

Figure 1: The Atlantic Fleet steaming out of Hampton Roads, Virginia, led by flagship U.S.S. Connecticut (Battleship No. 18). The armada was sent around the world by President Theodore Roosevelt from December 16, 1907 to February 22, 1909. The hulls of the battleships were painted white, earning them the popular nickname the "Great White Fleet." They visited California between April 14 and July 7, 1908. Boxst postcard collection.

California Salutes the Great White Fleet

Matthew A. Boxst

Introduction

On December 16, 1907 the United States Atlantic Fleet, under the command of Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans, embarked on a world cruise that lasted until February

22, 1909 (Figures 1-3).¹ It was a 43,000 mile, 14-month circumnavigation of the world that included 20 port calls on six continents. The goals of this naval exercise were multiple. It demonstrated American goodwill,

(Continued on Page 3)

The Branding Iron

Los Angeles Corral of The Westerners

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The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of up to around 20 pages dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

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Editor's Corner . . .

Ahoy there! Experiencing cabin fever from a full year of COVID quarantine? Then enjoy a vicarious voyage to the past in this Spring 2021 issue of *The Branding Iron*! Our lead article by Matthew Boxt is a richly illustrated history of when California was gripped by a different sort of fever—*fleet fever*—during the visit of Teddy Roosevelt's "Big Sticks" to our shores in 1908. The issue continues with Terry Terrel recounting an automotive tale, and A. C. W. Bethel sharing his research on the Pacific Electric Railway.

As California gradually eases quarantine restrictions, so too have the Westerners

eased back into making presentations, albeit online. If you weren't logged in for either of the spring virtual Roundups, you can catch up on what you missed with presentation summaries by youth fellows Alan Griffin and Arkaz Vardanyan. Brian D. Dillon closes this issue with an obituary for Dennis G. Casebier and a review of a biography of Jack London.

Many thanks to the contributors who make *The Branding Iron* possible. Here's to many more exciting issues to come!

Happy Trails!

John Dillon
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U. S. S. Connecticut

Itinerary of Our Cruise Around the World '07-'09

Port	Arrival	Departure	Miles
Hampton Roads, Va.	Dec. 16, 1907	Dec. 16, 1907	
Port of Spain, Trinidad	Dec. 23, 1907	Dec. 29, 1907	1276
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Jan. 12, 1908	Jan. 23, 1908	2339
Punta Arenas, Chili	Feb. 4, 1908	Feb. 7, 1908	2213
Callao, Peru	Feb. 20, 1908	Feb. 29, 1908	268
Magdalena Bay, Mex.	Mar. 12, 1908	Mar. 18, 1908	594
San Diego, Cal.	Apr. 14, 1908	Apr. 15, 1908	59
San Pedro Bay, Cal.	Apr. 18, 1908	Apr. 25, 1908	100
Santa Barbara, Cal.	Apr. 25, 1908	Apr. 30, 1908	83
Santa Cruz, Cal.	May 2, 1908	May 5, 1908	148
San Francisco, Cal.	May 6, 1908	May 18, 1908	435
Belknap Bay, Wash.	May 21, 1908	May 22, 1908	440
Seattle, Wash.	May 23, 1908	May 27, 1908	50
Tacoma, Wash.	May 27, 1908	May 28, 1908	50
San Francisco, Cal.	May 30, 1908	July 7, 1908	760
Honolulu, T. H.	July 26, 1908	July 22, 1908	2119
Auckland, N. Z.	Aug. 9, 1908	Aug. 15, 1908	3875
Sidney, Australia	Aug. 20, 1908	Aug. 27, 1908	1289
Melbourne, Australia	Aug. 29, 1908	Sept. 5, 1908	700
Albany, Australia	Sept. 11, 1908	Sept. 19, 1908	1273
Manila, P. I.	Oct. 2, 1908	Oct. 10, 1908	2453
Yokohama, Japan	Oct. 18, 1908	Oct. 25, 1908	1743
Manila, P. I.	Oct. 31, 1908	Dec. 1, 1908	1749
Columbo, Ceylon	Dec. 13, 1908	Dec. 20, 1908	2945
Suez, Egypt	Jan. 5, 1909	Uncertain	2190
Port Said, Egypt	Uncertain	Uncertain	1310
Villefrance, France	Jan. 14, 1909	Jan. 27, 1909	1537
Negro Bay	Jan. 31, 1909	Feb. 3, 1909	630
Gibraltar	Feb. 2, 1909	Feb. 6, 1909	
Hampton Roads, Va.	Feb. 21, 1909		3959

A Grand Total of 44,142 Miles.

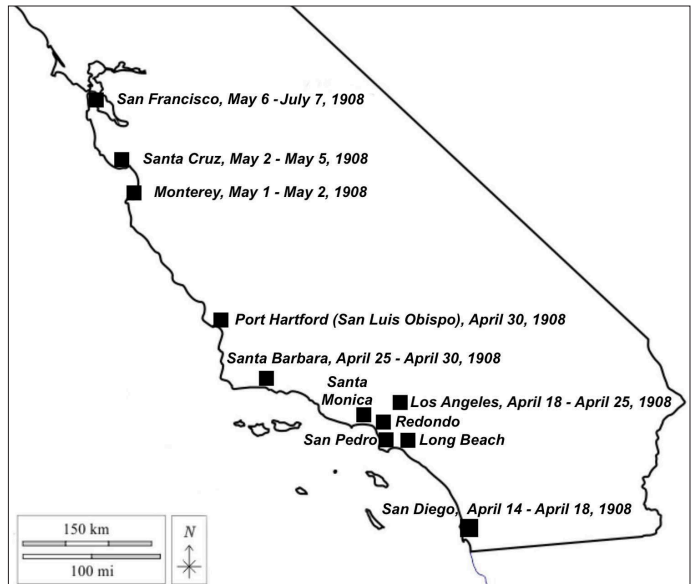


Figure 2, left: Postcard providing the U.S.S. Connecticut's itinerary during the "Great White Fleet" World cruise. Boxt postcard collection. **Figure 3, right:** California ports of call of the Great White Fleet. Map by Boxt, 2021.

yet also America's naval power and our willingness to protect our recently-acquired overseas holdings, and enforce international treaties. It also provided practical experience for U.S. naval personnel in sea duty and ship handling. The funds that President Theodore Roosevelt appropriated from the U.S. Congress transformed our fleet into a modern navy with state-of-the-art firepower (Figure 4). The 16 battleships that weighed anchor on December 16, 1907 were variously called the Atlantic Fleet, the Grand Fleet, or the Battle Fleet. Technically, the "Great White Fleet" refers to the combined Pacific and Atlantic Fleets, which steamed together for the first time with great fanfare through the Golden Gate on May 5, 1908.²

The first leg of the Atlantic journey included stops in Port of Spain, Trinidad; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Punta Arenas, Chile, in the Straits of Magellan. In the second, Pacific leg of the voyage, the fleet continued north to Callao, Peru.³ In every port of call, foreign dignitaries hosted formal receptions for the officers and the sailors were granted shore liberty (Figures 5-6).⁴ On 29 February, the fleet left Peru, pausing for a month in Magdalena Bay in Baja California for comprehensive gunnery training. In the old days,

real shooting was done only in time of war but Roosevelt's *new* Navy didn't wait for combat to test its big guns and battle readiness. When the fleet left Magdalena Bay, the seamen were combat ready, rested and anxious to return to what Louis Maxfield, Midshipman and signal officer aboard the U.S.S. *Illinois* called, "God's Country" or *the* Country.⁵

The Atlantic Fleet was greeted from San Diego to San Francisco with a hoopla that seems unfathomable today (Figure 7). The fleet stopped at five California anchorages on its way from Magdalena Bay up to San Francisco. Each city was anxious to outdo the others in welcoming the fleet with overwhelming hospitality. Californians went mad with enthusiasm in entertaining the bluejackets. Streets and buildings were decorated, and schedules were published in local newspapers, announcing sundry events to the joy of effusive crowds.

Californians had Fleet Fever. Residents and tourists alike crowded San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Pismo Beach, Santa Cruz, and Monterey to catch a glimpse of the armada or welcome it in person as it wended its way northwards toward the Golden Gate. Over the course of nearly three months, other



Figure 4: Rear Admiral Robley Dunglison Evans (left) and Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., 26th president of the United States (1901-1909), aboard the presidential yacht, U.S.S. Mayflower. President Roosevelt used the 273-foot Mayflower as an instrument of personal diplomacy in the 1905 negotiations that ended the Russo-Japanese War. His efforts earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906. Boxt collection.

independent elements of the Great White Fleet visited cities up and down the West Coast, including six Washington state ports.

The 1908 California visit is illustrated in this article by 19 vintage postcards, four black and white photographs, two newspaper clippings, and a lantern slide.⁶ It is estimated that roughly one million Californians celebrated the arrival of the Atlantic Fleet. Whether they flocked to cities or were perched atop coastal vantage points, their experiences, from Imperial Beach to Smith River, were captured on film at a time when black and white photographs were transformed into postcards and sent to friends and family worldwide.

The quantity and variety of Great White Fleet picture postcards and related ephemera that survive are a testament to the popularity of this naval event and the impact it had on American society at the time. Little did these folks know that dozens of their mailed

and unsent mementos would find their way into my modest postcard collection and then into the pages of the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners' *Branding Iron*, documenting this monumental event more than a century after it occurred.⁷

San Diego: April 14-18

Anchors first dropped off Coronado on April 14 and the triumphant heroes were showered with gifts. Local boats brought some 33,000 oranges to the fleet, while other vessels brought young women carrying armfuls of flowers. Governor James N. Gillett boarded the U.S.S. *Connecticut* and extended his warmest welcome to the entire fleet on behalf of the State of California.⁸ One dark cloud cast a pall of disappointment over the day: Rear Admiral Evans, who had not been well, could not attend the festivities. Rear

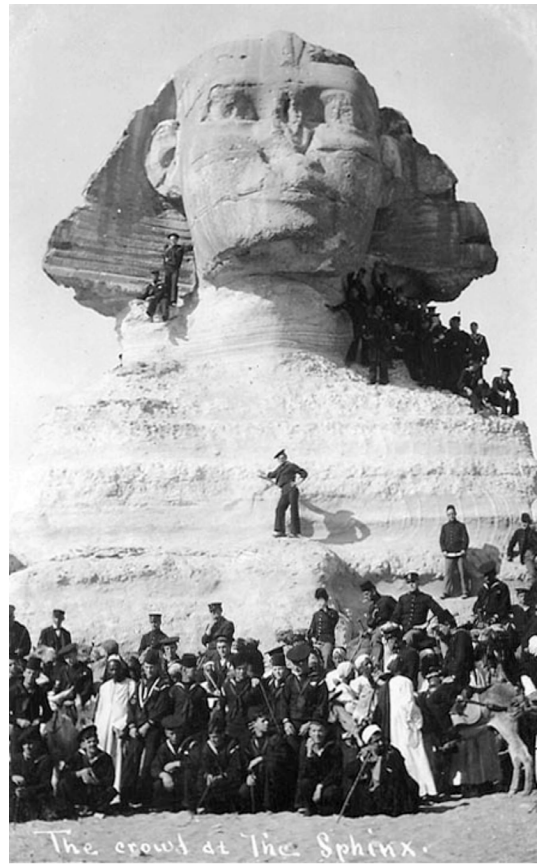


Figure 5, left: Sailors from the Great White Fleet attend a bullfight in Lima, Peru, in February, 1908. Figure 6, right: Some of the Fleet's Sailors pose at the Sphinx with their guides, during a sightseeing tour to Giza, Egypt in January 1909. Both photographs courtesy of the U.S. Naval Historical Center.

Admiral Charles M. Thomas accepted on Evans' behalf a beautiful jeweled box containing the key to the city gates.

Rear Admiral Evans was a gravely sick man who experienced health trouble during most of the voyage of the Atlantic Fleet from the Eastern Seaboard around the Horn, and then up to California. During the Rio de Janeiro visit, he suffered an attack of what the newspapers reported as "gout," which plagued him from the start of the voyage, and forced him to relinquish command when the fleet reached Magdalena Bay, Baja California. Ironically, as Evans received medical attention at Paso Robles Hot Springs, California, the entire nation was celebrating his achievement.

Fightin' Bob Evans grew so sick that he could not continue leading the Fleet across

the Pacific, and decided to not only step down as commander of the Fleet, but also to retire from the Navy. He announced this in San Francisco, to the dismay of all. When Rear Admiral Evans rejoined the Fleet in San Francisco he was, by far, the most popular man in California, if not the country as a whole. He was suffering not from gout, but from accelerated lead poisoning, from the rebel bullets that Civil War doctors "left in" after his horrific wounding at Fort Fisher, North Carolina in 1865. Evans carried lead in his body for 42 years, until it almost killed him in 1907-1908, then finally ended his life two years later.

Despite Evans' absence, San Diego's adoring citizens welcomed the Fleet. Landing parties were applauded by raucous crowds and the entire city celebrated the fleet's



Figure 7: Banquet for the Fleet at Balboa Park, San Diego, California. Boxt collection.

arrival with a mile-long parade including 5,000 men. Officers took automobile rides into the San Diego hinterland and the junior officers were treated to a grand ball at the Hotel Coronado on Good Friday. After three days of zeal and adoration, and banquets, balls, and receptions, the fleet weighed anchor for Los Angeles.

The Four Ports of Los Angeles: San Pedro, Redondo, Long Beach, and Santa Monica, April 18-25

The City of Los Angeles hosted the Great White Fleet from April 18 to April 25, treating the officers and enlisted men to auto tours of Los Angeles County with stops in Hollywood, Santa Monica, and Pasadena. The officers and men of the Fleet were wined, dined, and treated to elaborate barbecues, banquets, a rodeo and Wild West Show, and free boxing matches hosted by James "Jim" Jeffries, World Heavyweight Champion. Crowds of unprecedented size witnessed the fleet's maneuvers from the Venice, Ocean Park, and Santa Monica waterfronts (Figures 8-10). Los Angeles was packed. In *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, Reckner wrote:

News of the planned display drew tens of thousands of people to Santa Monica, and as a result all accommodations were booked solid. Friday night, women and children slept on the beach or in the canyons outside the city. Others found space on the floor of City Hall.⁹

Since good things always come to an end, the fleet sailed for Santa Barbara on Saturday 25 April.

Santa Barbara (April 25-30), Monterey (May 1-2), and Santa Cruz (May 2-5)

Not to outdone by San Diego or Los Angeles, the City of Santa Barbara hosted the biggest celebration in its history (Figure 11). Festivities included a formal ball for officers at the Potter Hotel and an extravagant Parade of Flowers, which was followed by a reception, a dinner, and dance.¹⁰ Robert D. Jones wrote:

Liberty parties were attacked at the landings on the streets by the enthusiastic people of the city, who, bombarded them with ammunition of bouquets, causing a

Fleet! Warships! Venice!
April 19th to 25th
 Warships Will Arrive at Redondo and Venice 8 A. M., Sunday, April 19. Illumination of Ships Every Evening
 Nearest point to see the GREAT FLEET. ONLY 14 MILES. 30 minutes from Los Angeles. Large new broad-gauge cars. Two and three-car trains continuously—ALL DAY—EVERY DAY and EVENING. Prepared to handle with comfort ANY sized crowd. THREE ROUTES to Santa Monica, Ocean Park and Venice. Ample special service between Los Angeles and Redondo.



SOUTH END OF VENICE BREAKWATER, SHOWING BATTLESHIPS ANCHORED WITHIN 100 FEET.

Santa Monica Bay Day, Friday, April 24th
 GRAND CELEBRATION AND ENTERTAINMENT. GORGEOUS ILLUMINATION OF SHIPS AND SHORE. MAGNIFICENT DISPLAY OF FIREWORKS. DON'T MISS THIS GREATEST SIGHT OF ALL. THE FORMATION OF ENTIRE FLEET IN SANTA MONICA BAY SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 25, FOR MANEUVERING and FIRING OF 100 GUNS at PARTING SALUTE.
Car Fare, 50c Round Trip Boat Fare, 25c Round Trip
Cars from BOTH stations, Fourth and Hill streets.
LOS ANGELES-PACIFIC RAILROAD

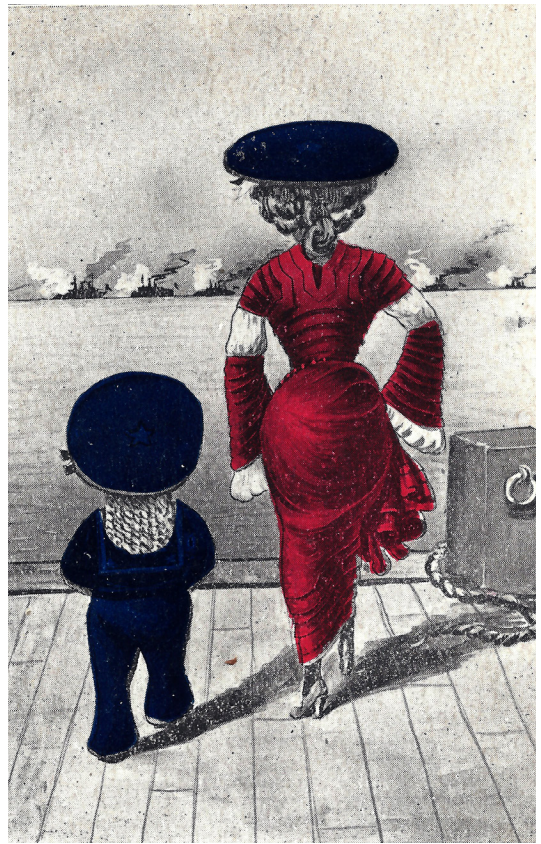


Figure 8, top left: The warships arrived at Redondo Beach at 8:00 AM on Sunday the 19th. Local crowds gathered at Santa Monica, Ocean Park, and Venice to see the fleet, which was illuminated every evening. Clipping from the Los Angeles Herald. **Figure 9, above left:** A fine view of San Pedro Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Young and old, alike, flocked to the nearest points along the coast to see the Great White Fleet. Boxt collection. **Figure 10, above right:** "Scene on the water front, Los Angeles, Cal. Boy: Mama, what ships are those in the bay? Mother: My son, those are Bob Evan's [sic] fighting ships from Hampton Roads. They can whip anything on earth." Boxt postcard collection.

speedy and unconditional capitulation. Flowers! Flowers! There was nothing but flowers. In anticipation of the arrival of the fleet everybody had planted flowers in the vacant lots, so that ammunition would not be short when the day came for the great battle of roses.¹¹

The Fleet steamed northward on April 30, dazzling the faithful who swarmed the coastline to watch it maneuver in San Luis Harbor (Figures 12-13). The fleet didn't actually stop off San Luis Obispo, but the Navy conducted a floating parade in the bay visible to the assembled crowds at Port Hartford. Thousands converged on Pismo Beach to

get a look at the awesome spectacle.¹² After a brief spell, the ships upped their anchors and headed for their scheduled stops in Monterey and Santa Cruz (Figures 14-17). The Fleet arrived on Friday, May 1, spending two days in Monterey and three days, May 2-May 5, in Santa Cruz before steaming on to San Francisco. James Reckner, sailor and U.S. naval historian, wrote:

By 4 May the full battleship fleet had assembled at Santa Cruz. At 1:30 P.M. the torpedo boat flotilla arrived after a stormy passage from San Pedro. That same day, further to the north, the eight armored cruisers of the Pacific Fleet

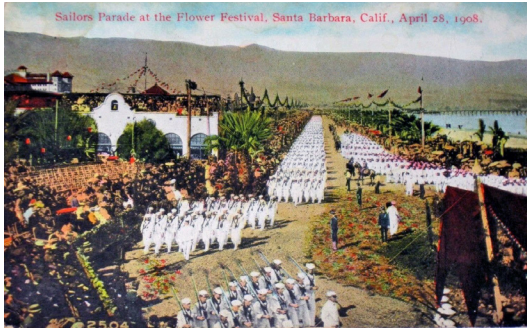


Figure 11, top left: A large crowd watches a procession of American sailors marching in the Fleet Flower Festival, Santa Barbara, April 1908. **Figure 12, top right:** Californians frolic in the surf with battleships of the Great White Fleet on the horizon, passing on their way to San Francisco. **Figure 13, above:** The Fleet steams across San Luis Bay, on April 30, 1908. All from Boxt collection.

entered San Francisco Bay after a three-day passage from Seattle.

Early next morning the *Connecticut* went to Monterey to pick up Admiral Evans, who on the preceding evening had moved from his room at the Paso Robles health resort to accommodations on the special railway car *Sacramento*, which had been provided and specially decorated for his use. "I am a new man today," he claimed as he left Paso Robles. "Didn't I say I'd lead the fleet through the Golden Gate?"¹³

On May 5, 1908, Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet, with the beloved Rear

Admiral Evans at the helm, steamed into San Francisco Bay.

San Francisco, May 5 - July 7

Admiral Evans returned to the command of his flagship, the U.S.S. *Connecticut* the day before in Monterey and was poised to join forces with the Pacific fleet, awaiting his arrival in San Francisco Harbor. When the Pacific fleet of eight armored cruisers and auxiliaries and the Atlantic Fleet's 16 battleships and torpedo flotilla, combined on May 6 in San Francisco Harbor, one could only be reminded of Alfred Thayer Mahan's words: "Whoever rules the waves rules the world."



Figure 14, top left: Liberty parties landing at Monterey (Jones 1908: 271). Figure 15, center left: The Atlantic Fleet at anchor, Monterey, May 1, 1908 (U.S. Naval Institute 1929: 126). Figure 16, above left: People of Santa Cruz watching the arrival of the fleet (Jones 1908: 271). Figure 17, right: Clipping from the Santa Cruz Evening News, May 7, 1908.

It might even be said that San Francisco is the birthplace of the modern U.S. Navy. The combined Atlantic and Pacific fleets was an impressive spectacle to behold.

The Atlantic and Pacific fleets joined in one and then Admiral Evans made a circle, nearly two miles in diameter, heading no less than forty-two men of war of the United States, the largest number of American warships ever assembled since the civil war, and the most powerful fleet

ONE BAKERY 3,286 PIES

ANOTHER BAKERY SOLD 6,000
LOAVES OF BREAD A
DAY.

OTHERS SOLD 1,500 AND 1,000
LOAVES A DAY RESPECTIVE-
LY—TARS GOOD EATERS.

That the sailors and visitors who were in Santa Cruz during the fleet celebration "ate a few lines," as the printer would say, is shown by the figures on their output given by the bakeries of this city.

Alfred Swan of the Royal bakery sold 3,286 pies to the bum-boaters who peddled them among the warships in the bay; the Walnut Avenue bakery baked and sold 6,000 loaves a day for three days; the Grand Central bakery 1,500 and the Seaside Creamery 1,000 a day. All of the bakeries sold large quantities of pies, cakes and doughnuts, Mr. Swan selling 400 dozen buns for sandwiches to one man alone.

ever seen in the Western hemisphere, a fleet greater in size and power than any nation had ever gathered together before with the exception of Great Britain.¹⁴

The celebrations in San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Monterey foreshadowed what lay ahead. San Francisco's seemingly, non-stop, dawn-to-dusk festivities in honor of Admiral Evans and his Great White Fleet lasted from May

(Continued on Page 12)

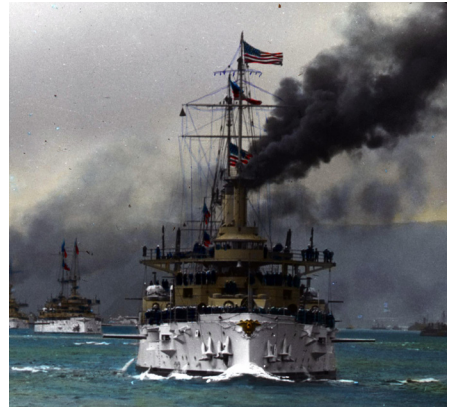
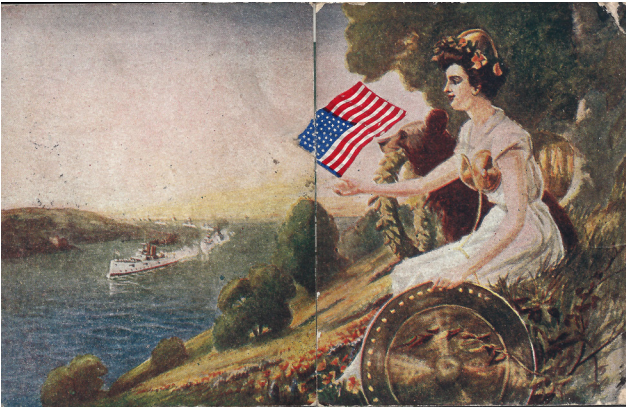


Figure 18, left: *San Francisco welcomes the Fleet*. Issued by Heald's Business College, 425 Mc Allister St. (near Van Ness) San Francisco, this oversized fold-out postcard reads, "Dear Friend. You are invited to make our school your headquarters while in the party to welcome "The Fleet." Boxt collection. **Figure 19, right:** The Great White Fleet arrives in San Francisco Bay, completing the first leg of its journey around the world. As each ship passed Fort Point it fired a 21-gun salute, which was answered with a salute from the forts on both sides of the Golden Gate. Magic lantern slide, scan courtesy of John Freeman. **Figure 20, below:** Onlookers line Van Ness Avenue near Sutter, honoring the Great White Fleet on May 7, 1908. The float, Vallejo's welcome to the Fleet, was built by workmen of the Mare Island Navy Yard, California. Boxt collection.





Figure 21, upper left: Military & Naval Parade, San Francisco, May 7th, 1908. Van Ness near Grove, 1908, view northwest across Van Ness. Mayor Edward R. Taylor (lower right) and Admiral Evans in open carriage. Crowds on roof of Columbia Hotel, 321 Van Ness Ave (now site of War Memorial Opera House). Boxt postcard collection. **Figure 22, upper right:** "Battle Ships at Night in San Francisco Bay, Cal." The buildings under construction in the middle right were part the effort to repair and replace structures devastated by the earthquake and fires of 1906. The electric lighting in the foreground was very new. Boxt postcard collection. **Figure 23, bottom left:** Great White Fleet Comic Postcards. Members of the Young Ladies' Reception Committee that will Welcome the Sailors to California: Miss Anna Beauchatcher—U.S.S. Vermont, Miss Jessie Dimples, U.S.S. Missouri, Miss Annie Beautiful—U.S.S. Kentucky, Miss Susie Peach—U.S.S. Alabama, Miss Sarah Jane Forbiddenfruit—U.S.S. Rhode Island, Miss Lucy Dear—U.S.S. Maine, Miss Ella Sunshine—U.S.S. Kearsage, Miss Nancy Sugarlump—U.S.S. Washington, Miss Lizzie Cheerful—U.S.S. Illinois. Boxt postcard collection. **Figure 24, bottom right:** This 1908 comic postcard includes a note from John, a seaman with the Great White Fleet, that reads, "How is this for me when I left Hampton Roads, Virginia Dec. 16/07 but look at me now." Boxt postcard collection.

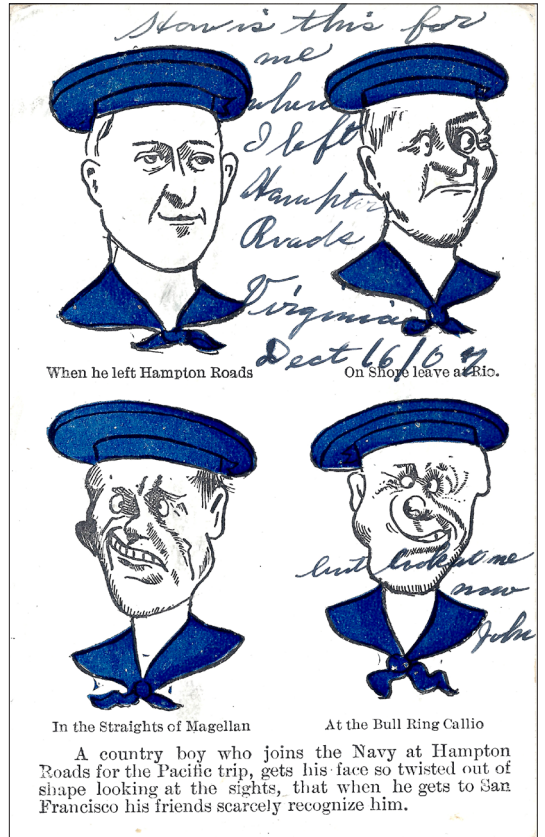




Figure 25, above: A young woman poses with a sailor between the guns of an unidentified "Great White Fleet" vessel, San Francisco Bay, May-July, 1908. Courtesy San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. Figure 26, left: Studio portrait postcard of four people in prop navy motor launch with sign May 6th 08, the day the Great White Fleet entered San Francisco Bay. Note the painted backdrop of battleships at anchor. The photograph was taken at Abe Lipman's concession, Fulton Street Chutes amusement park. Boxt collection.



5 to July 7, 1908 (Figures 18-19). Crowds estimated at hundreds of thousands thronged vantage points to get glimpses of the Great White Fleet and to enjoy the festivities (Figures 20, 25-26).

Swarms of people congregated on Portereo Hill, Telegraph Hill, Russian Hill, Fort Winfield Scott Hill in the Presidio, and from Lands End to the Embarcadero. All rejoiced in their enthusiasm for the fleet. There were parades up Market Street. A grand ball with 5,000 invitees at the Fairmont Hotel lasted for two days. A partial list of scheduled events included nightly illumination of the fleet, the Army-Navy baseball championship game at the Presidio, the Pacific coast amateur boxing tournament, a trip to Mt. Tamalpais and Muir Woods, musical

entertainment, auto trips to The University of California, Vallejo, Santa Rosa, San Jose, and Stanford University, a military and naval parade with 16,000 men in line, an Atlantic vs. Pacific Fleet boat race, athletic events at Golden Gate Park, daily public tours of the battleships, and a grand review of the fleet by Victor H. Metcalf, Secretary of the Navy. Transbay ferry traffic from May 5 to May 17 exceeded the usual numbers by 450,000 passengers.

The heaviest travel day was on May 6 when 186,000 passengers were taken across San Francisco Bay to see the arrival of the fleet on an extraordinarily clear day. It was one of the largest crowds ever assembled in California. The sailors, too, loved their liberty in San Francisco. The city's merchants,

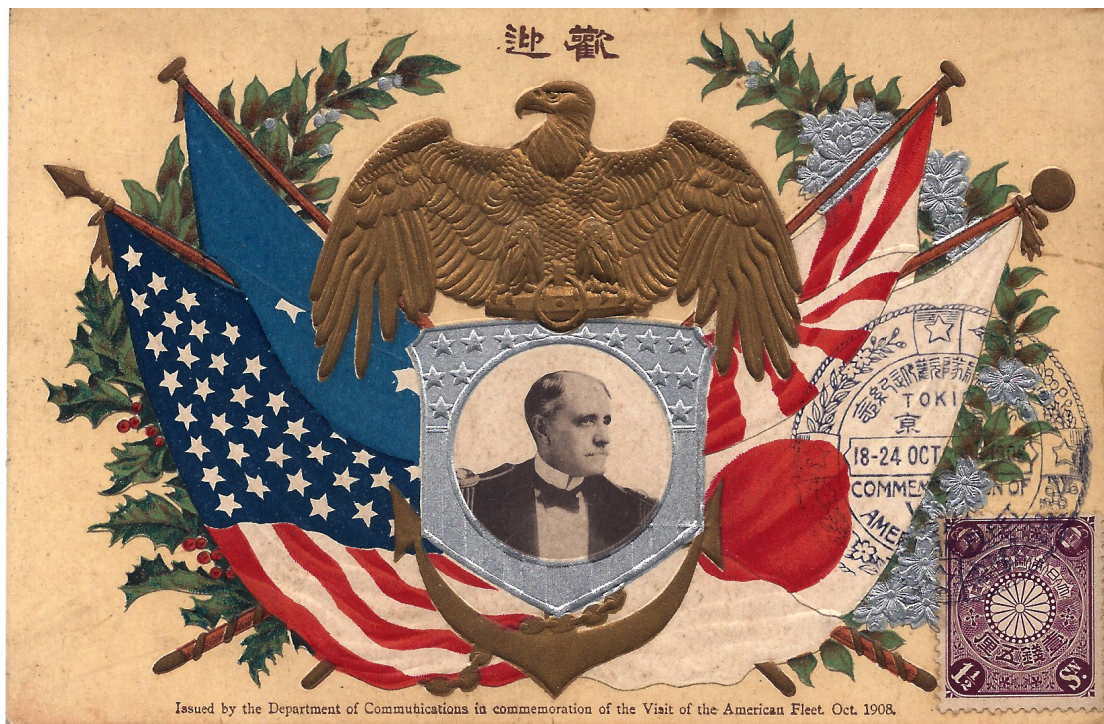


Figure 27: Japan welcomes Rear Admiral Charles Stillman Sperry and the U.S. Navy. Strong patriotic images such as draped national flags, American Holly and Carolina Cherry-Laurel trees, and flowering chrysanthemums are all indicative of the desire for peaceful relations between the two countries. An inked seal (18-24 October 1908) and the postage stamp bearing the Imperial Seal of Japan, also called the Chrysanthemum Seal, add to the historical value of this artifact. At San Francisco, Rear Admiral Charles S. Sperry, pictured in this postcard, assumed command of the Fleet, owing to the poor health of Admiral Evans. Boxst postcard collection.

saloons and bordellos did a land-office business from the sudden influx of bluejackets. San Francisco's naval shindig marked the first public celebration of the city's recovery from the 1906 earthquake and fires (Figures 21-24).

Conclusion

The year 2021 commemorates the 113th anniversary of the Atlantic Fleet's triumphant visit to California and the end of the first leg of its 1907-1909 around-the-world voyage. In 1907, when the fleet set out, the population of California was just over 2 million. When the fleet arrived, it was the biggest event in everybody's life who witnessed this spectacle. Hundreds of thousands of Californians experienced first-hand the U.S. government flexing its maritime muscle, and participated in a patriotic frenzy of epic scale. The fleet's

visit to the West Coast lasted one week shy of three months. The California part of the tour seemed like a constant party, with all-hands-on-deck, young and old and sailors and civilians alike, delighting in this great escapade. Supporters either viewed the fleet steam across the coastal waters of California from Coronado to Crescent City or flocked to San Diego, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Pismo Beach, Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco, for an up close and personal experience. Millions more saw the Great White Fleet in Australia, Japan, China, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Italy, Greece and France.

The front page of every major newspaper publicized the voyage as the grandest spectacle of the age. Without question, the Great White Fleet was impressive in many ways. While nobody denied that the officers and sailors deserved high praise for their



Figure 28: A set of four postcards of Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans, each with a different verse anticipating the Great White Fleet's visit to the Golden State. Boxt collection.

accomplishment, the 1907-1909 voyage was not without its critics. Henry Reuterdaahl, nautical painter and Lieutenant Commander in the United States Naval Reserve Force, was a vocal opponent of the voyage. He accompanied the Atlantic Fleet as far as Callao, Peru, and noted:

...It had been a mistake to show off old-fashioned battleships, with their misplaced armor and other frailties, at a time when dreadnoughts were capturing the attention of the world. It had been unwise to display the nation's inability to coal and supply its own fleets. The Navy was not surprised when, despite all the publicity it had won, it slipped a notch in the world rankings for 1909. The all-wise calculators who worked for Brasey's

and Jane's judged that the United States Navy was no better than third, behind Great Britain and Germany, with France creeping up fast.¹⁵

Sending around the world a fleet this size—16 battleships and dozens of escorts—linking the Pacific and Atlantic in a way that had never been done before—was an unprecedented feat, and the fleet, itself, was a sight to behold. The hulls of the ships were painted pure white with gilded scrollwork on their bows, instead of gray, announcing to the world it was a goodwill voyage.¹⁶ But despite displaying the Navy's peacetime color scheme, a less benign message was not lost on other countries, particularly Japan, whose maritime prowess had been demonstrated in their decisive naval victory at Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. The United States of America was a world power to be reckoned with, exerting its naval influence in both major oceans, Atlantic and Pacific (Figure 27).¹⁷

Today, the population of California is 40 million, yet not one person in a thousand knows anything about the Great White Fleet. This is because very few of the state's present population had an ancestor here in 1908 when it arrived. For whatever reason—a contemporary unpatriotic malaise among our citizenry, collective amnesia, or a gap in our historical memory that's too vast to bridge, this momentous event seems to have been relegated to the dustbin of history.

Nevertheless, in the spring and summer months of 1908, when folks glimpsed the line of 16 battleships with hulls painted white, bristling with guns, and trailing plumes of black coal smoke, hugging the coastline of California, it was certainly a time to remember and NOT just another day in what too many people today call La La Land.

Notes

1. *Rear Admiral Robley Dunglison Evans*: was the first commander of the Great White Fleet. He was affectionately known to the public first as "Fighting Bob," then as "Our Bob" (cf. Evans 1908, 1911). He hoisted his flag in the

U.S.S. *Maine* (Battleship No. 10) on 1 January 1906 and led the fleet around South America to San Francisco, California. Prior to his departure from Hampton Roads, Virginia, Admiral Evans declared, “we are ready at the drop of a hat for a feast, a frolic, or a fight.” Brian D. Dillon (2013a, 2013b) provides stimulating reviews of Fightin’ Bob’s life, military service, and command of the Great White Fleet.

2. *Full-Steam Ahead*: When the Atlantic and Pacific fleets merged in San Francisco Bay, it announced to the world that the United States of America was now a World Power. For the very first time, its Two-Ocean Navy had all of its principal ships in the same place at the same time.
3. *The World Cruise of the Great White Fleet*: Crawford 2008: 3.
4. *Photography*: Almost every aspect of the world cruise was captured on film by sailors, professional photographers, and members of the public at large, who disseminated these images in picture postcards. This enormously rich resource exists piecemeal in formal public and private collections, as well as in boxes, filing cabinets, and envelopes in cellars, attics, and garages the world over.
5. *R&R and Gunnery Practice at Magdalena Bay, Baja California*: Reckner 1988: 56.
6. *Deltiology*: is the practice of collecting postcards. Stamps, coins/banknotes, and postcards, in that order, are the three largest collecting hobbies in the United States. Great White Fleet postcards of varying quality of preservation are available for purchase at online auction sites or from vendors at national and international postcard shows. Great White Fleet postcard themes are diverse, ranging from patriotism, pomp and ceremony, and militarism to portraiture, geography, humor, and promotional advertising. Countless postcards show sailors aboard ship or on shore leave. What makes this particular voyage unique for the deltiologist is that the entire journey, from beginning to end, was documented in picture postcards, examples of which are included in the present article. All date to the “Golden Age of Postcards,” as it is typically called, referring to the period of time between 1900 and the beginning of

World War I in 1914. This fifteen-year period represents the first era in which the widespread popular usage of photographic images, converted to picture postcards, enjoyed worldwide popularity, both as correspondence and collectibles.

7. *Postcard Aficionados*: When most folks look at a postcard, they see panoramic vistas of exotic places, vacation spots, archaeological sites, or urban cityscapes with a brief note or catchy phrase on the back, like “We’re having a swell time,” “Words can’t describe the marvels of this trip,” or “I wish you were here to see the sights.” However, deltiologists or people like me who collect postcards as a hobby, view them from a different perspective. For the enthusiast, the humble picture postcard is far more than a banal expression of popular culture, it is a legitimate documentary medium worthy of academic inquiry. Postcards often depict places and events or people of note who no longer exist—images historically amplified by time-sensitive indicators like the names of businesses, political or social events, natural catastrophes, advertising slogans, clothing, or even conveyances, like automobiles, trains, or stagecoaches. Their back or address side offers information about the sex and place of residence of the sender and addressee, the date of posting and the views, explicit or implied, of the sender, who provides eyewitness accounts and serious insights into an event or historic figure being described.

Leslie Compton’s (2008) *Dearest Minnie, A Sailor’s Story* and *Border Fury, A Picture Postcard Record of Mexico’s Revolution and U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917* by Paul J. Vanderwood, and Frank N. Samponaro (1988) are two remarkable books employing postcards as direct historical evidence. Both use picture postcards to document important events that defined the character of United States in the early twentieth century: the Mexican Revolution and General John Joseph “Black Jack” Pershing’s 1916-1917 Punitive Expedition to capture General Francisco “Pancho” Villa, and the voyage of Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet, 1907-1909.

8. *San Diego Greets the Fleet*: Jones 1908: 258; Carter III 1971: 72.

9. *Los Angeles Greets the Atlantic Fleet*: Reckner 1988: 57-58.
10. *Grand Ball at Santa Barbara's Potter Hotel*: Compton 2017: 84-85.
11. *Liberty Parties*: Jones 1908: 270.
12. *Maneuvers off Pismo Beach*: Hart 1965: 165.
13. *Bob Evans at the Helm*: Reckner 1988: 58.
14. *The Atlantic and Pacific Fleets in San Francisco Bay*: Matthews 1908: 320.
15. *Mission Accomplished?:* The Royal Navy's H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, launched in 1906, was the first battleship to be powered by steam turbines instead of pistons, and to be armed with an "all big gun" battery of 12" guns instead of a mix of primary, secondary, and tertiary calibers. The *Dreadnought* could chase down and gun down any other ship afloat at the time, and sparked an arms race to build similar designs. All battleships of the Great White Fleet were of the slow, undergunned "pre-dreadnought" generation, so critics like Henry Reuterdaahl did not wish to advertise any potential weaknesses of the U.S. Navy on the world stage (Hart 1965: 300).
16. *The Great White Fleet*: steamed around the world on a mission of "Gunboat Diplomacy," impressing foreign dignitaries with an epic show of military force. In reality, all was not as it appeared to be. Two of the ships had such severe mechanical problems that they could not complete the cruise, and two more were unfit for battle. When the vessels returned from their cruise they were stripped of their fancywork and much of their bridge-work, painted gray, and had their pole masts replaced by functional but unsightly cage masts. The buildup towards WWI was underway (Hart 1965: 163).
17. *Diplomatic Relations*: with Japan were at low ebb during "The Pacific Coast Race Riots of 1907," when mobs of White nativists threatened American and Canadian residents of Chinese and Japanese descent, attempting to marginalize citizens and immigrants alike, and to maintain segregated schools for Caucasian and Japanese students.

The San Francisco riots began May 20, 1907 and lasted for several days. The hostilities were temporarily tamped down by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, an informal pact between the United States and the

Empire of Japan, stipulating that the United States would not impose restrictions on Japanese immigrants already present in the U.S., if Japan would halt emigration to the United States. The agreement was never ratified by the United States Congress and was superseded by the Immigration Act of 1924. The Great White Fleet's visit to Japan was intended as a diplomatic gesture to reduce tension between these two nations.

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Sweet Love Peggy Lee's Wheels

Laron B. "Terry" Terrell

Sweet Love Peggy Lee and I were sippin' some cool ones while watching a football game in the lounge of the Santa Maria Elks Lodge. We were headed home after a few weeks along the cool Pacific Coast during the hot August of 2011. We camped nights at selected Elk Lodges with RV hookups.

I brought the lap-top into the lounge to catch up on our e-mail. Nothing on mine, so I pulled up Peggy's. I joined her at the bar and mentioned her e-mail was set up. Much to my surprise she left an active TV football game to catch up on her e-mail.

I was engrossed in the football game when Peggy called to me. She said she had found the cutest little car. I assumed it was a TR-3 because she had owned one during the sixties and loved it dearly.

Over the last few years we have reviewed a few TR-3s on the internet. Most were on the East Coast. This location caused concern about the winter salt on the roads and the possible rust problems. The major discouraging factor was the starting price at \$20,000 and up. That price would have cut deeply

into our drinking fund.

She returned to the bar and encouraged me to look at the car photos. The 7 photographs were outstanding, but the car was not a TR-3. I raised my voice to be heard over the TV and the drinkers' conversations. I told her it was not a TR-3, but a MGB Roadster.

By then our fellow lounge lizards became aware of the subject of our conversation. The 1960 era of sports cars caught the fancy of more than a few of our bar buddies.

She stated it was not a TR-3 but still beautiful. I agreed. I also mentioned the current bid was \$8,600 and there was less than an hour and a half left in the bidding. By then a few more of our boozin' buddies were listening to our loud conversation and joined me at the laptop. Peggy Lee turned slightly, raised her voice and over her right shoulder said to place a bid of \$10,000.

That comment grabbed the hearts and minds, not to mention the giblets 'n' gizards, of the gathered. I blurted out something which was to imply I would use pocket change to cover the bid. I, as well as

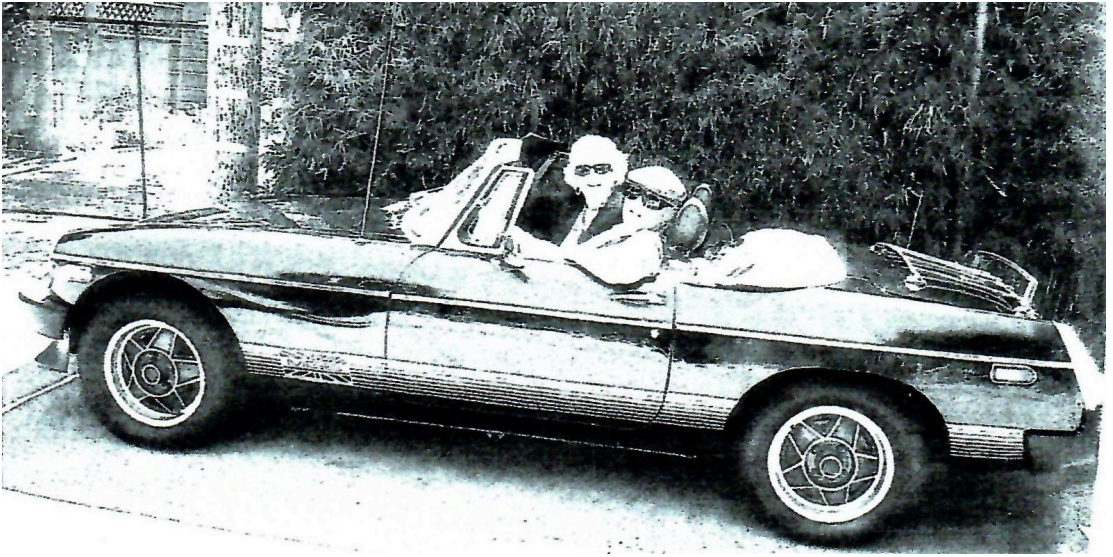


Figure 29: Terry Terrell and Peggy Lee taking their 1979 MGB Roadster out for a spin. Terrel photo.

a number of the others thought she was kidding. Everyone chuckled at her comment and my response. By now most of the bar guests were closing in on the laptop.

Peggy Lee did a 180 degree turn around on her bar stool. When her face was visible, I realized she was not kidding. She wanted me to place a bid of \$10,000 on the "cute little sports car."

I confirmed I would place said bid. The gathered were mumbling among themselves when I carefully bid. My bidding process was unbelievably careful as I had not purchased anything over a few \$100 or so on the Internet.

It goes without saying, everyone in the lounge became involved in the bidding. Peggy Lee and a few others returned to the TV game. After bidding I returned to the bar. Most of the bar folk moved to chairs where they could view the laptop. Over the next hour and a half, a lap top viewer would call out the time remaining and announce no other bid had been placed. Most were involved in the bidding process or lack thereof. There was no counter-bidding as Peggy Lee's bid sat there unchallenged.

Finally, it was yelled that Peggy Lee bought the car with a bid of \$9,000. We discovered later there was some rule about the bidding at a maximum of \$400 at each bid.

Much cheering erupted and the bartender took it upon himself to ring the bar bell which resulted in Peggy Lee buying a round for everybody. To this day some still question the meaning of the bar bell ringing. However, at that moment it meant her bid on the cute little car was accepted and the drinks are on the bidder.

The next day we moved on down 101 to Camarillo where we took HWY 1 to Thornhill Broome State Beach. This was 35 feet of asphalt parking next to the sandy beach where we spent the last day of our trip. There was no cell phone signal to contact the roadster's owner.

I questioned Peggy's decision to purchase the car. She said one of the reasons was during the '60s she and her hubby had a few sports cars and enjoyed each one for a few years. She said my '60s were awful while dealing with countless family problems. She said I should be able to have sports car driving fun even if a little later in life. Bless your generous heart my love.

We returned home and contacted the roadster-selling lady. She seemed a little upset because we did not follow all of the conditions that were stated within the online information. She pointed out the two main conditions were to send her a bank note of some sort for \$9,000 and she would then ship

the car, at the purchaser's expense, to their stated destination.

I apologized to the Seller for my *faux pas* and tried to explain the circumstance under which the bidding was carried out. I also mentioned no money would be sent until the car was viewed in person. She was informed we would take possession in person. If that was not agreeable, we could forget the whole thing. There were a few more phone calls between the seller lady and myself which finally reached an acceptable conclusion. We would take the train to Richmond then a cab to San Rafael and supply her with \$9,000 in cash. That conclusion seemed to emit some kind of odor hanging over the entire process. Was the car stolen? What was all the stuff about the seller didn't want any money delivered to her that was traceable? Was she pulling some sort of shenanigan that would disappear into the coastal fog when we arrived at San Rafael?

The next day arrangements were made for train tickets, motel, and the Wells Fargo Bank in San Rafael to have \$9,000 cash on hand. Arrangements were made with the seller lady to meet with her the morning after we arrived.

The train left LA around 9:00 AM and arrived at the end of its run in Richmond, on the edge of San Francisco Bay, after midnight. We stepped down in the dark of night and were able to locate the conductor who pointed out the way to the depot over various railroad tracks to a walkway. The depot was located much lower than the tracks.

When the elevator door opened, there was a man's body lying face down, in the middle of its floor. Upon closer inspection the body was breathing and apparently his only problem was a snoot full of distilled spirits. The second floor was empty except for a tall lady police officer. We mentioned the drunken body in the elevator. The officer said she would look into it later. She directed us to the front of the depot where a taxi might be found that time of night.

There was not a living thing outside the front door. A few dim lights broke the darkness but nothing moving to be seen. Rather spooky. Within 15 minutes a taxi pulled up.

We jumped in and attempted to give directions to the driver. The taxi driver had no understanding of the English language. Peggy Lee mentioned San Rafael, the driver nodded in the affirmative and took off like a panicked Cheetah. The taxi crossed the very long Richmond Bay Bridge into San Rafael. Peggy Lee presented our motel address. This was also a great mystery to the driver. Fortunately, Peggy Lee had looked at a map prior to leaving on this lost world adventure and was able to guide the driver by pointing her finger. Somehow, we found the motel and arrived about 1:30 AM.

Everything was as black as the Ace of Spades except the motel office. It contained a gentleman in pajamas, slippers and bathrobe. As requested in our reservation the dear owner/manager had been waiting patiently for our arrival.

At 8 the next morning, the seller phoned from the parking lot to take us to the MGB Roadster. It took a short while for us to upholster ourselves, run a comb and splash on some Foo Foo. The greetings, handshakes and introductions were completed, and we were delivered to a coffee shop. The seller lady said she would return in a few minutes with the MGB.

We sat on a bus bench reviewing this adventurous purchasing circus which was feeling more like a large mistake with each passing minute. We expressed concern about what was to be around the next corner. Was the MGB stolen? Did she go to pick an accomplice? Would she have a gun to rob us of \$9,000? I believed I should have slipped a 9mm into my under-lovely's. Could a gun have been taken on the train?

She did arrive with the roadster after about 20 minutes. It looked just like the pictures, when she pulled up next to the curb. The seller lady said Peggy Lee would test drive first and then I would test drive. The car handled very well, just like a small older sports car should, without power steering.

The seller asked about her cash. Peggy explained that she had made arrangements with a Wells Fargo bank in the neighborhood. I thought maybe the MGB is not stolen after all. Another delay occurred in which

the seller lady had to drive back to her home, leave the roadster and bring back the sedan. Oh my, what's next?

We found the bank, informed the manager who was aware of the circumstance and had everything organized. The seller and I stood in the middle of the bank making idle chit-chat. Peggy was at the window of the bank where 3 people were counting out \$9,000 cash. As they were wrapping up the package of the \$9,000, I asked the seller to get out her pink slip and we could conclude the transaction in the bank.

She looked a little sheepish and said she did not have the pink slip. She said she lost it but one was in the mail and she could mail it to us as soon as it arrived.

Stolen car again crossed my mind. Peggy Lee looked at me, I looked at Peggy Lee. We both refrained from immediately calling the police. Something about this deal was smelling worse every time we turned around. I asked if there was a DMV in this town. The seller said no, but there was one in the adjacent town and we could go there.

This move required the \$9,000 to go outside in Peggy Lee's purse and into the seller's car. I thought about asking if I could borrow the bank guard's gun. Wells Fargo just might agree if I promised to bring it back before closing. Naw!

Upon our arrival at the DMV we found a waiting line halfway around the building in the sun on this hot day. We took turns holding our place in line. Peggy Lee and the seller lady made it to the DMV counter in an hour and a half. The DMV employee's first choice of language was not English. I turned the details over to Peggy and the seller. The way chaos was mounting with purchasing details at each step, I wasn't sure I could deal with even one more. Peggy Lee said there was some difficulty with the DMV rep and her accent, but somehow everything was okay.

In the parking lot the money and the ownership papers were placed in the correct hands. Now, what three-ring circus foolishness might still prevail before we could pick up the MGB Roadster?

Via an alleyway we emerged into the seller lady's backyard. There were four

vehicles, each covered with a tarp, parked in her driveway. I couldn't believe this lady was in the automobile selling business. I *would* believe that a major amateur was using us as subjects on which to experiment.

The smallest tarp was removed and the car was as beautiful as ever. We placed our stuff in the small trunk area, bid the seller lady a fond farewell and hit the road. Somehow, Chief Navigator Peggy the Pointer placed us on HWY 101 and we headed south.

Driving the freeway at sixty-five MPH plus, with the top down, gives full meaning to the open-air joy of the sports car. This also justifies grasping the wheel 'till your hands turn blue. The low seating allows the driver to look under the eighteen-wheeler neighbors as they pass. It took three days to reach our Sierra Madre plantation since we lollygagged most of the way. The weather ranged from sun to drizzle, but we never gave up and put the top up.

After we got home, our mechanic found that the engine mounts had separated from the frame. We were lucky to have reached home in one piece. The tires were so old they appeared petrified. But once the cute little car was given new tires and motor mounts, it ran as smooth as glass. Those additions used up the last \$1,000 of the \$10,000 bid.

A year and a half later, we discovered the DMV had not sent us the license renewal information. Three DMV phone calls with extra-long waiting times finally corrected the last bumble fumble of a "simple" car purchase. Success at last! However, we were stuck with the overdue charge.

The 1979 MGB Roadster is now hiding in its own bag next to the Jag in the garage. It still looks as beautifully bright and shiny as it did when it rolled out of the factory 42 years ago.

Editor's note:

This article was originally submitted for *BI* 299, the special issue on American automotive history. As a *British* car, the MG Roadster did not fit that issue's theme, but Terry's storytelling is too good to pass up, so here it is!



Figure 30: The Pacific Electric at its height, circa 1950. The train is running on the four-track right-of-way along Huntington Drive on its way to Arcadia-Monrovia. Photo by Donald Duke, courtesy of Golden West Books.

Why the Pacific Electric Railway Abandoned its Passenger Service

A. C. W. Bethel

In January 2014 I was honored to give an after-dinner talk to the Los Angeles Corral about the abandonment of the once-extensive passenger service that the Pacific Electric Railway (PE) had once provided between end points as distant as Canoga Park, San Bernardino, Santa Ana, Newport Beach, and Santa Monica. PE suburban and interurban cars often ran on private rights-of-way that segregated them from street traffic, and some lines avoided downtown traffic altogether by running fast in a mile-long subway tube that led to a visually impressive terra-cotta and marble clad terminal on Hill Street. How, I wondered, could something that seemed to be such a permanent and ubiquitous part of the region's built environment vanish so utterly in just a few years?

Historians have rejected the idea that a conspiracy by bus and tire manufacturers and oil companies killed the PE. Instead, a common explanation has been that by

the 1920s traffic congestion had slowed PE trains, the PE's weak finances limited what improvements it could afford to build, and apathetic voters refused to vote for bond issues to implement city-sponsored transit plans.

But, it turns out that the PE had access to Southern Pacific capital and was prepared to build piecemeal improvements in the 1920s that would have separated its trains from downtown traffic and connected destination points west of downtown with destination points to the north and east. This would have speeded trains and given riders new options; presumably such improvement would have attracted new passengers. All of this would have increased revenue and efficiency.

The reason that this never got built was that the city government blocked it because they believed that a transit system should be designed from scratch by professional planners to serve Angelenos' needs, not to

promote private profit. The plans they offered marginalized the PE's business goals and focused instead on combatting decentralization by bringing large numbers of people downtown quickly, a goal that such civic-minded groups as the City Club thought would be counter-productive.

In the late 1940s, when the State Division of Highways was designing the Los Angeles freeway system, Mayor Bowron urged that a citizens' committee promote locating rapid transit rails in freeway medians, as had already been done in the Cahuenga Pass. But attempts to persuade the highway engineers to reroute the Hollywood Freeway, then still in the planning stage, through downtown Hollywood met with hostility. The Los Angeles delegation in the state legislature refused to support calling a special legislative session to create a transit district, the voters

were divided over creating a transit district with taxing power, the city council withdrew its support, and the plan died.

The *Southern California Quarterly* 102, Volume No. 4 (Winter 2020) published the first installment of my article, "The Unfinished Web: Transit Planning in Los Angeles, 1895-1953," wherein I develop these points in considerable detail. SCQ 103, 1 (Spring, 2021) contains Part II. I am indebted to SCQ editor Merry Ovnick, who graciously gave me a great deal of constructive help during the article's long gestation.

What I found out as I worked on these articles was sometimes unexpected, and I changed my mind about the thesis I was arguing as I went along. I've learned that we researchers need to keep an open mind about where our research will lead, as revealed in the present *Branding Iron* note.

Monthly Roundup . . .

March 2021

Brian D. Dillon

Zzooooom! The past year in quarantine seemed to fly by with respect to our normal Westerners' functions. We were fortunate, though, that we didn't need to get back to full business-as-usual-mode before we resumed a bit of our cowpoke camaraderie. The Zoom video-conferencing app came to the aid of our own Dr. Brian Dillon for his presentation, "The Last Mutiny? Around the Horn to California on the *Clan Buchanan*." This allowed him to share a bit of his family history with us, as we all lounged about in our underwear (or was I the only one?).

Nominally, Dr. Dillon's presentation was the story of a mutiny which his great-grandfather helped to avert while sailing



Figure 31: The *Clan Buchanan*, rechristened as the Norwegian ship *Valerie*, under sail sometime after 1908. Caledonian Maritime Research Trust photo.

as a passenger aboard the *Clan Buchanan* in 1888. However, the topic also allowed the rounding-up of all sorts of interesting details about that period in maritime history ("Windjammers," "Grain Racers," "Crossing the Line," "Pollywogs," and "Shellbacks").

Seeking treatment for tuberculosis, Dr. Dillon's great-grandfather, William Müller, set out aboard the *Clan Buchanan* (a four-masted "Grain Racer") from London, bound for San Francisco. The crew had drunk their weight the night before departing under the

leadership of a tee-totalling captain. Incensed at their soddenness, he locked them below decks, whereupon they refused to work, thus earning manacles in addition to their confinement. Müller, a passenger, was pressed into service to keep the ship sailing. He did one better, plying the confined crew with his own whiskey to get them to drop their protest, return to the rigging, and get him to the dry air of America's West.

We can all be thankful that William's plan worked. He made his way from San Francisco to Colorado, married, and had a daughter before the tuberculosis claimed him young. That daughter would become the grandmother of our Dr. Dillon, ensuring that the lot of us have evenings' worth of historical lectures to enjoy from the comfort of our own homes (and in whatever state of undress we find ourselves).

— Alan Griffin

April 2021

Brian D. Dillon

Brian D. Dillon showcased his family line of historical publications as examples of how to be a better history writer in the virtual presentation, "Writing, Editing and Publishing History." He explained the step-by-step processes involved and the many unskippable milestones of writing a single document: getting started with historical writing, addressing everything that a reader needs to know, how to research, what technology is best for efficient typing and proofreading, and what to expect from the editing and peer review process.

Dr. Dillon framed his advice with numerous examples of successes in historical writing and editing from his grandfather, his father, himself, and his son, using four generations of experience to back up his guidelines. Furthermore, Dr. Dillon emphasized the need for writers to keep their content interesting. Through this recurring theme, he discussed the sheer amount of ethnic diversity in California that should be represented in historical writing, as well as the need for

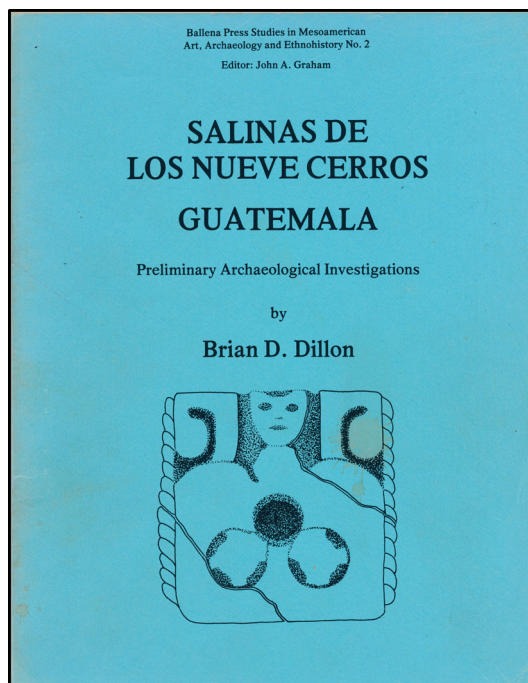


Figure 32: Dr. Dillon's first full-length monograph, published in 1977, was based on his independent fieldwork in 1975. Image from Dillon collection.

writers to remedy the problem of a lack of "herstory"—female representation—in the written record. He suggested oral interviews as an effective way to get information from different local populations. Whether a writer interviews people who experienced past events, checks out library texts, or looks at newspaper scraps scanned onto online databases, Dr. Dillon affirms that one should always take care when conducting research.

Dr. Dillon ended his presentation with a call to action for historians to *never stop writing*. With publication mediums available to the public dwindling, he urged historians at any level of experience to research, write, and publish their own favorite topics and to begin their own journals. Inclusivity and flexibility are required when starting up journals and historical societies, or working with editors. Dr. Dillon made no distinction between amateur and professional historians, only between bad and good writers. The former only become the latter with practice.

— Arkaz Vardanyan

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

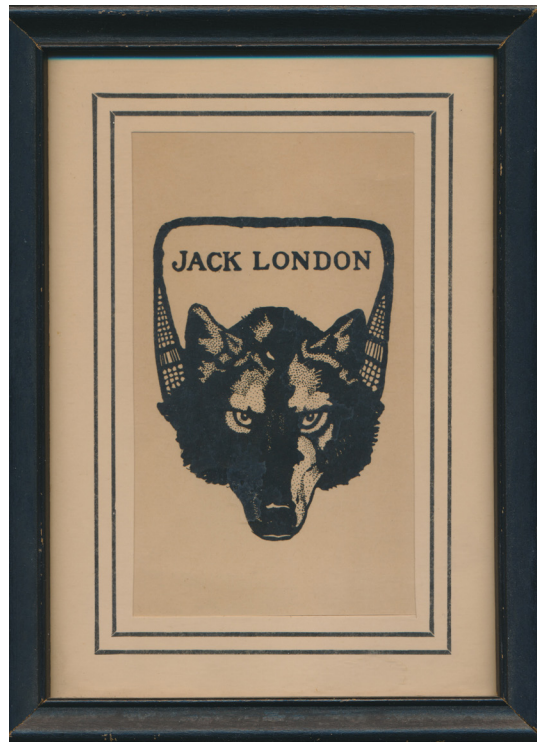
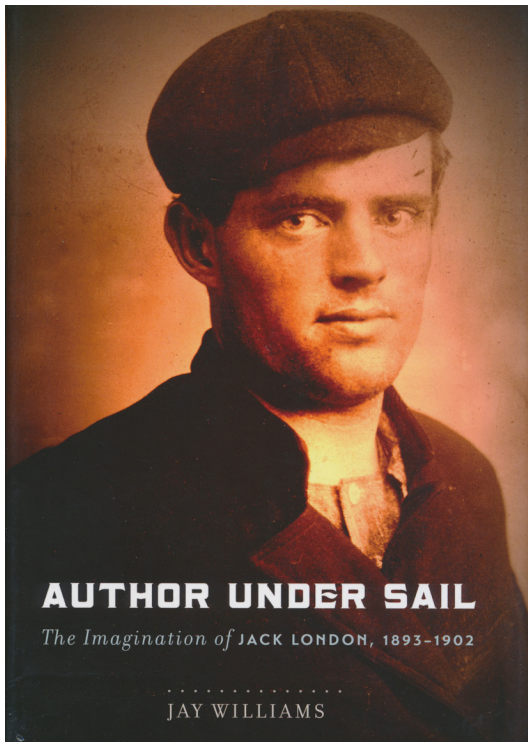


Figure 33, left: Cover of the 2017 Jack London biography by Jay Williams. **Figure 34, right:** One of Jack London's bookplates, framed, which has hung on Dillon family walls for 70+ years. R. H. Dillon collection.

AUTHOR UNDER SAIL: *The Imagination of Jack London, 1893-1902*, by Jay Williams, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2014. Hardbound, 600 pages, notes, bibliography, index. \$90.00. Paperback [2017] \$34.95.

Anyone studying or writing about late 19th and early 20th century California crosses paths with Jack London. Novelist, socialist, U.C. Berkeley drop-out, drunkard and drug-dabbler, London was a larger-than-life *bon vivant* and adventurer. He was an incredibly productive literary moth too close to the flame from the 1890's right up to his death in 1916. Jack London gained fame as a writer of fiction, but many, if not most, of his stories were quickly and unfortunately misinterpreted as fact. By the end of his short life, at age 40, he had become his own biggest fan, and perhaps the staunchest believer in his own mythology.

The title of Jay William's new Jack London biography, *Author Under Sail*, recalls that of the standard, 1947, work, Irving Stone's *Sailor on Horseback*. What could be written about one of California's most celebrated authors that has not already been published? Stone presents a London with no warts or blemishes, while Williams takes a more realistic approach. His scholarly opus is a biography, but it is also a post-mortem analysis of the give-and-take between London and his editors, publishers, even his reviewers and critics, day after day, year after year.

Probably no living scholar knows London better than Williams, nor, perhaps, has anyone tried to explain more fully why he wrote what he did. Williams' detective work reveals a side of the writer previously unsuspected: the radical socialist rabble-rouser in public as a cold-blooded capitalist

in private.

Stone lionized London, and occasionally printed fiction instead of verifiable facts. Williams, however, painstakingly documents every literary contract London signed. More significantly, he treats us to several "life-cycle" accounts of ideas that became jottings, then articles, and finally republished as chapters or entire books. The most rewarding contribution of Williams' new book concerns London's "imagination," what others might simply call his *motivation*. These were as varied as the topics of his writing: making money, primarily, but also *writing wrongs* as his more starry-eyed defenders would have it. But there were also drunken, dead-end maunderings, and just plain blowing off steam, self-inflicted detours from the road to literary immortality.

Williams sometimes ventures into retro-psychoanalysis in *Author Under Sail*. This is facilitated by London himself, for the writer, fraught with inner torment, often put pen to paper while in narcissistic mode, expiating his demons of the moment, documenting periodic bouts of alcoholism, nihilism, and half-serious thoughts of suicide. London was no saint. He was a drunk, an opportunist, frequently bit the hand that fed him, and periodically suicidal; so much so that determining his own end as intentional or accidental is still at best a coin-toss. But the mature reader doesn't have to *either* love London *or* hate him, he or she can *love* some of his writing, be *disappointed* by other examples of it, and even *loathe* yet other examples.

London was an extremely uneven writer, ranking amongst the best America has ever produced when at the top of his form, yet guilty of the worst self-congratulatory drivel when his self-restraint abandoned him. He offended people who had actually lived the kind of life he fictionalized — President Teddy Roosevelt contemptuously called London a *Nature Faker*. "Jerk" London also insulted entire races, cultures, and nationalities, even the sufferers of poorly-understood diseases, by trivializing or ridiculing them just to sell books and articles.

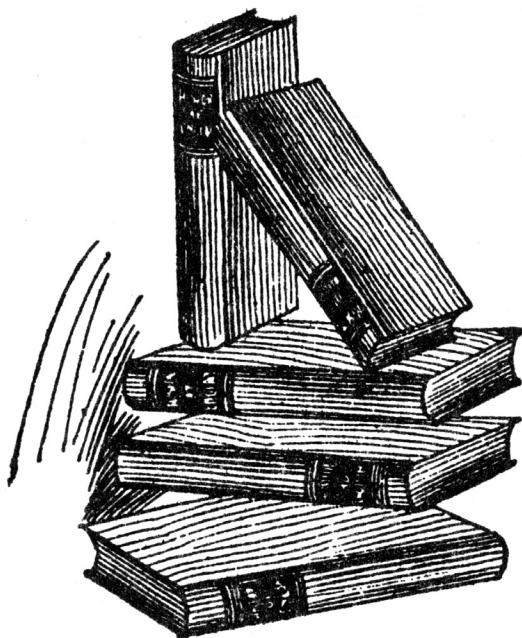
There are no illustrations to leaven the 600 ponderous pages of *Author Under Sail*.

This is curious in light of Jack London's own devotion to photography and his photographic commemorations of many of the more adventurous episodes of his later life. During his coverage of the Russo-Japanese War and throughout the cruise of the *Snark*, his camera was always at hand. But, since Williams' book ends in 1902, just before London's photographic compulsion reached full flower, perhaps 100% of the illustrations that would have enhanced Part 1 will appear in Part 2, if there is to be a follow-up volume.

Like him or not, all Californians are stuck with Jack London. Even now, more than a century after his death, the re-writing of his own peculiar history is far from over. Anybody fascinated by one of our most controversial and unique writers will learn something new about London from Williams' book. Verging on excruciating in its detail, the volume will nevertheless be embraced by Jack London aficionados and by students composing term papers on one of California's most enigmatic writers.

By all means, rush out to buy *Author Under Sail*, and be certain, after reading it, to place it right next to *Sailor on Horseback* on your bookshelf.

— Brian D. Dillon



In Memoriam, Dennis G. Casebier, 1934-2021

With regret we announce the passing of long-time Los Angeles Corral member and California desert booster, writer, and conservationist Dennis Casebier at his home in Bullhead City, Arizona, on February 10, 2021. Kansas-born Dennis came to California as a young Marine in 1954, and was stationed at the USMC facility at Twenty-Nine Palms. He found the arid lands of California so compelling that for the next 65+ years he became one of the most active and literarily prolific “Desert Rats” of both the Mojave and the Colorado Deserts in the southeastern quarter of his adopted land.

Casebier became enchanted with the desert and especially devoted to the history of the old Mojave wagon road. The more research he did, the more he realized that its fragile traces were only one of the many prehistoric and early historic treasures of the California desert. He also became alarmed at how much all of them were endangered by development—road building and suburban sprawl—but even more so by the carelessness of casual visitors unaware of their value. Everyone who has worked in the California desert has been depressed by its conversion from natural and historic wonderland to modern trash-heap, but few have been more active or more successful in reversing this alarming trend than Dennis Casebier.

So Casebier became not merely an historian and writer of popular guides to his beloved desert, but also a conservationist. He worked tirelessly with federal, state, county, and local government agencies, and with clubs, voluntary associations, and all visitors to the dry lands he came to know better than just about anybody. Dennis’ own two organizations, the *Friends of the Mojave Road*, and the *Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association*, educate the general public and facilitate research and responsible visitation to the desert. Their crowning achievements were the restoration and preservation of the old Goff’s Schoolhouse, and construction of a nearby research center, the Mojave Desert Archives Library, in a replica of the old Goffs Santa Fe Railway Depot building.

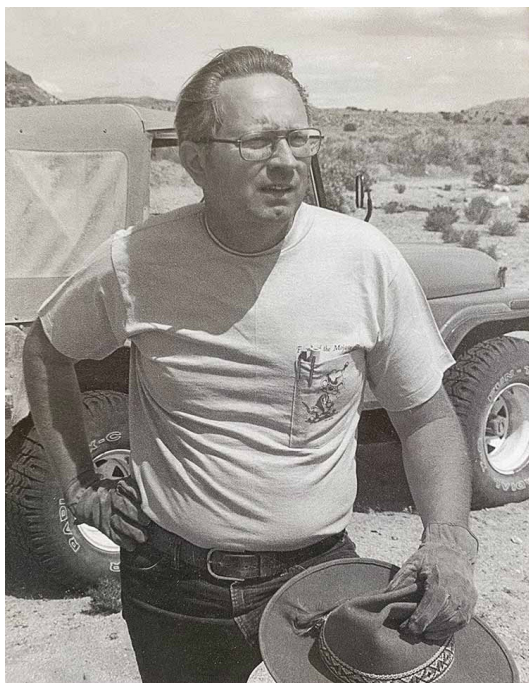


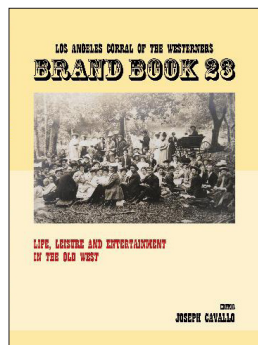
Figure 35: A younger Dennis Casebier on an adventure somewhere in the California Desert. Photo courtesy of the Casebier family.

Along the way Dennis attracted many like-minded people who believed that the California deserts were worth studying and protecting. The results of decades of historical research, documents, maps, photographs, artifacts, and oral history interviews with desert old-timers, are now concentrated at the remarkable research facility at Goffs. This is the best possible testimonial to Casebier, the man to whom all desert visitors and all Westerners are indebted.

— Brian Dervin Dillon



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