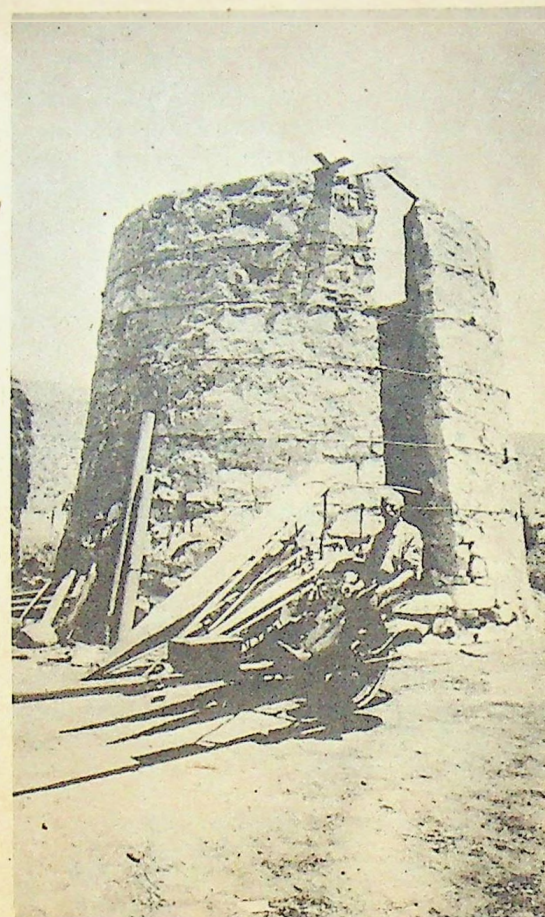
THOMAS and Margaret Thomson—"Uncle" Andrew Thomson. Collection Carrie Thomson Wonacott

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WM. D. ROBERT of Round Valley was said to build the first silo in the west in 1898. Collection of Theodosia Roberts Nordyke

battle with the Indians. The valley was once a lovely place, nestled like an oasis out there in the sand hills" as told by Eva (McGee) Yaney in her "McGee Family History." She added, "there were alfalfa fields, all kinds of grain, corn, meadow land and shade and fruit trees. Little McGee Creek brought plentiful water from above the Buttermilk area."

The McGee family, Alney T. and sons Alney Lee, Barton and John and a cousin Taylor, settled on land in Pleasant Valley in 1866 along with another family named Gunter. The McGees were cattlemen and once owned Long Valley in Mono.

The name McGee goes back to the first years in several locations of Inyo-Mono. Noted in the Inyo Register of Jan. 1, 1903; "J. S. McGee has sold his ranch west of Bishop to one Albert Longley of Chicago for \$19,000." In the same issue; "the register reviews the situation as it was and as it promised to be on this date. The year just closed

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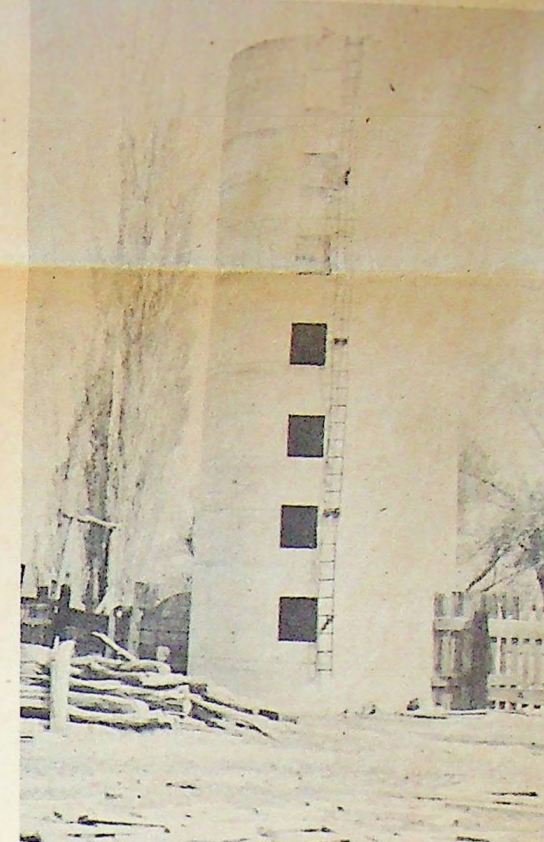
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A Mr. Holihan purchased the ranch and operated it for a time. The Sierra Power Company was the next owner, it went by the name Abelour Ranch. Finally the DWP bought the acreage and the formal home. It was leased to the Inyo Lumber company and a year or so later a disastrous fire leveled the mansion completely. The big silo and a small home mark the old McGee homestead, part of which is now occupied by the Mill Pond complex. Eva (McGee) Yaney; historian "Gus" Cashbaugh.

THE ROBERTS RANCH

Northwest of Bishop, in Round Valley near the old U.S. 395 Sherwin Grade road stands the granddaddy of all Inyo silos. It has long been familiar to those who traveled the old northbound route which curved around and about up Sherwin Hill after crossing Rock Creek at Gene Crosby's Paradise Resort. The hand made silo has been a positive landmark of the Wm. D. Robert's ranch since 1898.

Mrs. Theodosia (Roberts) Nordyke, daughter, recalls pertinent facts; "My father was born in North Wales in 1852 and came to America at an early age with the family. They came across the plains to Salt Lake City, Utah by pushcart. After a few years in Utah and at Jack's Valley, Nevada, the family came to Round Valley where my grandfather homesteaded 240 acres of land. Father was eventually owner of the land and he purchased an additional 160 acres northerly. A few more acres were bought from Indian Sam who lived on the ranch until his death. Father married Minnie Thomson in 1888, she was a teacher in the Round Valley school. I was their only daughter and they raised three sons, Bill, Jr., Llewellyn and Revan." Quoting from an old farm magazine, "W. D. Roberts began farming his land using crude tools that he made. There were alfalfa and corn fields, home orchard, garden, berry patch, poultry yards, a comfortable home, barn, corral and milkhouse, a self-sustaining ranch. Rock Creek, tumbling down its tree-lined course, afforded him gravity water. Roberts built a pipeline that brought water to all buildings and to a little power housing. The electricity generated there ran the milk house

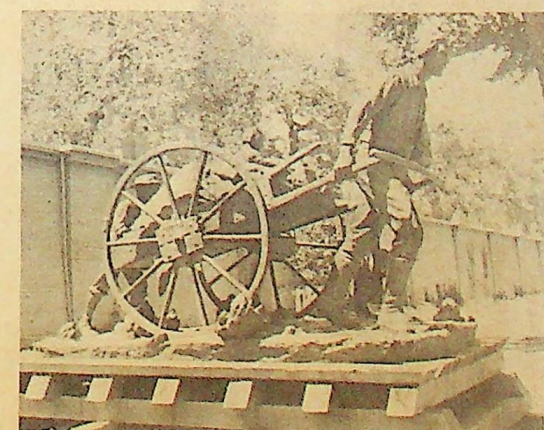


A 14 RING silo on the Thomson land. Adele Reed photo

Fairview Jersey Farm that faced the superb Sierra Range with tall Mount Tom watching over all.

Mrs. Nordyke recalls; When we had the bad earthquake of 1906, our big silo was badly cracked. It was plastered on the inside and metal rods were drawn around it, outside. These were tightened by turn buckles, making it very sturdy once more. Our home burned in 1916—despite the water bucket brigade of neighbors—and we lost all the old records and deeds. A comfortable bung-alow type home was soon built."

The ranch headquarters remain much the same today. It was sold to the DWP in the thirties and has been under lease to Arthur Schober for years. Schober, a member of an early family, runs a pack camp up Bishop Creek in summer and in winter his string of horses and mules are seen in the pasture, thus the ranch is in use! And the old silo stands sturdy and strong.



FATHER PULLED, son pushed and mother was aboard the famous push cart way of early travel. Seen in Cathedral Square, Salt Lake City, Utah. Adele Reed photo