

Cancio de Mayo 1980

Dear Mr. Irwin - Some how or other your letter of March 24th was put aside to answer and then didn't get! It is cool & overcast and can rain the man said. I do hope you make the trip to The Junction - it is not Ranch - that name was hung on by people who knew no better - from the beginning 1876 it has been "The Junction" after Greenes left and in the late 1880's when Domingo Etcharren relocated it as his homestead it remained The Junction - but not at the junction of the roads a half mile or so down the flat - where Nadeau sunk a 90 ft. well - dry at the cross roads of his road up from Indian Wells Valley and John R. Shepherd's road coming west from old Coso & Cole Springs that he built in the 1876 - and on down the Canyon - Shepherd's to Panamint Valley and across to Surprise Canyon - later in 1890's when Ballarat boomed the road went straight across from the mouth of the Canyon to Ballarat. During summers "up home" - before Owens Lake dried up - thanks to the city of Los Angeles - we always had thunder storms each day & often Shepherd's Canyon would be washed out - the last time in Sept 1909 - taking the road out completely as it remains today - Frank Howard had the Darwin - Ballarat mail contract - he made one attempt to get down on horse back and quit before his contract expired - so we were with out mail except weekly trips to Darwin. and finally persuaded the

Postal system in Washington to change the contract from Millsbaugh to Brown - Kern Co. in Indian Wells Valley and I began the first trip Jan 1st 1910 - the contract had 6 months to run so I "carried" the mail on horse back from Jan 1st 1910 to July 1st 1910 - 40 miles a day - 6 days a week - leaving Millsbaugh Mondays - Wednesdays, Fridays and returning Tuesdays - Thursdays & Saturdays - couple times a month took the team & buckboard to bring home hay & grain and grub - 10 miles out from Brown was Desert Wells - run or rather dug with pick & shovel 12 ft. & to this day has water in it - that is if any one now except me, knows where it is! - old time teamsters camped there and one evening around the camp fire, made a bet they could find water - so dug & at 12 ft. water came in and always stayed at that level from top - one mile fell in & instead of hauling him out they dug another well along side - we put a platform around the top and dropped a bucket down on end of a rope & pulled the water up - bucket had a rock wired on the bottom so it would sink & fill! last time I crossed the valley in the '50's it was the same as in 1910 - tho if one does not know where it is can't be found as present road is not where our old one of Nadeau's was - he built it as all his other roads in a straight line across the valley from Coyote Holes to mouth of Mt. Spring Canyon - Indian Wells was settled later as a stage change station from Keeler to Mojave - fine springs were developed - Back to summer rain storms - they gathered during the day & generally late afternoons we would get rain - hard sharp showers - we had no sand storms and

3) To me my old home Country was "God's Country" -
some prospectors around and some one camping at
The Junction - any one was welcome - plenty of water
& shade under the old locust trees - and a "cooler"
hanging under the trees. We had no vandals in those
days! men came up from Ballarat to get out of the
heat and stayed as long as they wanted to - some time
Domingo Etcharren & John Carriest came for weeks -
their home. Domingo had a saloon in Ballarat with
Claire Tyler and John had several mines he worked or
would go over to Old Coss and run the little open stamp
mill he & several others made their mill runs -
John had several placer claims also. lovely quartz with
gold sticking out! some specimen "rotten" with gold -
Sand Canyon will really be a treat for you - all the
writings and "picture" in your mind the people who
"wrote" them and lived - they were probably the same
who "wrote" on the Malapai rocks on west side of Junction
Flat - some stone metates and manos left behind - they
evidently camped there when the pinons (pinos) were
ready to harvest - one of their main foods and cones
gathered - a fire built in a hole & when coals just
ready cones were put in, heat opened them & the nuts
fell out - nicely roasted - "my" Indians did the same
when I was growing up. Each fall they camped above
our place (Millsbaugh) at extreme head of Shepherd's
Canyon - gathered the pinons - roasted them and used
in different ways as one of their main foods - ground
some to a flour for bread - flattened & cooked on a
hot rock or sheet of iron if they had that - As for
animals - coyotes were plentiful & I like to hear them "talk"
as they will stand & "howl" - rarely were any Bob Cats

seen - in 1909 Frank Chrysler found one in the Malapai
along Junction Flat - he had it dressed and gave to
Mamie Reynolds when she & Tilas had the Darwin
Store & it burned when our 2 blocks on west side of main
street burned July 7th 1910 - east side burned 2 blocks
Aug 17th 1917 leaving only a couple of the original buildings
built in 1876 - We had no deer or fox - plenty coyotes
and in 1912 a Mountain Sheep strayed down and
we saw it just above Camp on east side and on
what was called Recompence Flat, we were looking for
our horses and Mike Hanson - Indian was looking
for his and there right out in the open was this
beautiful Mt. Sheep - all my years of growing up it
was the second one - the first I got a quick look
at when coming up from Junction Flat and he
was standing at the summit of the road - We had
plenty of wild horses - in the '80s Landers - a cow outfit
from Bakerfield brought in some fine horses and
many became "wild" and ran with the Indian
horses and some of Dave Cole's that ran loose from
Cole Springs - Dave and Mary Cole and their numerous
boys brought their stock from the South Fork (Kern river)
in the '80s when they homesteaded 5 miles west of Red
Cros - a Lion's grave - David is on the side of a hill
close by, he died of typhoid fever in 1909 - they were a nice
bunch of kids but "wild" - used to come over to our place
once in a while to visit and Dave gave me a pair of
hand forged spurs which I used all my riding years
and still have - Are you there? I'm about to run out
of gas, so will tie this up later! I get started on old days

5) and never know when to quit - memories rush in.

As for old old Hungry Bice - we knew him years ago - they would come to Darwin and camp up at the end of the Main Street - when we would go up to see them - kids scattered like quail in the brush all 9 of them - "wild little Indians" - Mammals were chipmunks - lizards - cotton-tails and Jack rabbits and a sight to remember was a coyote on a moonlite night - standing on a huge boulder just above camp - silhouetted against the skyline - "ringing" and off in the distance another one answering - music! As for The Inyo Trails - volume #1 was published in winter of 1933. volume #2 Spring 1934 - lovely books of poems - one of Wallace Campbell's "Desert Summer Song" pg 14 & "Charity" pg 26. Volume 1 - Winter 1933 Wallace had 3 poems. pg. 3 - pg. 7 - pg 13 - even as a child he liked poetry - as Dix said - we went to school together in "our old school house" 1900 - 1909 - The Inyo Trails were delightful little books - that Inyo Writers Guild published - Claude Weimer. Pres. Genevieve Naffziger. Vice. Pres. and Dorothy C. Cragen - Rec. Treasurers - copies should be in the library - as for The "Lost Gunsight Mine" I read it years ago. don't have it now - for awhile folks Art & I went over board on Maxley's stories and others who wrote of Death Valley - the ones who really knew Death Valley were the our old prospectors and of course Scotty - whom I knew as a child when he would stop over at our place - I loved his fine mules - Rhody Harris I knew & saw last in Ballarat in 1931 & took a picture of he and my sons - Dix & Bob in front of the old school house where he was camping. and when young & they were all alive and stopped often at our place - Bice Boland & Johnny Thorsone

and Jack Gunn - we always saved kittens for him
& took to the Minnetta and his wife Eva Lee Gunn &
I were close friends for years and Helen - who when we
were girls always sent me boxes of grapes from Lone Pine.
she delicious moccasins and later years when ever I
was in Independence I always went to see them - but
stayed with my beloved Mamie Reynolds - 1910 when
she came as a bride to Darwin and ran the store and
was Post master from 1910 to 1918 when our second fire
destroyed 2 blocks of original buildings. The store was the
one Charlie Anthony build in 1876 when Darwin boomed
& he came over from "dying" Panamint City - one of our
finest old timers & friend for years. he also had a
mine & mill in Anthony Canyon just next south of the
mouth of Shepherd's Canyon. that he worked during
Panamint City days & before coming to Darwin. - Frank
Fitzgerald was in & around Darwin in early days - I remember
him - and Jerry Fitzgerald in those days had a cabin
and fine garden at the head of Darwin Falls - supplied
Darwin with produce - in 1898 a cloud burst came down
& he attempted to run across the wash - apparently - if
he had stayed in his cabin he would have been safe -
but the flood carried him over the falls and out on
to Panamint Valley - never found - but in 1939-40 Bill
Reid came across a skull & bones when exploring -
after Reid's built and opened Panamint Springs - gathered
them up & buried & no doubt were Jerry "Fitz" bones.
Pat Reddy came now and then to Darwin but no longer
had interests after late 1890's - As for George Gregory -
he may have taken the teamster Joseph Gregory's
name - they did when they fixed a name - George was
born at or near by old Coco - probably at what we called

2) The Indian Gardens - he was born in the early 1860's when that part of the country was being discovered by the white man and some of the army was stationed there in the '60's when the Indians were stirring up trouble a very small "tribe" - a life long friend was born there in 1864 and when a baby her mother was shot & killed as she held the baby on her lap - I knew Sarah Hunter years ago when she lived on Hunter ranch - (range) but we all called ranch - she made fine baskets - did not get to Darwin and I think was Johnny Hunter's sister - as I say - we did not see them often - Darwin was out of their "territory" so no doubt they came to town but we were not interested and were a different tribe from our Coro Indians and of course the Panarnint ones - they had their "district" or what ever and did little moving about in those days. Then when all the old ones were gone the young ones had been to school and spread out. And dear Hilderman kept a Dewey button - she would - some of us were like pack rats & accumulated "junk" as folks called it. I wish I'd kept all of mine - would have a wagon load! Not much electioneering was done in Darwin - some lively arguments at times and election day was important - I served on the board for years - a pleasant experience & remember - old timers came from miles away to vote & to visit and this is enough for now - have fun! This "Gee as she looks"!

Sincerely

Elizabeth L. Meehan